



MILWAUKEE WATER COMMONS

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR WATER AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

April 2025



Authors' Note

This white paper is a call to action. In the past five years alone we have seen both national and global protests calling for an end to racialized oppression, we have surpassed an internationally recognized threshold for what are expected to be irreversible impacts of the climate crisis, and we have witnessed countless communities across the country experience disaster because of extreme weather events and failing and outdated water infrastructure. We are in a moment where anything less than transformative change is an unacceptable outcome for both people and the planet.

We the People of Detroit and Milwaukee Water Commons, are two community-based grassroots organizations working towards environmental justice, often through coalition building and collective action. Between two federal administrations, we have witnessed a dramatic shift in our government's support for the environmental justice movement. Starting in 2021, for the first time in the history of this nation, we saw significant federal investments in repairing and replacing water infrastructure and fostering climate resilience, all with a commitment to prioritizing equity, committing 49% of those funds to the nation's most impacted communities. This year, our government is rejecting the existence of climate change, and across the country, has begun pulling funding from programs and projects that mention environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Ahead of this project, we recognized that even with broad investments in environmental justice, there was very little existing infrastructure to ensure that federal funding was equitably distributed, often seeing that responsibility fall to community-based organizations to ensure that marginalized communities benefit from those investments and have a voice to influence how those investments will reshape our institutions, our movement, and our communities. As our two organizations discussed this moment of change in our country, we realized that we needed to put a voice to how community-based organizations were experiencing this "once in a generation opportunity."



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So we took the opportunity to create a space designed for frontline, community-based, and grassroots organizations to do exactly that. Our discussion seems even more timely in this moment, when community-based organizations around the country must trust that their peers and partners' commitments to environmental justice and equity extend beyond the scope of federal funding.

In planning for this white paper, we were acutely aware of the power dynamic that exists between community-based organizations and larger institutional partners. With much of community-led work being dependent on maintaining those relationships, there is a delicate balance to making forward progress while protecting the needs of the organization. Despite experiencing harmful or challenging partnerships, community-based organizations are often hesitant to call out those experiences for fear of jeopardizing their support, credibility, funding, or more. Therefore, while we believe in acknowledging the contributions of our peers, we wanted to create an opportunity for community leaders to have candid conversations safely and share their collective thoughts anonymously.

As a result, we are pleased to share reflections from that conversation and, most importantly, our calls to action. We acknowledge that we are a small representation of a much larger set of movements, but we hope our peer community leaders will find validation in their experiences and use this as a guiding tool to navigate their own partnerships. We also see this report as the beginning stage of a sustained conversation through which our networks can continue creating spaces that are thoughtful and rejuvenating rather than simply reactionary.

As we look ahead in this new political landscape, where drastic cuts to critical funding and commitments to climate and environmental justice will only widen the disparities in how communities experience climate change and water challenges, we know our partners will be faced with pivotal decisions. Now more than ever, communities and advocates are calling for our partners to remain steadfast in their commitments to climate and environmental justice in the face of mounting political pressure to abandon them. This major shift we are experiencing not only demonstrates the need for authentic partnerships in this movement despite adversity, but also the importance of that commitment, *especially* in times of adversity. We ask our institutional partners and allies to embrace this insight into our communities' lived experiences and feel called in to build partnerships that are based in trust and respect for the communities they work with.

Finally, we want to express gratitude to our peers for placing their trust in us to facilitate this conversation, their willingness to share and support each other, and the dedication they have to their communities.

Victoria, Joe, & Tiana

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Introduction

The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and 2022 Inflation Reduction Act represent the nation's largest investment in climate action and a “once in a generation” investment in the nation's infrastructure. When these investments were initially introduced, institutions, philanthropic organizations, nonprofit organizations, and policymakers around the country made commitments to invest in “disadvantaged communities”, environmental justice, and climate justice. Policies like the federal Justice 40 Initiative set guidance related to program design and implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. This year, we have seen a shift in federal leadership, and a new administration that is both denouncing the existence of climate change and pulling federal funding from projects for naming environmental justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Despite these changes, it is clear that the movement for environmental justice is growing across our country. But what does it look like for frontline organizers working in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards to be supported by federal funding as well as the institutions and stakeholders responsible for implementing those funds? What does this movement look like now, when our political landscape has changed so drastically and those institutions and stakeholders are being influenced by both changes to policy and funding?

