

Financing the Future of the U.S. Water Sector: Mobilizing Capital for Infrastructure Investment

Date: Monday, March 23rd, 2026

Location: Charlotte, NC

Target Audience: Water utility leaders, investors, infrastructure funds, technology firms, public agencies, legal experts, and community advocates

Summary: Across the nation, aging water infrastructure and rising costs are creating an urgent need for additional capital and innovative financing solutions. In addition, as the water sector moves toward a circular water economy, unlocking up to **\$47 billion annually in direct economic value for U.S. utilities and municipalities**, the sector must come together to chart a path forward.

To meet this challenge, the **Water Environment Federation** is convening leading experts from across the country for a high-impact summit focused on financing the future of water infrastructure. Together, we'll explore strategies to leverage federal resources, mobilize private investment, and build sustainable funding models that drive long-term resilience and growth.

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM | Registration & Networking Breakfast

- Coffee and continental breakfast

10:00 AM – 10:15 AM | Opening Remarks

- Welcome from conference host and overview of the day's objectives
- **Ralph Exton**, Executive Director, Water Environment Federation

10:15 AM – 10:45 AM | Keynote: The Scale of the Infrastructure Investment Challenge - Financing Water in America

- This keynote will dive into the scale of today's water infrastructure investment challenge by examining funding gaps, regulatory dynamics, and emerging opportunities for private capital to drive sustainable solutions.
- **Reese Tisdale**, President & CEO, Bluefield Research

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM | Panel 1: Funding Update – Status of Federal Funding for Water Infrastructure

- This panel will explore the status of federal funding programs, trends in the municipal bond market, the implications of tariffs, and the critical challenges looking forward.
- Moderator: **Hank Habicht**, Managing Co-Founder, Water Finance Exchange
- Panellists:
 - **Michael Deane**, Chief, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, US EPA
 - **Shannon Groff**, Director, Public Finance, Fitch Ratings
 - **Deirdre Finn**, President, Finn Strategies

- **Kishia Powell**, General Manager/CEO, WSSC Water
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12:00 PM – 1:15 PM | Networking Lunch

- **Lunch Keynote:** This keynote will detail the results of the latest Infrastructure Report Card from the American Society of Civil Engineers, stressing the need for further investment in water and wastewater infrastructure.
 - **Celine Hyer**, Senior Vice President, Arcadis
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1:15 PM – 2:30 PM | Panel 2: Making the Case – Why Should We Consider Private Capital in Water Infrastructure?

- This panel will explore how public-private partnerships can be an effective tool, examine risk-return profiles, highlight case studies, and detail ways private finance can help close the infrastructure investment gap.
 - **Moderator:** **Rocky Craley**, Vice President, Raftelis
 - **Panellists:**
 - **Brian Shell**, Vice President, WSP
 - **Deane Dray**, Managing Director, RBC Capital Markets
 - **Tony Clamp**, Independent Consultant
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2:30 PM – 3:30 PM | Panel 3: Financing Water Reuse and the Circular Water Economy

- This panel will explore circular water economy investments, state and federal policy drivers, and regulatory concerns including how data centers can leverage water reuse strategies amid evolving regulations
 - **Moderator:** **Bruno Pigott**, WaterReuse Association
 - **Panellists:**
 - **Angela Bricmont**, Chief Financial Officer, Denver Water
 - **Cindy Jia**, Managing Director, Head of Sustainable Solutions Group, ING
 - **Bastien Simeon**, Partner, Roland Berger
 - **Stephen J Auton-Smith**, Senior Managing Director and Americas Sustainability Leader, Ernst & Young Infrastructure Advisors
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3:30 PM – 3:45 PM | Coffee Break

3:45 PM – 5:00 PM | Panel 4: Closing Plenary: What Comes Next?

- This panel will present a forward-looking view of the future of water infrastructure finance, identifying opportunities for innovative technologies, addressing affordability challenges, and highlighting the need for public support
- **Moderator:** **David Henderson**, Managing Partner, XPV Water Partners
- **Panellists:**
 - **Melissa Westfall**, Chief Financial Officer, Charlotte Water

- **Anna Wildeman**, Senior Vice President, Stakeholder Affairs & Sustainability, Veolia North America
 - **Tom Ferguson**, Managing Partner, Burnt Island Ventures
 - **Michael Robbins**, Senior Partner, Bain & Company
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5:00 PM – 5:15 PM | Wrap Up

5:15 PM – 6:30 PM | Networking Reception