



GLC Water Workforce Roundtable



JULY 15 & 16, 2025

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel - Emerald Room

Expected Outcomes and Agenda

- Build a Great Lakes community of practice focused on strengthening existing and building new programs to train the next generation of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater professionals
- Understand opportunities for regional efficiencies including expanded community college and university offerings to meet workforce needs
- Chart a course to inspire children and young adults to pursue careers in the water sector
- Produce regional recommendations for consideration by elected officials and policymakers

Day One: Tuesday, July 15

Time	Topic	Speaker/Lead Facilitator
12:30 p.m.	Welcome remarks	Erika Jensen, Executive Director, Great Lakes Commission (GLC)
12:35	Overview of roundtable agenda and logistics with introduction of GLC staff	Nicole Zacharda, Program Manager, GLC
12:50	Table introductions	All participants
1:00	Sector-based introductions: educators	
1:15	Youth perspectives on water careers: inspiring & recruiting the next generation	• Hillary Caron, City of Grand Rapids Water System • Haley Kozal, Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) • Youth participants in workforce development programs
2:00	What else is happening in Grand Rapids?	GRCC
2:15	Sector-based introductions: water utility leaders & staff and other local partners	
2:30	Break	
2:45	Sector-based introductions: state agency managers and staff	

3:00	State agency perspectives on water workforce development	• Andy Barienbrock, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency • Jason House, Indiana Department of Environmental Management • Koren Carpenter, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy • Amy Garbe, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Additional comments from other state agencies
4:00	Sector-based introductions: regional and national partners	
4:15	Table discussions: successes and challenges for water workforce development	
5:00	Sharing table discussions with the larger group: where are we seeing common themes emerge?	
5:30	Adjourn Day 1	
6:00 p.m.	Optional evening event, Founders Brewing: 235 Cesar E. Chavez Ave SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503	

Day Two: Wednesday, July 16

Time	Topic	Speaker/Lead Facilitator
7:30-8:30 a.m.	Breakfast buffet	
8:30	Welcome back and invitation for thoughts from Day 1	Nicole Zacharda, GLC
8:45	Keynote Address (virtual): Water First internship, training the next generation of First Nation water operators	• S.J. Kendall, Director of Community Engagement, Water First • Adam Peacock, Senior Manager of Drinking Water Programs, Water First • Elijah Toulouse, Internship Technical Trainer & Coordinator, Water First
9:15	Panel discussion: older teenager and young adult engagement	• Patricia Butler, Great Lakes Water Authority • Angel French, City of Watertown (NY) Pollution Control Facility • Chakena Sims, Natural Resources Defense Council Moderator: Hillary Caron, City of Grand Rapids Water System Additional comments from Water First staff (virtual)

10:15	Break	
10:30	Panel discussion: community college offerings and other educational programs for water workforce training	• Kristin Bean, Alliance of Rural Water Indiana • Troy Gallagher, Bay College • Mary Kaczinski, Owens Community College Moderator: Nick Haig, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
11:30	Plated lunch in the Gerald R. Ford Ballroom (downstairs)	
12:45 p.m.	Keynote Address: Youth workforce development in STEM, policy, and drinking water	Candice Mushatt, Flint Community Lab, Director
1:15	Panel discussion: how do we pay for workforce programs (without too much red tape & including small/mid-sized communities)?	• Bre Plier, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District • Jeremy Short, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District • John Van Elst, GRC Moderator: Crystal Davis, National Parks Conservation Association
2:15	Table discussions: where do we go from here?	
3:00	Break	
3:15	Prioritization exercise	
3:50	Next steps: shaping recommendations through follow-up video conference meetings	
4:00 p.m.	Adjourn	