



ALLIANCE FOR WATER EFFICIENCY

WATER EFFICIENCY & CONSERVATION SYMPOSIUM 2025

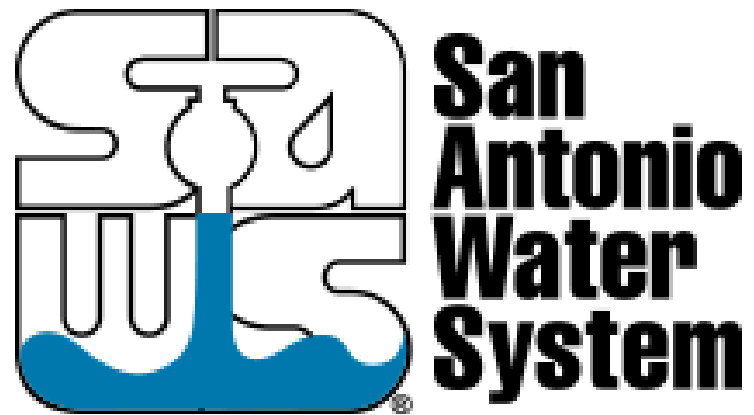
AUGUST 6-8, 2025 | CHICAGO, IL

When Less is More: Water Efficiency Interventions That Go Above and Beyond

Room 400 10:00-11:00am



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Leak Repairs: A Centralized Pilot to Serve Diverse Communities across Cook County

Rachael Burchett

Program Manager, Water Programs, Elevate, IL





Cook County
Leak Repair

Cook County Leak Repair

A centralized pilot designed to serve diverse communities across suburban Cook County



Agenda:

- The challenge
- The intervention
- Outcomes
- What's next



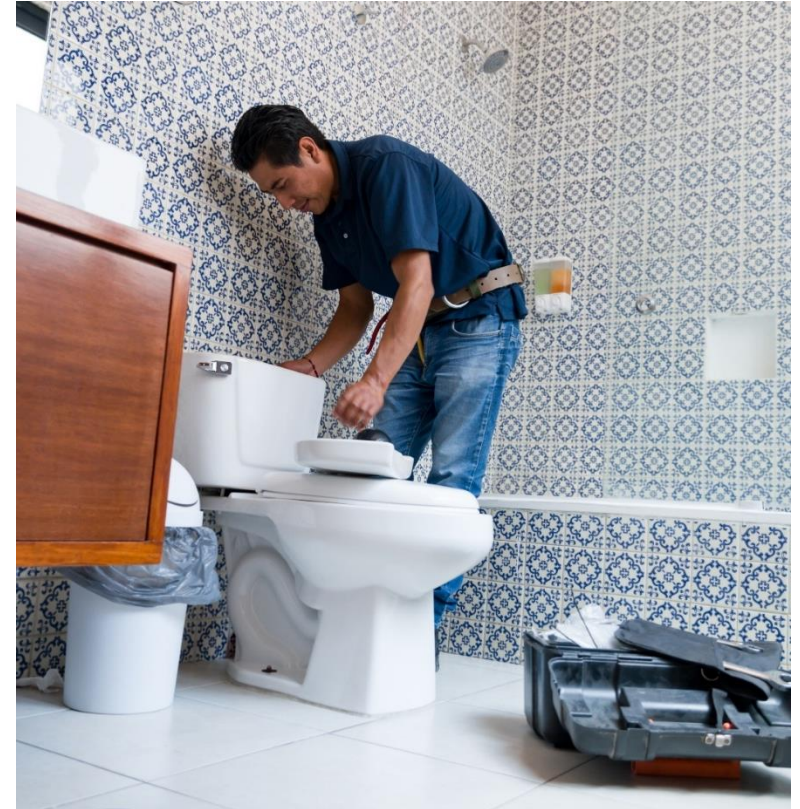
The Challenge

- In a typical year, approximately 15 million people in the US experience water shutoffs for nonpayment.
 - In suburban Cook County, we estimate that 16,000 - 48,000 shutoffs occur each year.
- **Our goal is to make sure everyone has safe and affordable access to water in their homes through leak repairs and water bill assistance.**