During the US Water Alliance 2023 One Water Summit, working with the Water Equity and Climate Resilience Caucus convened by Policy Link, We the People of Detroit and Milwaukee Water Commons convened a group of frontline organizations working towards environmental and climate justice for a strategy session, Authentic Partnerships for Water and Climate Justice, with the goal of:

1. Deepening connections among frontline organizations that would empower community leaders working around the country and in different areas of the movement around environmental justice and water equity.
2. Unpacking frustrations felt by community-based organizations navigating power dynamics with partners and peers, and what it looks like to authentically partner with community organizations in pursuit of water and climate justice.
3. Co-developing calls to action that would support the power of community-based organizations to lead the movement around water equity.



Community leaders from around the country shared space to reflect on their experiences in advocacy, to identify obstacles to progress, and to use these reflections to co-develop calls to action for what is currently needed across our movement. The following report, Authentic Partnerships for Water and Climate Justice, is a summary of those conversations and a call to action for stakeholders looking to work authentically with communities around the country towards justice. Although the insights shared in this summary are important as individual core themes and calls to action, they are also interconnected and model the intersectionality held by partners working in this movement and should be considered simultaneously.

Intended Audiences

This white paper summarizes the start of a conversation about what it means to work authentically with frontline organizations in the water and climate justice movement. As a part of the discussion, participants identified a list of stakeholders and calls to action to meet this moment. The following section lists the intended audience for these calls to action.

Community-Based Organizations

Tribal Community

Large Non-Profits

Funders/Philanthropy

Elected Officials

Academia & Research Organizations

Community

Utilities

Youth Organizations

Government Organizations

Private Sector

Banks/Financial Institutions

Hospitals and Medical Institutions

Media

Core Themes



Partnership

Partnership was brought up consistently throughout our conversations as a commitment not to be taken lightly. Partnerships were described as trust-bound relationships, built through respect and reciprocity. Partnerships involved shared planning, conceptualization, and implementation, and partners shared important elements such as decision making, resources and relationships, data stewardship and ownership, tracking, and transparency, as well as a shared celebration of success.

Participants emphasized that partnerships with frontline organizations should be peer-to-peer relationships, in which authenticity would demand overcoming power dynamics, embracing the leadership of community-based organizations, and being open to change. As stakeholders in the movement for environmental and climate justice, partners should be guided by what is just, right, and inclusive, and should be ready and willing to leverage their power and privilege to call out bad actors.



Transparency

Transparency was frequently recognized as an important element of partnerships between community organizations and stakeholders in a decision-making position or a position of power. Since there are many stories of institutional power being abused throughout history, and through the history of the organizers with whom we spoke, transparency was viewed as an essential component of fostering trust. In many examples, participants explained how a lack of transparency had stifled their ability to work in partnerships, or to meaningfully address a challenge their community faced. Where there were examples of information being shared transparently, participants explained how it led to better tracking and reporting of progress, more adaptive approaches and solutions, and ultimately strengthened the community's ability to see impact and drive accountability for structural change.



Recognizing community expertise

Recognizing community expertise emerged as a significant component of true collaboration. Participants discussed the desire that institutions recognize the extensive knowledge and deep relationships community-based organizations have with their communities, as well as expertise gained through lived experiences. The vast knowledge within communities was noted as something not to simply be tapped, but honored and valued.



Reframing how we think about water and environment

Reframing how we think about water and the environment. Community leaders expressed that to work authentically towards water and climate justice, as a movement, we need to reframe how we think and speak about water and the environment. There is a lack of genuine understanding about water as a living entity and how our relationships with water and the natural environment shape our communities and cultures. To truly address environmental injustice, that understanding should shape our actions and decision-making as individuals, as organizations, and in partnerships. Our work and partnerships should be guided by our solidarity with the water and climate justice movement. The group expressed the importance of taking leadership from Indigenous communities and grassroots community leaders in this pursuit.



Co-opting, tokenization, and exclusion

Co-opting, tokenization, and exclusion were discussed as frustrating experiences that broke trust with community partners and hindered progress in the work for water and climate justice. Community leaders shared how their organizations' names were used without consent, how they have been excluded from conversations, or how they were invited in at the final stages after the major decisions had already been made. It is clear that to find sustainable solutions to environmental crises and address systemic injustice, communities must be recognized as equal partners in every step of the way; from identifying problems, to designing solutions, to implementing actions.



