

How Do We Build Understanding and Support For Water Investments?

Samantha Villegas, APR, Fellow PRSA

November 20, 2024





Samantha Villegas

APR, Fellow PRSA

Principal Consultant

- Award-winning communications and outreach executive
- Over 30 years of experience in the areas of water, energy, and recycling – more than half in water.
- Led communications **American Water, Loudoun Water, and EPA's Office of Water.**
- A communications professional in water
- Master's degree in environmental policy from **Johns Hopkins University**



Who is Raftelis?

Helping local governments and utilities thrive



Finance



Executive services



Strategic planning/facilitation



Communication

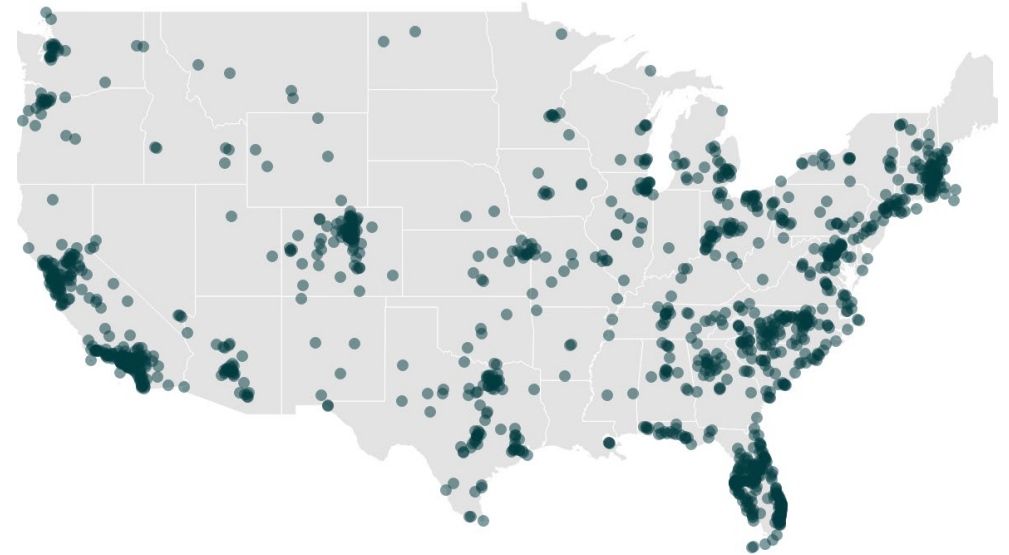


Organization



Technology

National Experience



With more than...