Case Study: Leaking Toilets & High Bills

- An elderly resident in Harvey had high water bills and growing water debt tracing back to 2018.
 - Monthly water bill was \$300-\$400
 - A payment plan for the outstanding debt added an additional \$150/month
 - Received max LIHWAP benefit (\$1,500) but remained at risk of shut off
 - Leak was ultimately traced to a running toilet



Inefficient Fixtures Can Lead to High Water Bills

Replace old toilets with WaterSense models & save



13,000

gallons of water savings
for the average family

Homeowners
can save



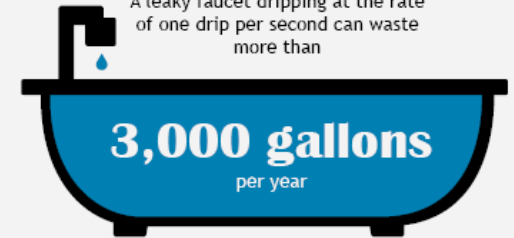
10 percent on their water
bills



Epa.gov/watersense

10

percent of homes have
leaks that waste 90
gallons or more per day



A leaky faucet dripping at the rate
of one drip per second can waste
more than

3,000 gallons
per year

Did you know?

Minor water leaks account for nearly



trillion gallons

of wasted water each year and is equal
to annual household water use in nearly



million homes



A shower leaking at

10 Drips

per minute wastes
more than

500

gallons per year

Repair

leaks by checking faucet washers
and gaskets for wear and replacing
them if necessary



The Intervention



**Cook County
Leak Repair**

Cook County Leak Repair provides **free plumbing repairs and fixture upgrades** to help families stop leaks and save money on water bills.

This program is administered by Elevate on behalf of Cook County Government. Funding is provided through the American Rescue Plan Act.



ELEVATE



**COOK COUNTY
BUREAU OF
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

- The Cook County Water Affordability Program will provide **immediate relief** to suburban Cook County residents struggling with water costs while creating **long-term solutions** for water affordability in the region.

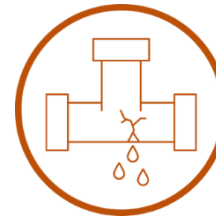
Program Components: Three Data-Supported Solutions



**Targeted Water
Bill Relief**



**Water Affordability
Technical Assistance**



**Cook County Leak
Repair Program**

for municipalities

for residents

What We Do



- **Water Efficiency:** toilets, showerheads, faucets
- **Large Leak Repairs**
- **Water Restoration** following a disconnection
- **Water Bill Relief**



**Cook County
Leak Repair**

About the Program



No Hidden or Unexpected Fees

Participation and repairs are free. We identify the cause of your high water usage and provide plumbing repairs and fixture upgrades to stop the leaks—at no cost to you.



Plumbing Upgrades

Fixture upgrades and repairs may include faucets, toilets, showerheads, and more.



Licensed Plumbers

Licensed plumbers will repair leaks, replace your outdated fixtures, and ensure you aren't wasting water or money.



Experienced, Friendly Team

The Cook County Leak Repair team is dedicated to helping you make your home more water-efficient.



Save Money

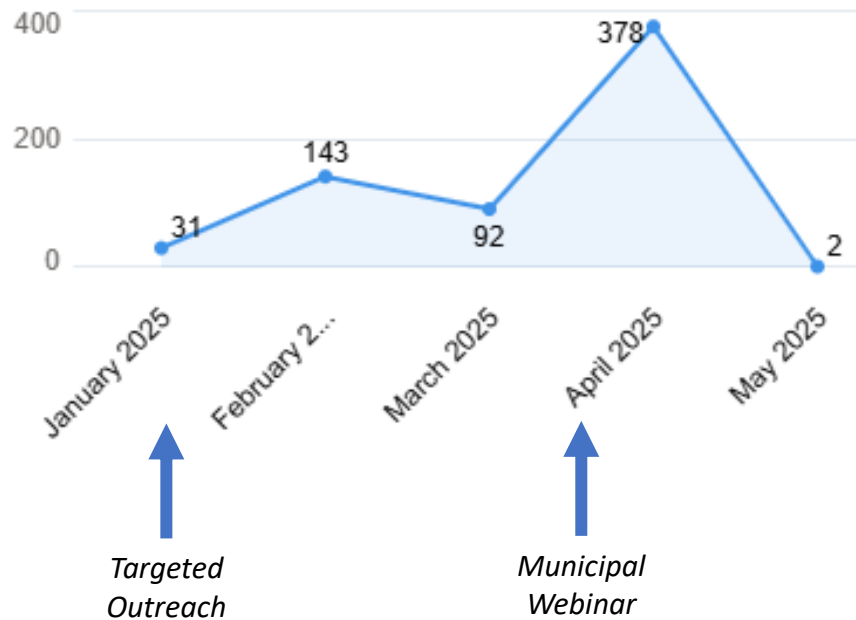
Addressing the water leaks in your home can save you hundreds of dollars every year.



