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Best Practices for Developing Indirect Potable Reuse Projects: Phase 1 Report

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Objectives

The purpose of this WaterReuse Foundation report is to examine how people perceive the value of indirect potable reuse and how the messages and management practices of the sponsoring utility affect these perceptions. This report outlines 25 best practices to ensure that well planned indirect potable reuse projects receive fair consideration in water supply decisions.

The best practices are also intended to maintain the reputation of the sponsoring agency and the industry, even if indirect potable reuse is not adopted in a given community. This report addresses planned indirect potable reuse, which includes groundwater recharge, reservoir augmentation, and soil aquifer treatment reuse projects.

The research team examined several case studies of past indirect potable reuse projects to understand the key ideas of value related to the project, how communication of the project was managed, and how key people involved in the project perceived the benefits and risks.

Benefits

This report provides water agencies with the 25 best practices determined to be the most critical in ensuring the acceptance, approval, and implementation of indirect potable reuse projects.

Highlights

- Best Practice #1: Create a perception of improvement. It is next to impossible to get support for a project if key audiences perceive that the project is somehow degrading quality of life. The successful projects in this study were perceived as an improvement or moving in the right direction.
- Best Practice #17: Identify and collaborate with key audiences. The most important audiences are elected officials, people who influence them, the media, and any official decision makers.
- Best Practice #18: Embrace conflict and opposition. Embracing conflict (i.e., viewing it as valuable and legitimate) helps the sponsoring utility to see project flaws, helps opponents to believe that they are being heard, and increases the credibility of the utility.
- Best Practice #21: Develop ongoing relationships with the media. The media can create negative perceptions about projects that will cause elected officials and decision makers to be concerned.