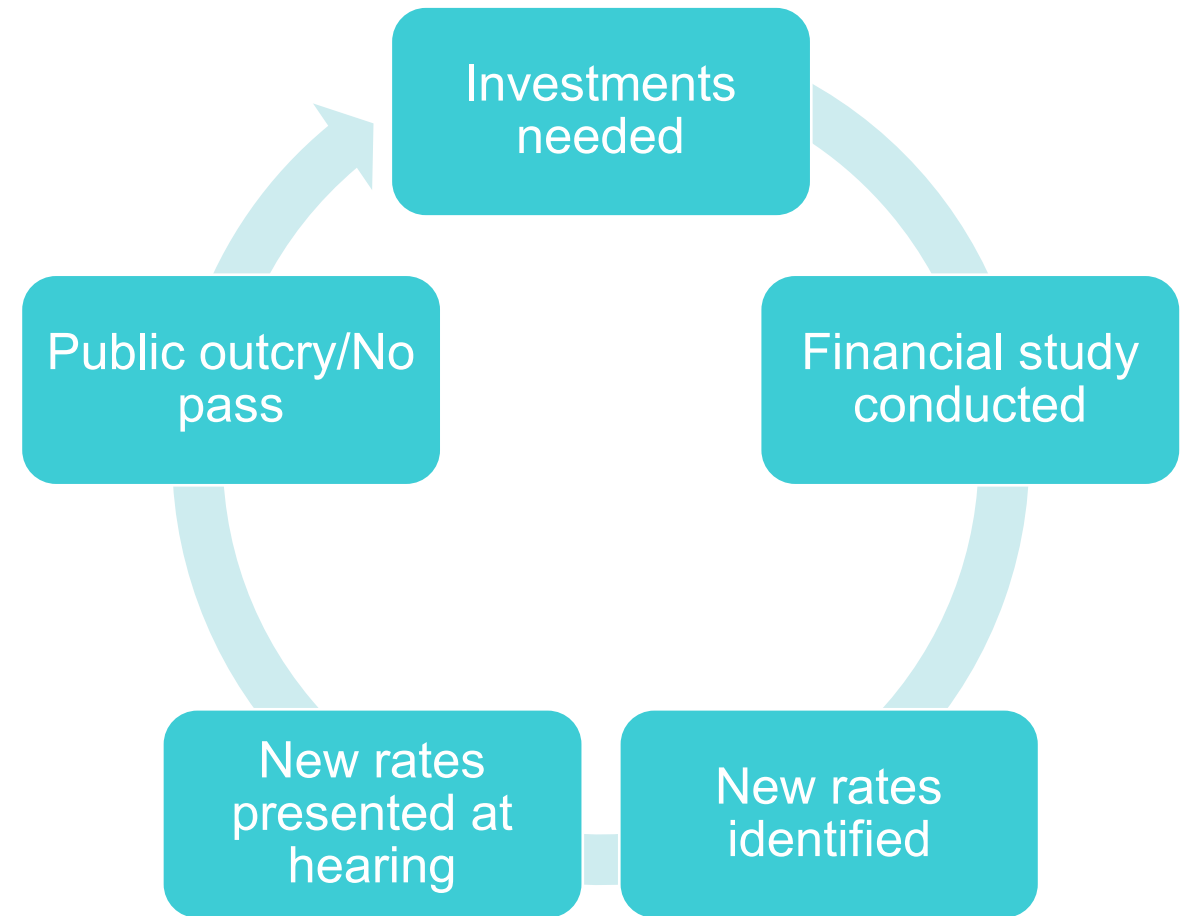
200+ consultants across the U.S.