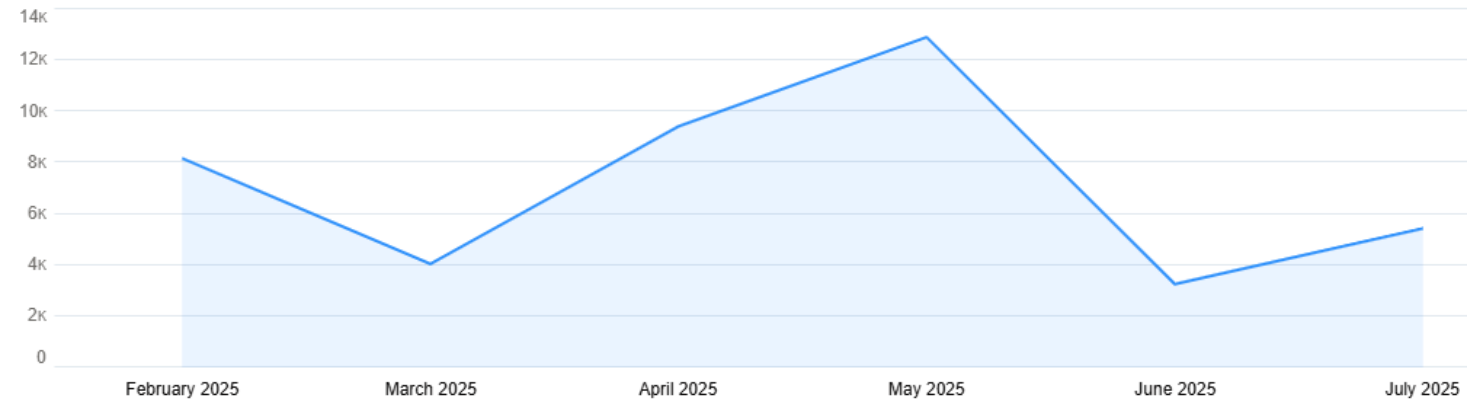
Cook County Leak Repair

Program Demand

Enrollments Received

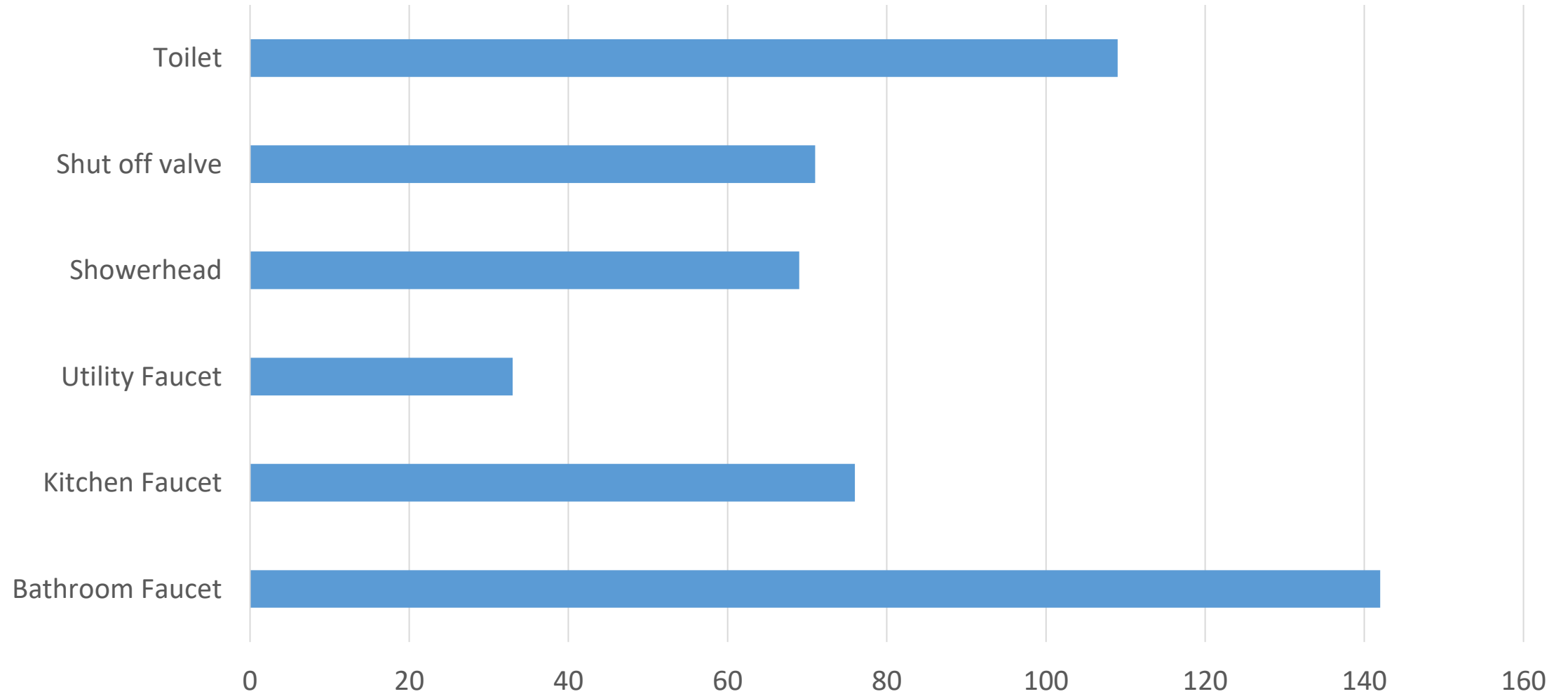


Water Bill Relief



60 bills paid
Total Amount Credited: \$43,242
Average Bill: \$718.40
Highest Bill: \$4,029.58*

Most Common Replacements



The Big Picture

- *“We saw a drastic spike in our monthly bill since there was a constant leak. The water would be running when we were away from home and we didn’t even realize it. This [program] has given me a greater peace of mind. I don’t have to get up at night to check that it’s not leaking. It’s really a peace of mind that was life changing. ”*
 - Raleigh, Park Forest
- Services Received:
 - Kitchen faucet & shut off valve replacement
 - Showerhead (2) replacement
 - Water bill relief \$900+
 - Shower diverter repair (pending)



Impact & What's Next



- ✓ **Estimated 500 households served** through leak repair, plumbing upgrades and debt relief
- ✓ **High demand for the program** shows that this is an area in need of future investment

Thinking Bigger

- Small, public utilities are limited in their ability to fund these types of programs on their own.
 - What other partnerships could make this possible?
 - What funding sources could support these programs?
 - What are the policy opportunities to support something like this?
- What would incentivize large utilities to run a program like this in-house?
- Where are people making sacrifices to pay their water bill? What interconnected expenses point to other potential partnerships?
- How could we more effectively identify those most in need (with the highest bills) by working directly with municipalities?