Community-based organizations are critical leaders in the movement for environmental and climate justice and should be acknowledged as both peers and partners.

Partners in the movement for environmental justice must ensure that representative community engagement informs the actions and decision-making shaping our lived environment. In many cases, community-based organizations are a better bridge to share information with and receive information from community members. Community-based organizations often lead and lend capacity to reforming and reimagining programs and policies to ensure that they are informed by and empowering the communities that they impact. As non-government representatives of their community, community-based organizations are well-positioned to advocate for systemic change and to identify and organize opportunities for collaboration and collective action that will drive that change. These roles are essential to pursuing water and climate justice, and in many instances were named as undervalued, assumed, or unsupported aspects of partnerships with community-based organizations.

Supporting examples:

- Participants described feeling obligated to lean into partnerships with institutions because of their power and decision-making authority, despite having had negative experiences or history.
- Participants recommended that institutions should invest in “building and supporting networks of community partners who can help develop resources and capacity to meet community needs.” Co-developing projects and developing community agreements with community-based organizations establishes a strong foundation for the partnership.



Partnerships should be rooted in shared solidarity and a commitment to action. Stakeholders working in this movement must grow beyond values and optics, lean into discomfort, and hold accountability as an ally.

Far too many community organizations have stories of partnerships built on tokenism or false promises of solidarity. For community organizations, these partnerships risk damaging the community’s trust in their organization. In addition, they often extract social networks, language, time, and intellectual property without adequate compensation, real impact, or structural change. Partnerships tied to values and optics—rather than creating impact—maintain systems of power and disempowerment through performative actions and transactional relationships. Partnerships with community-based organizations should be rooted in a shared understanding of how accountability and reciprocity will look, shared decision making and representative leadership, and a genuine investment in shared interests. Stakeholders working in solidarity and partnership in this movement should be allies even when the community is not in the room—holding bad actors accountable, investing internally in working to transform their organizations, and actively identifying opportunities to eliminate systems of oppression.

Supporting examples:

- Partners in the movement for water and climate justice should leverage their power and resources to dismantle systems of oppression. Allied organizations should invest in internal work to further accountability mechanisms, such as “build a diverse and representative staff”. In other instances, allies should leverage their power in solidarity. Participants named both policies and organizations that were responsible for causing harm but were not called out or held accountable by their counterparts, allowing that harm to continue. One participant stated, “We need institutions to actually name the bad actors who create injustice. Systems and actors both”.
- During our discussion, participants referenced many instances where stakeholders in positions of power had brought their organization in on a project as a tokenized community representative, only to gain additional power and resources because of their participation. One instance that stood out was when a community-based organization declined to work with their city to coordinate community engagement, because the city hired and funded a consultant who they knew would gain credibility for the capacity and reputation contributed by community partners.



Data and research must be shared with community-based organizations, and partners should facilitate opportunities for community-based organizations to have ownership of the process and resulting information.

Data and research are critical components for community-based organizations to identify problems and advocate for solutions. However, community advocates often find it difficult to find, access, or navigate the necessary data. Withholding or delaying data sharing from a community-based partner can break trust and confidence in a current or potential partnership. To be equal partners, institutions must equip community-based organizations to engage and advocate by sharing existing data and resources that facilitate leading their own research, such as funding opportunities and educational resources, in a timely manner. Resources should be easily accessible and navigable, ensuring translation services are supported or provided. Partners must also invest in community leadership development by sharing or shifting ownership and stewardship of data and research.

Supporting examples:

- Participants shared past experiences where institutional partners did not respond to requests for public data or extracted information from communities without sustained engagement with the community. However, participants also shared recent successes where institutional partners in research recognized this issue and acted in service to the community, “One of our academic partners has given us ownership to the data collected in a water affordability, quality study. Too often our communities are studied, but data from surveys, etc., is not provided to community-based organizations.”
- It is of critical importance that information is accessible. Participants consistently noted a “lack of translation or interpretation, or only having materials in English,” and looking to institutions to “share easily accessible and navigable websites with the public with data, funding, projects, etc.”



To engage in long-term relationship building, institutional partners must be prepared to actively listen to community needs, commit to follow-up actions, and act with the same urgency as that of their community-based collaborators.