Raftelis has provided assistance to over

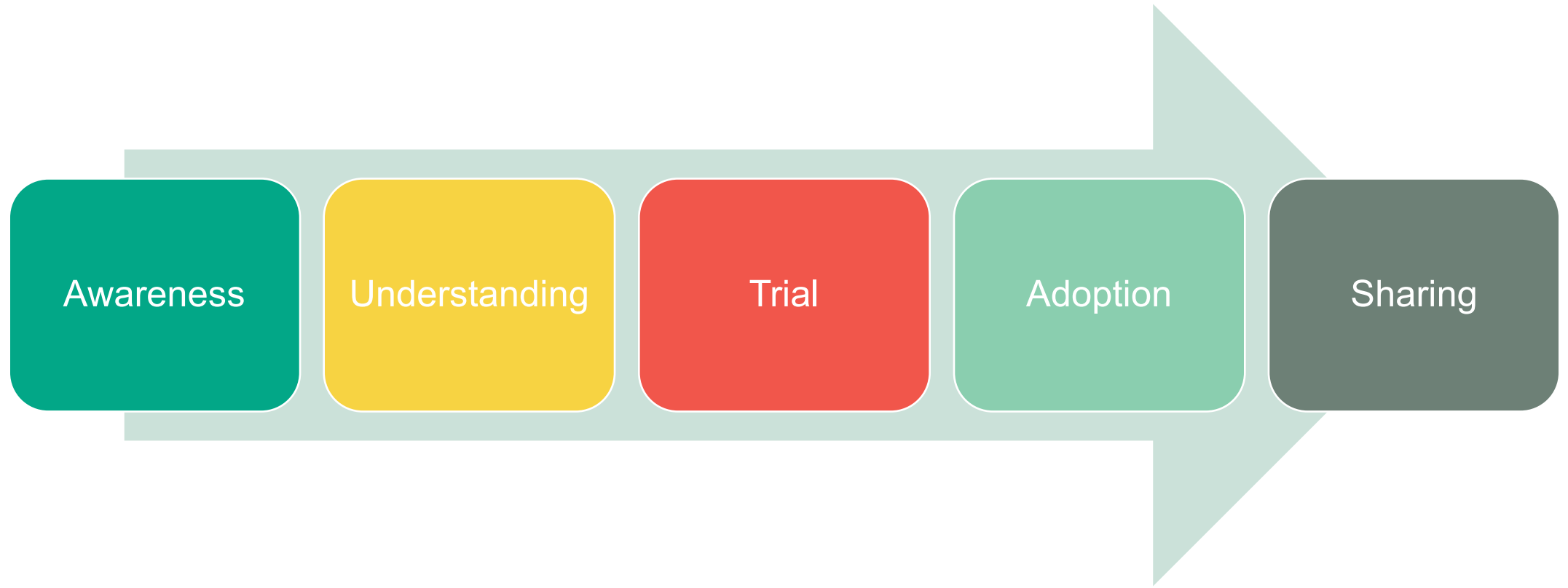
1,700+ public agencies and utilities



How Investment in Water Often Handled



Diffusion Theory



Awareness

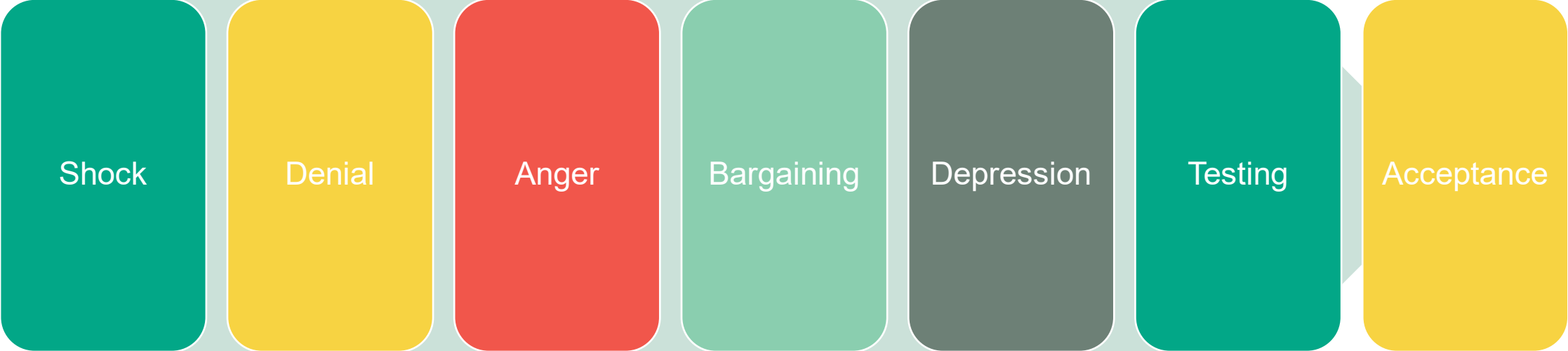
Understanding

Trial

Adoption

Sharing

Stages of Grief



5

**Ways to Build
Understanding
and Support
For Water
Investments**

1

SHOW DON'T TELL



1. SHOW DON'T TELL



2

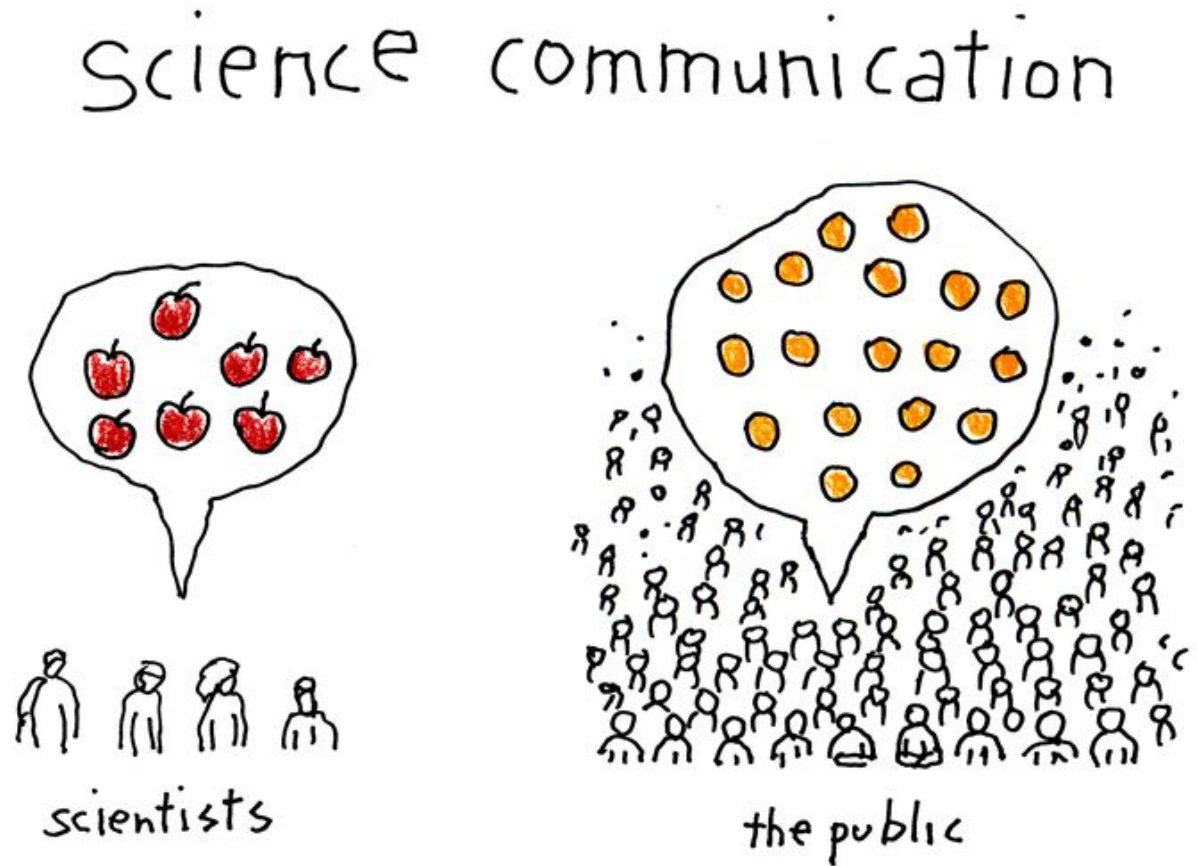
**USE COMMON
LANGUAGE**



2. USE COMMON LANGUAGE

99.9% of our audience doesn't know what we know.

- They're not familiar with terms we use every day
- They're not as comfortable in the science as we are
- Skepticism is growing
- Opinions valued over facts



Use relatable, well understood words

Words That Are Relatable and Understandable

- Affordable
- Safe, clean
- End of useful life
- Pipes
- Protection
- Severe weather