Contact

- Rachael Burchett
 - Program Manager, Water Programs
 - Rachael.Burchett@ElevateNP.org

Phone: 773-570-4547

info@CookCountyLeakRepair.org

CookCountyLeakRepair.org




**Cook County
Leak Repair**

Water Efficiency as a Public Health Strategy? Lessons from an Onsite Septic System Pilot in Alabama

Troy Benavidez

Leader, Government Relations and Policy, LIXL, NJ



The background of the slide is a photograph of a river, likely the Alabama River, with a bridge visible in the distance. The image is dark and moody, with a blue and black color palette. The river reflects the sky and the surrounding trees. The bridge is a simple structure with a single span. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

› Water Efficiency to improve Onsite Sanitation System (OSS): Insights from Alabama pilot program

Troy Benavidez, Leader Strategic Partnerships,
Government Relations and Policy, LIXIL

Water Efficiency and Conservation Symposium, Chicago, August 7th 2025

LIXIL

➤ THE CHALLENGE: SANITATION ACCESS IN THE ALABAMA BLACK BELT



10K homes lack access to safe sanitation:
Have access to centralized drinking water



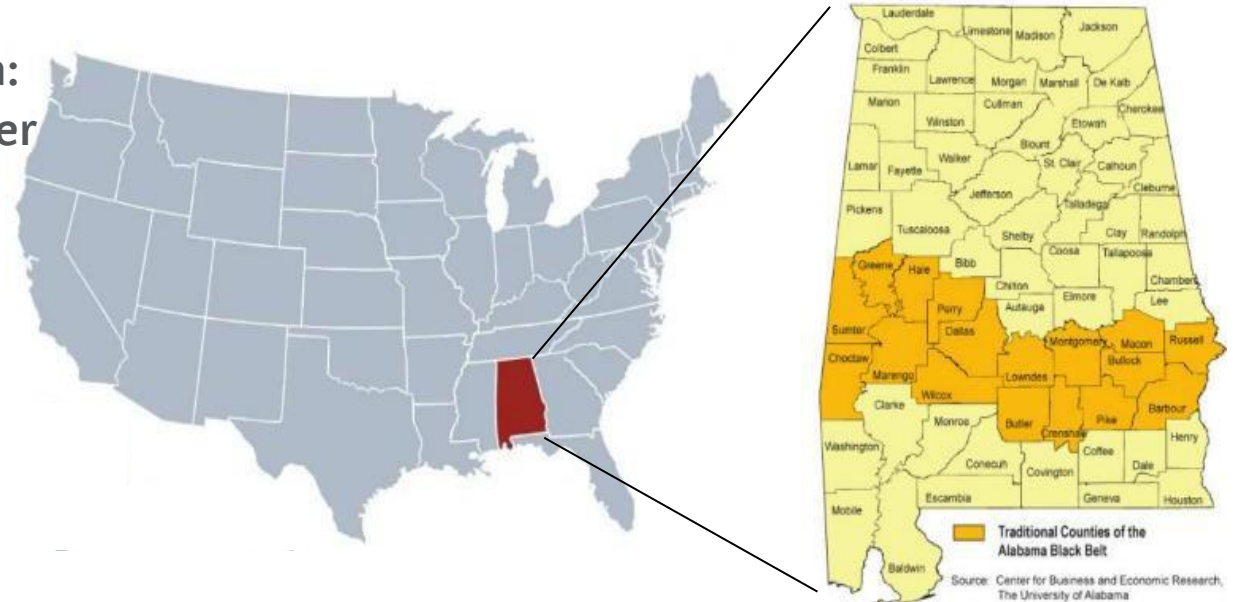
Majority beneath poverty level



Rural and remote with low population density



Majority mobile homes and aged infrastructure



› COMPLEX CHALLENGES REQUIRE INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

ENVIRONMENT



Clay soils, low permeability
High rainfall area.

SKILLED LABOR



Lack of skilled labor.

INFRASTRUCTURE



Rural area; limited centralized
sanitation system coverage.

FUNDING / COST



Funding restrictions for sanitation
systems.

BARRIERS TO INNOVATION



Innovation needed but
pathways unclear

TRUST



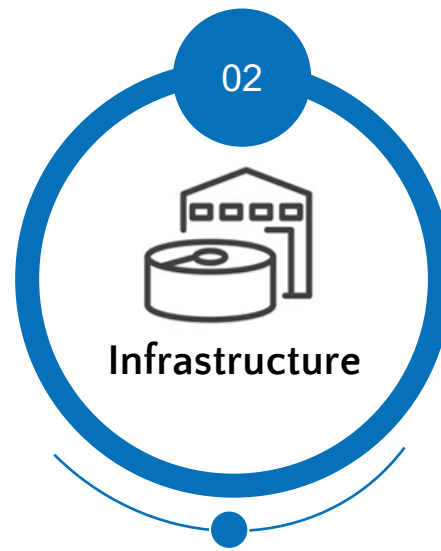
Lack of trust stemming from
decades of environmental
injustice.