Community-based organizations dedicate considerable time and resources to addressing the issues of their communities but often face institutions that are unresponsive, dismissive of their needs, or slow to act. Institutional partners should not only increase organizations' financial capacities but also commit substantial, ongoing time and effort to engage in meaningful partnerships. Adequate time and resources must be put towards maintaining public information to be current, accessible, and navigable to ensure the public has the information they need to engage and advocate. Partners should be open to listening and responsive, understanding the urgency to keep projects moving and follow through with their commitments. It is critically important to recognize that in partnership, institutions are not only showing up for their collaborator but the environmental justice movement as a whole.

Supporting examples:

- Community leaders shared positive experiences and outcomes when institutional partners actively listened to the community and remained open to community-led collaboration. One participant noted, "We have had good outcomes with city departments who are willing to listen to our requests, work with us and create something beautiful, community-led."
- Institutional partners should commit time and take action to stay accountable to the community by "getting our state agencies to hold meetings with us, share knowledge, and ask us to assess their programs and community engagement."



Institutions must enter into partnerships, understanding the need for community-based leadership and self-determination.

Communities that have been disproportionately affected by environmental injustice have, and continue to be, heavily studied and surveyed. Recognizing when there is fatigue within their communities, community-based organizations should be given the freedom to analyze whether a new research or funding proposal is in the best interests of their communities at that moment. Institutions have the responsibility to listen to and respect those decisions and find ways to support their community partner's goals. By doing this, institutions recognize that communities possess unique insights into their own needs and challenges and that creating space for community-based organizations to lead and develop solutions fosters more effective and sustainable impact. There must also be active efforts to go beyond invitations for community leaders to be present, but to elevate them as knowledgeable speakers and to value lived experiences as expertise.

Supporting examples:

- Participants shared several experiences of well-intentioned institutional partners approaching their organizations with research or funding proposals that would have resulted in more burden than support or did not truly drive change on the issues the organizations were trying to address. Participants also shared ideas and recommendations, including developing a standard evaluation for new requests or positioning themselves so that “researchers requesting to collaborate on projects understand that we may push back.”
- Participants noted the need for institutions to elevate the leadership and expertise of community leaders, saying that, “Tribal entities are often invited to open the space or meeting but not often as knowledgeable speakers and participants.”

Healing Our Waters Great Lakes Coalition: Community Leadership across the Great Lakes

The Healing Our Waters Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 180 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation, and community-based organizations throughout the Great Lakes region. The Coalition has been working collectively for more than 20 years to advocate at the federal level to protect and restore the health of the Great Lakes, a source of drinking water for over 30 million people throughout the region and home to twenty percent of the world's freshwater. Their focus on bringing together communities from across the region to safeguard the health of our shared waterways has both strengthened the advocacy of local organizations and fostered a strong regional network that amplifies the importance of the Great Lakes for both the planet and the many communities who call the region home.

In 2004, following the release of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy and the creation of the federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, the Healing Our Waters Coalition formed with a primary goal of bringing together community based organizations to advocate for a comprehensive and sustainable restoration plan for the Great Lakes ecosystem, alongside the necessary federal funding to implement it. In 2010, Congress passed the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a program that has allowed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to work in collaboration with other federal agencies, states, and tribes to fund projects to restore and protect the Great Lakes. With the creation of the GLRI, the Coalition has continued to grow its advocacy, helping to inform the program's implementation and facilitating collective action to address other regional issues related to water. As the Coalition has grown and engaged a more diverse network of leaders around the region in pursuit of its mission, the priorities held by frontline organizers working across the Great Lakes have challenged the Coalition and its members to look at the intersections between environmental and social justice, reshaping the movement around the Great Lakes.

Environmental and public health hazards in the Great Lakes region disproportionately impact low-income communities, communities of color, and indigenous communities.

