The Impacts of a Civic Engagement Cohort Program for Water Quality Professionals

By Beth Kallestad, Scott Chazdon, Brian Fredrickson and Denise Stromme – October, 2018

Introduction
From 2012-2017 Leadership & Civic Engagement (LCE) Educators partnered with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to offer five civic engagement cohorts for water quality professionals around the state. The purpose of the cohorts was to:

- Build Networks
- Co-learn about water quality issues
- Enhance capacity to engage stakeholders

This poster reports on several evaluation efforts to understand the impacts these cohorts had on participants’ work and the engagement strategies that have been most effective in their communities.

Methods
- End-of-cohort retrospective surveys
- Cohort and Comparison group survey
- Brinkerhoff Success Case Method
- Ripple Effects Mapping

Participant Outcomes
Surveys & Interviews
Cohort participants feel more competent in using their skills for civic engagement than comparison group.

REM Themes
- Voices being heard
- Being inclusive
- Willingness to listen

Civic Engagement Impacts
“I don’t think there’s any way I would have ever tried it [civic engagement] had I not done the cohort. I think I get stuck in the same old rut of we don’t really engage those citizens, we just tell them things.”

“Used a simple process with farmers….They like to write their ideas—natural, cultural, recreational. They like to see their voices being heard and used in a planning process.”

Challenges
- People “starving” for conversations
- Neighbors stepped up in unexpected ways
- Awareness about water quality

References