➤ WHY FOCUS ON WATER EFFICIENCY?

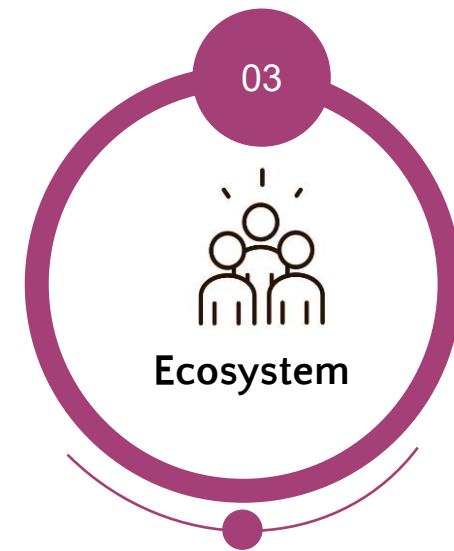
Water use efficiency provides immediate savings for households while driving long-term economic and sustainability benefits across the value chain



- Leads to lower water bills for households
- Prevents costly water damage
- **Can reduce OSS Capex through efficiency gains and right sizing**



- Reduces, defers or even eliminates new water supply and new water and wastewater infrastructure investment
- Lowers maintenance costs and reduces strain on ageing infrastructure



- Improves water resource management and long term sustainability
- Reduces environmental impact