 **CALL TO ACTION #2**

 **CALL TO ACTION #5**

Further, those communities have been drastically under-represented in decision-making and public engagement opportunities related to water and Great Lakes Restoration. In 2014, the devastating impacts of the Flint and Detroit Drinking Water Crisis put a national spotlight on the direct connections between water and environmental issues, public health, and social injustice. As drinking water issues gained visibility around the region and the nation, the environmental movement wrestled with its role in supporting communities locally and through advocacy. It was local organizers who raised the alarm about the diversity of the environmental movement, that the voice of the communities impacted by those challenges had been long absent from decision making in the environmental movement, and in the face of an emerging crisis, those voices were being left out again. The Coalition's leadership and staff took that call to action seriously and began to bridge relationships with organizations around the Great Lakes who were working on the frontlines of the region's water crises. While the Coalition was deeply rooted in traditional environmentalism and ecological restoration, leaders like Monica Lewis-Patrick (We the People of Detroit), Brenda Coley and Ann Brummitt (Milwaukee Water Commons), and Alicia Smith (The Junction Coalition) who were recruited to inform the Coalition's work, brought a strong local commitment to environmental justice bridging traditional environmentalism with intersectional issues of social and racial justice.

When their community partners vocalized that the Coalition's commitment to equity and justice needed to be a part of all aspects of the Coalition's work, and not siloed as its own initiative or for particular focus areas, Healing Our Waters staff worked together with their member organizations to ensure that those commitments shaped the coalition's mission and values, their policy platform, and their strategic plan. Between 2016 - 2018 Healing Our Waters made a public commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice and invested in the creation of an Equity, Advisory and Action Committee that would work with their Governance Board on implementing those values, and encouraged those committee members and other community partners to join their Governance Board and lead the direction of the Coalition. That transition was not easy, it came with hard conversations among the coalition's membership and the funding community, as well as a great deal of uncertainty about how their advocacy would be received. The Coalition's commitment to equity and justice was born from community-based leadership and a willingness to move beyond optics, lean into discomfort, and remain accountable to its members and mission. As that commitment grew and moved into implementation, so did the visibility of the coalition and its recognition among regional grassroots organizers.

 **CALL TO ACTION #2**

 **CALL TO ACTION #5**

The Coalition invested in reshaping its work in the Great Lakes Region, beginning with an environmental justice assessment of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the same regional policy championed by the Coalition since its formation, and has been implementing the recommendations of the assessment. Healing Our Waters also began working with their members to host regular policy roundtable discussions with community leaders in each state to ensure that their federal advocacy was informed by the most pressing issues and insights of organizers working and living throughout the region. The Coalition funded lead organizations in each Great Lakes state to add capacity for building connections with new voices and diverse leaders throughout the region, encouraging participation in and co-development of Coalition conferences and events, and ultimately working to build the diversity of the Coalition's membership.

The Coalition also invested in adding capacity for their membership's work around diversity, equity, and inclusion, both as a part of the coalition and to inform their work locally. Healing Our Waters hosted antiracism training available to their members, and established caucus spaces for both white and non-white leadership to explore how racism and white supremacy showed up in their organizations and as a part of the coalition members' work together. The Coalition also utilized flexible grant funding to fill gaps in regional emergency response efforts and to add capacity for local partners to take on specialized projects in each Great Lakes state that focused on identifying and addressing environmental injustice.

The Healing Our Waters Great Lakes Coalition's commitment to community-based leadership and self-determination, and their ability to lead with both integrity and humility, make them a strong example of a partner committed to the movement for environmental and climate justice.



CALL TO ACTION #2



CALL TO ACTION #5

Mapping the Water Crisis: Collaborative Research

We the People of Detroit (WPD) successfully partnered with academics to research, document, and publish Mapping the Water Crisis. This collaboration highlights how community-based organizations (CBOs) can lead and control research efforts to address critical social issues while ensuring partnerships serve community needs rather than academic agendas.

Community-Driven Research Approach

From the outset, WPD emphasized that the research process must be community-led. This meant shifting the research focus away from traditional academic inquiries—such as water quality and system engineering—towards questions that mattered to the community. While this approach initially created some tension, the co-leads of the WPD Community Research Collaborative, Dr. Nadia Gaber and Professor Emily Kutil, remained steadfast in their commitment. They were supported by WPD co-founders Monica Lewis-Patrick, Debra Taylor, and Cecily McClellan, who reinforced the importance of centering the voices of those most affected by the water crisis. The research began with three core questions:

1. How many people have had their water shut off?
2. Where were the most shutoffs happening?
3. What was the impact of these shutoffs on residents?

The answers to these questions led to the creation of the first map, which provided a comprehensive visualization of the widespread water shutoffs in Detroit. This data-driven approach was instrumental in bringing attention to the scale of the crisis.