Words That Are Not Relatable or Easily Understood

- Financial
- Sustainable
- Resiliency
- Efficacy
- Depreciation

3

**INVOLVE
STAKEHOLDERS**



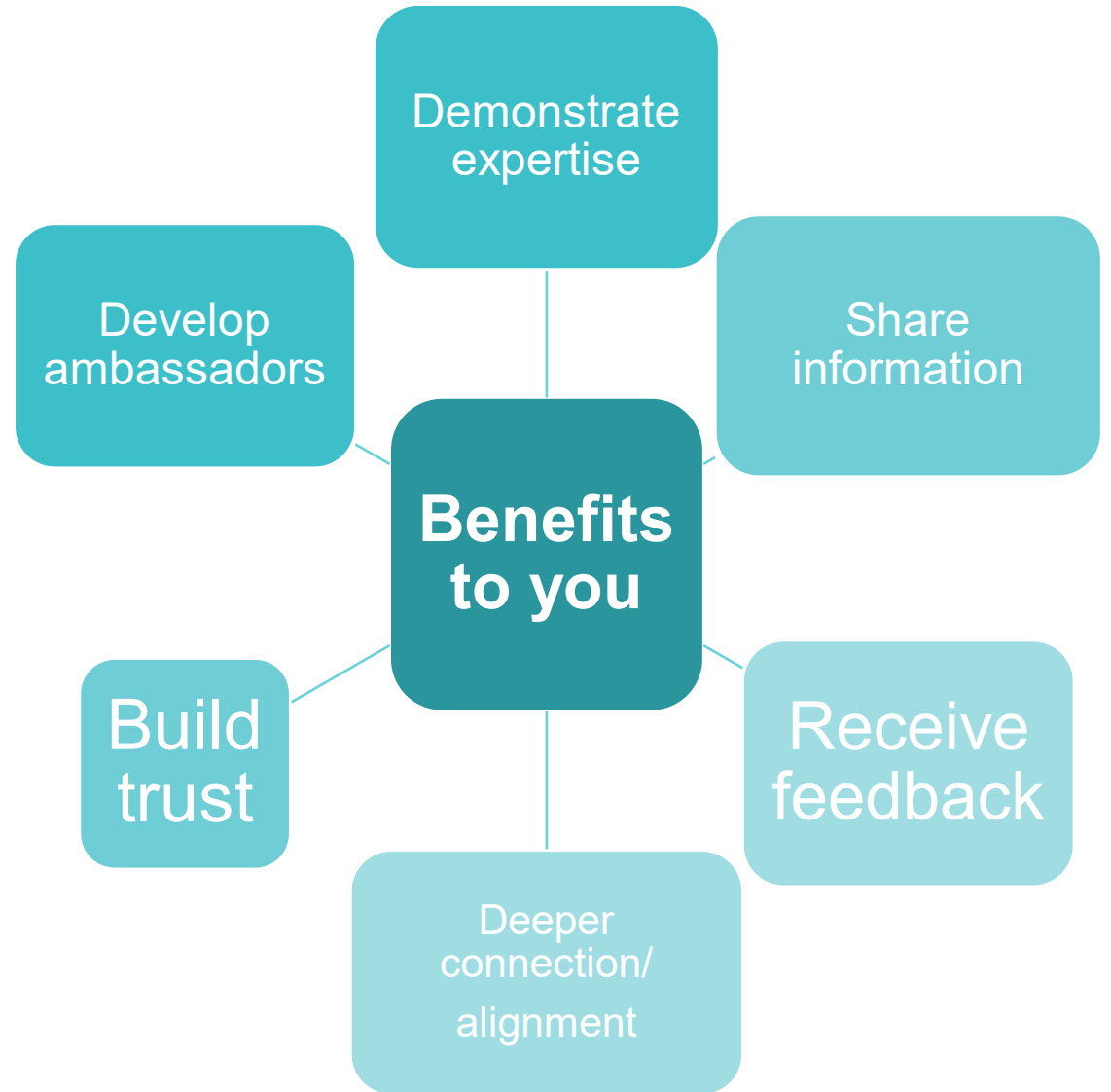


Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand.

Chinese Proverb

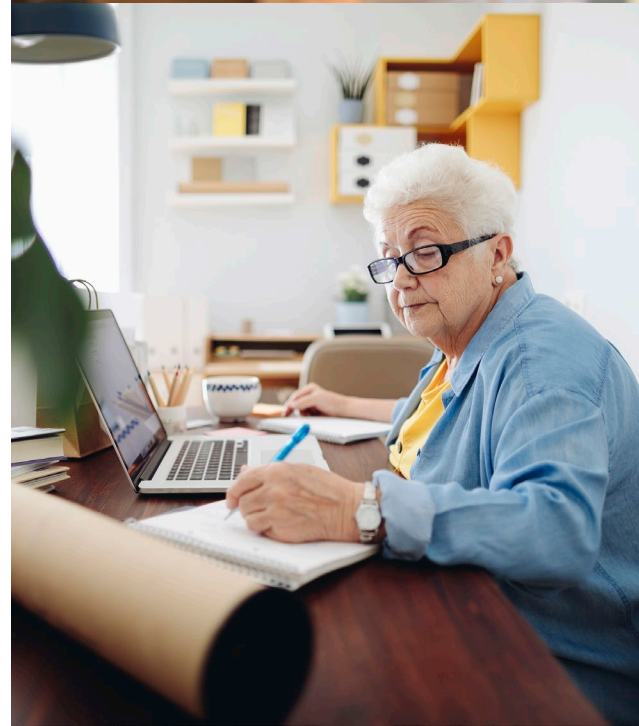
3. INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS

- Study them, understand them
- Prioritize them by interest & influence
- Determine how/what level of engagement

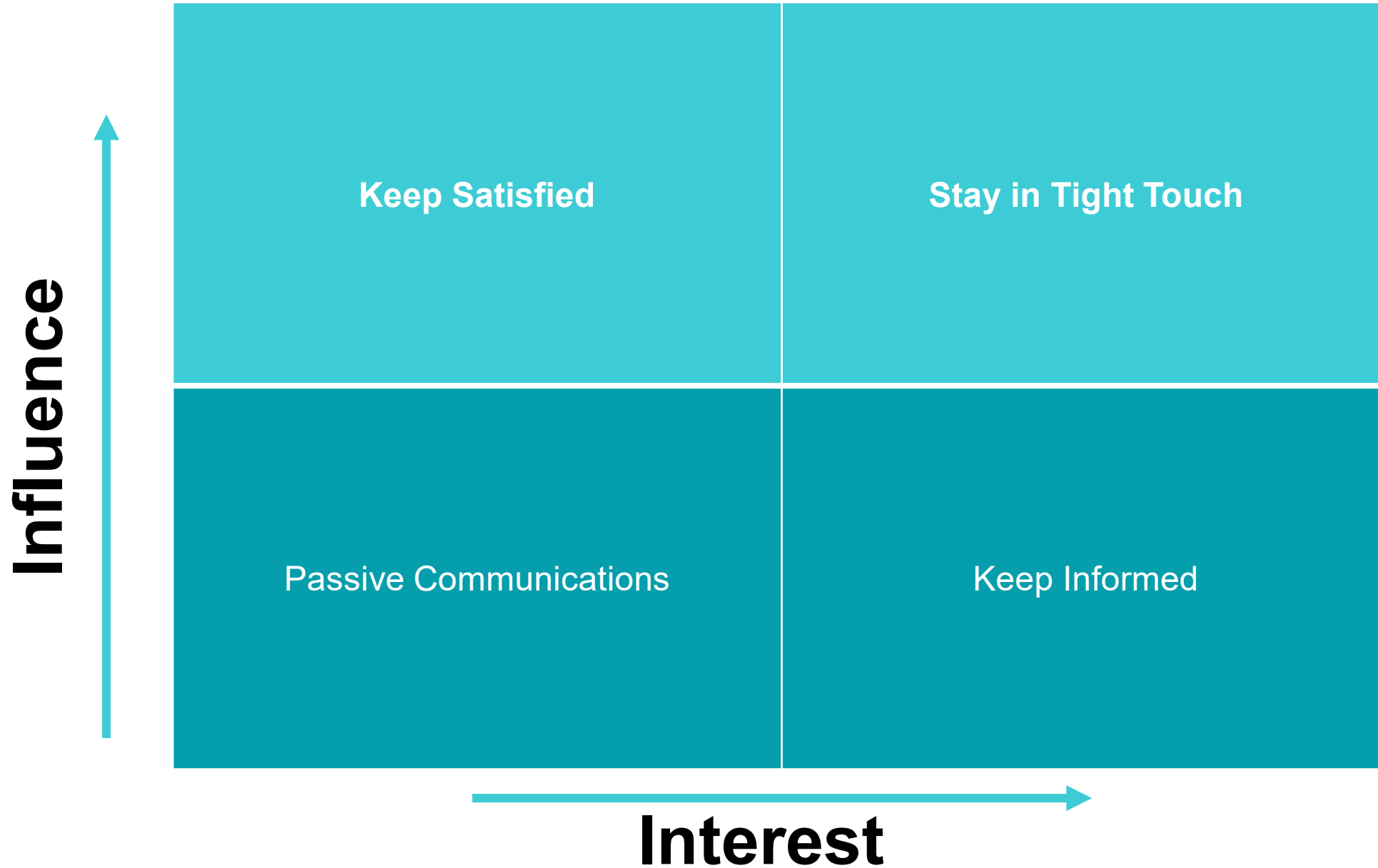


Understand Your Stakeholders

- Who are they?
- What do they believe?
- What concerns them?
- What motivates them?
- Who do they trust?
- Who do they listen to?
- What do they value?