Ensuring Ethical Research Practices

Throughout the research process, WPD set clear ethical and operational standards for collaboration:

- **Community Ownership of Data:** WPD ensured that all data generated remained under community control. This principle established a model for future partnerships, where community members retain authority over their own information.
- **Compensation for Community Participants:** WPD developed a formula to ensure that every community expert and participant, whether organizations, households, or youth, received fair compensation for their time and contributions.



CALL TO ACTION #1



CALL TO ACTION #3



CALL TO ACTION #5

- **Protecting Vulnerable Residents:** Given that Michigan law allows child protective services to remove children from homes without water access for 72 hours, WPD prioritized participant safety. They mandated strict confidentiality protocols and required academic partners to uphold these protections. If at any point these conditions were not met, WPD reserved the right to withdraw from the project.

Impact and Adoption

The collaborative effort resulted in the publication of Mapping the Water Crisis, which has since been integrated into the curriculum at 14 higher education institutions. The book has provided an evidence-based foundation for discussions on water justice, policy reform, and community-led advocacy.

Lessons Learned for Future Collaborations

This case study provides a replicable model for how CBOs can successfully partner with institutions while maintaining agency and ensuring meaningful outcomes:

- **Prioritize Community-Driven Questions:** Research should start with the issues that directly impact residents, rather than defaulting to academic or institutional interests.
- **Negotiate Ownership and Control:** CBOs should establish clear agreements regarding data ownership and usage to prevent external exploitation.
- **Compensate Community Members Fairly:** Sustainable partnerships require equitable recognition of community expertise and contributions.
- **Protect Vulnerable Communities:** Ethical considerations, particularly for historically undervalued communities, must be a non-negotiable aspect of research design.
- **Establish an Exit Strategy:** CBOs should have the power to withdraw if institutional partners fail to uphold agreed-upon ethical and operational standards.

WPD's partnership with academic institutions for Mapping the Water Crisis exemplifies how CBOs can lead research efforts in ways that empower communities and drive systemic change. By prioritizing community needs, enforcing ethical research practices, and ensuring data ownership, WPD set a standard for meaningful and equitable collaborations between grassroots organizations and academic institutions.



CALL TO ACTION #1



CALL TO ACTION #3



CALL TO ACTION #5

Conclusion

Through the conversation convened at the 2023 One Water Summit, it became evident that while frontline organizations carry the heavy burden of responding to crises, they also hold the power to reshape the way partnerships and collaborations function. Authentic Partnerships for Water and Climate Justice highlights the critical need for genuine, respectful, and reciprocal relationships between frontline organizations and the broader network of environmental and climate justice stakeholders. In this moment, when federal support may wane, it is more critical than ever that partnerships move beyond token engagement and toward deep, meaningful collaborations that recognize community-based organizations as equal leaders in this fight.

In this moment, as we face profound changes to the political landscape and challenges posed by environmental hazards and climate change, fluctuating federal investments in infrastructure, and rising demands for justice, the expertise and leadership of those most impacted must be centered in decision-making processes. Institutional partners must go beyond listening— they must also act with urgency, transparency, and a commitment to equity. By embracing these principles, we can co-create solutions that are both just and sustainable, fostering a future where communities are not only resilient but thrive.

The path forward requires all stakeholders—community-based organizations, governments, nonprofits, academia, and the private sector—to embrace the hard work of dismantling systems of oppression and to build new systems rooted in justice, accountability, and shared power. Together, we can forge authentic partnerships that honor the leadership of frontline communities and drive meaningful change in the pursuit of water and climate justice.

This report is just the beginning. It represents the voices of communities, and we invite others to join us in continuing this dialogue. As we move forward, let this document serve as both a guide and a reminder that transformative progress requires not only resilience but also intentional spaces for reflection, collaboration, and action. Our communities deserve nothing less.



Milwaukee Water Commons

Milwaukee Water Commons is a cross-city network that fosters connection, collaboration and broad community leadership on behalf of our common waters.

We promote stewardship of, equitable access to and shared decision-making for our common waters.

Learn more about our work at
www.milwaukeewatercommons.org



We the People of Detroit

We the People of Detroit is dedicated to community coalition building and to the provision of resources that inform, train, and mobilize the citizens of Detroit and beyond to improve their quality of life.

Learn more about our work at
www.wethepeopleofdetroit.com