Prioritize by interest and influence





Inform



Consult



Involve



Collaborate



Empower

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner	To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions	To work with the public to make sure that concerns and needs are considered and understood	To partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making	To place the final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise	“We will keep you informed.”	“We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns.”	“We will work with you to ensure your concerns and needs are directly reflected in the decisions made.”	“We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible.”	“We will implement what you decide.”
Situation	High Trust Low Controversy	Decent Trust Minor Controversy	Uncertain Trust Some Controversy	Declining Trust Significant Controversy	No Trust High Controversy
Technique	Letter mailed Newsletter Media	Interviews Small group consults Surveys/Focus Groups Open Houses World Cafe	Panels Advisory Groups Workshops Charettes	Panels Advisory Groups Workshops Charettes	Citizen Jury Referendum/Vote
Who	Passive Communications	Keep Informed	Keep Satisfied	Stay in Tight Touch	Staff

4

**USE SURROGATES
AND PARTNERS**



4. USE SURROGATES & PARTNERS



Apartment Dwellers

- Tenant Association
- Seniors Association
- Constituent Services



New Immigrant/Non-English Community

- Places of worship
- Social Services



Low-income residents

- Social service organizations
- Affordability advocates

5

STAY IN TOUCH



5. STAY IN TOUCH

When you
need to raise
rates
shouldn't be
the only time
you're
reaching out

How We
Treat Water

How to
Protect the
Source

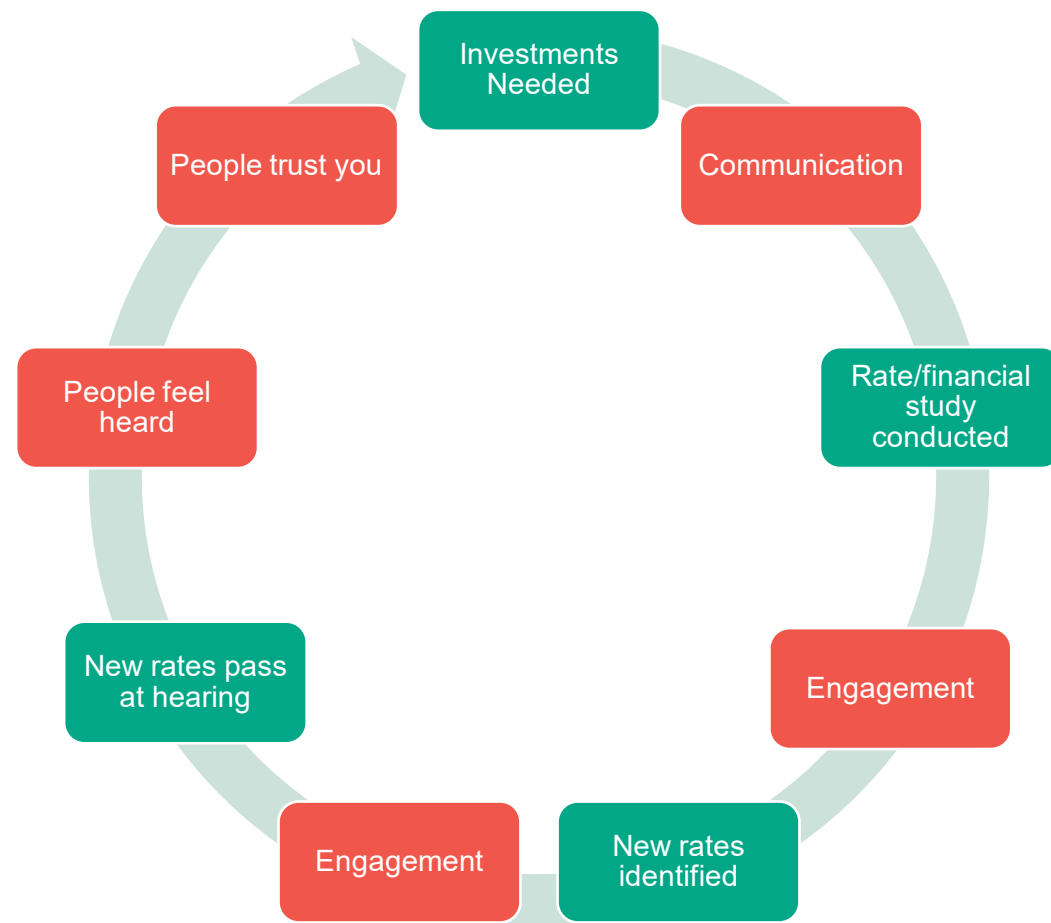
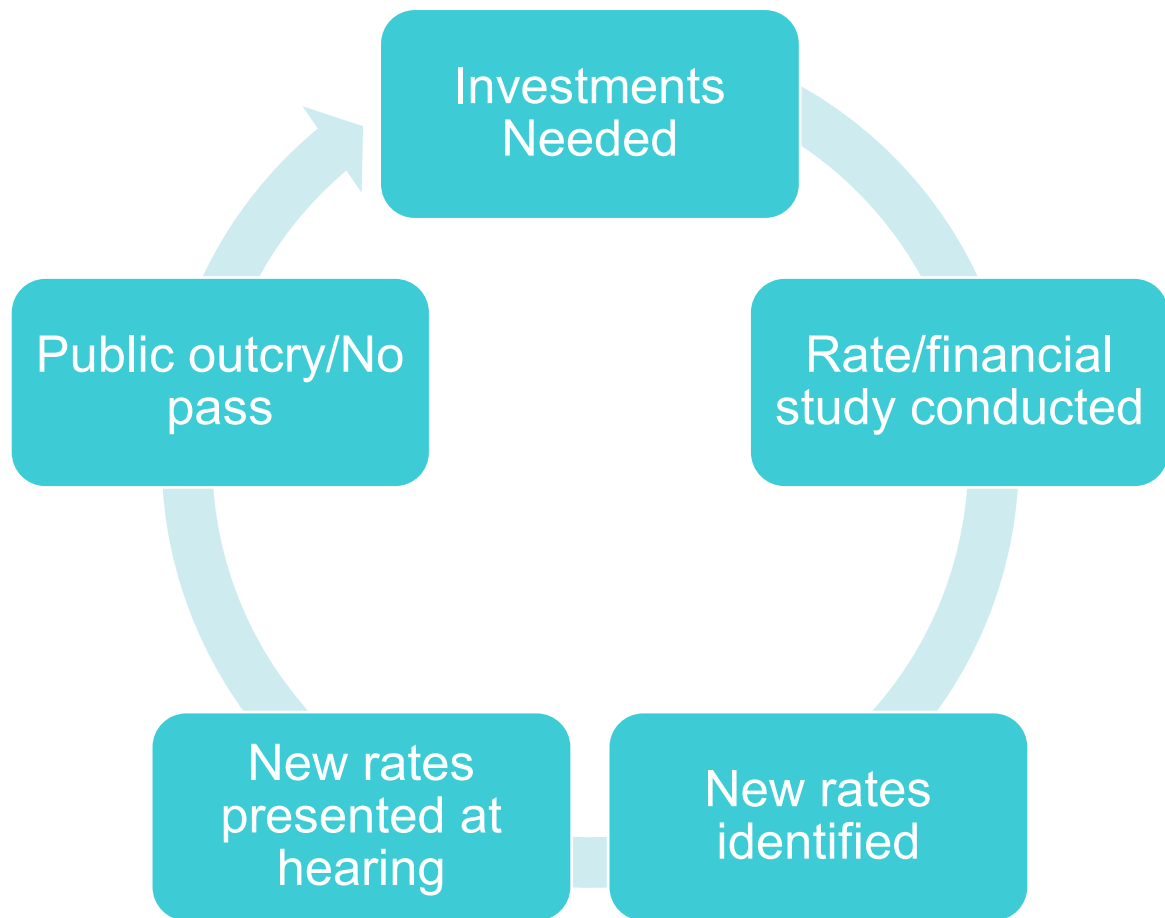
Employee
Recognition

Company
Awards

Bill
Assistance

Capital
Projects

Create a new outcome



The value of this process



Let's Keep Talking!

Contact:

Samantha Villegas, APR, Fellow PRSA

P: 571.577.7477 | svillegas@raftelis.com