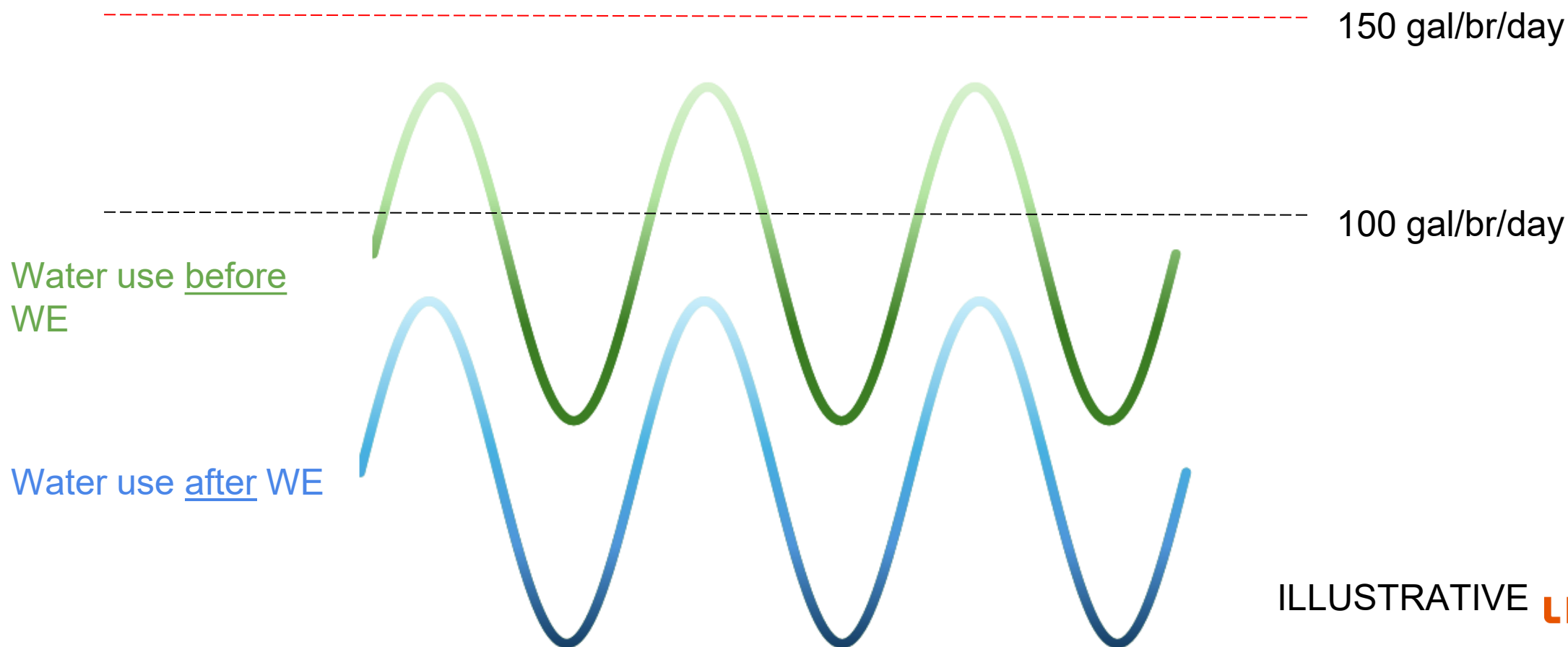
› iPIP PROGRAM FEATURES

- Plumbing assessments and WE plumbing retrofits in **78 households**
- Turnkey, efficient management; 6 month delivery timeline from plumber recruiting to final retrofit
- **Plumbing upgrades used as an incentive**
- **Capital cost savings on OSS enabled through variance granted on condition of WE retrofits.**
- iPIP program costs/households more than offset by the capital cost savings delivered for new traditional septic systems.
- Pilot model successfully demonstrated and ready to scale



› WATER EFFICIENCY WAS CRITICAL TO MEETING THE SIZING VARIANCE

Despite low baseline water use, **water efficiency was a necessary component** of meeting the obtained variance, de-risking overflow events for regulators.



➤ DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Cost savings stretched program funds and reduced cost burden for homeowners

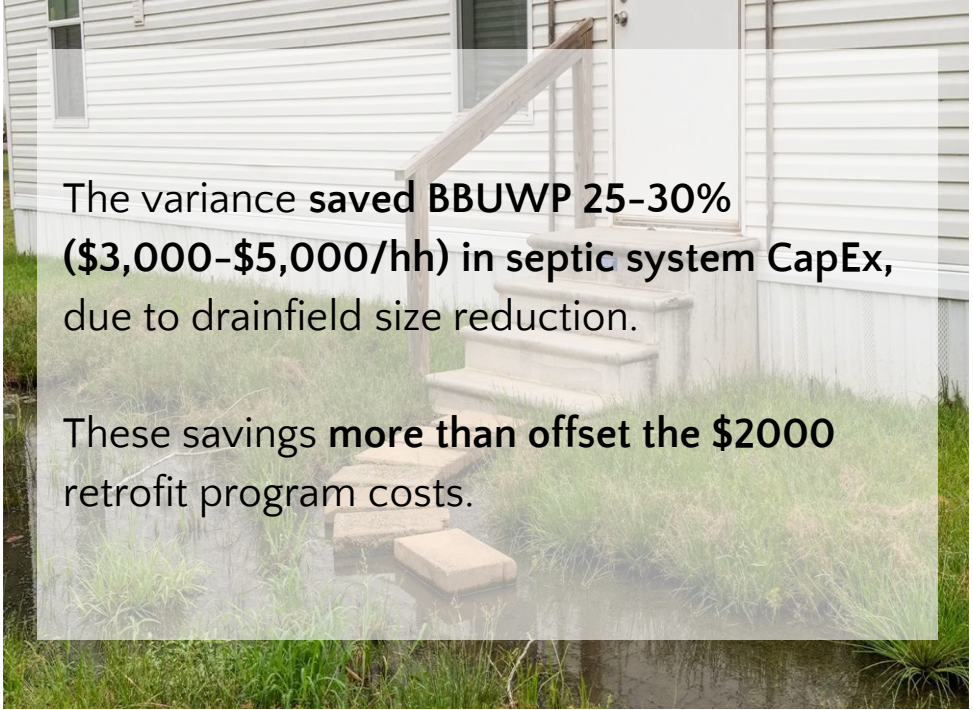
HOMEOWNERS



2/3 reported lower water bills equating to an estimated **\$8-10/month in savings.**

This **offset up to 50%** of the new sanitation maintenance fee, driving towards long term economic sustainability

PROGRAM

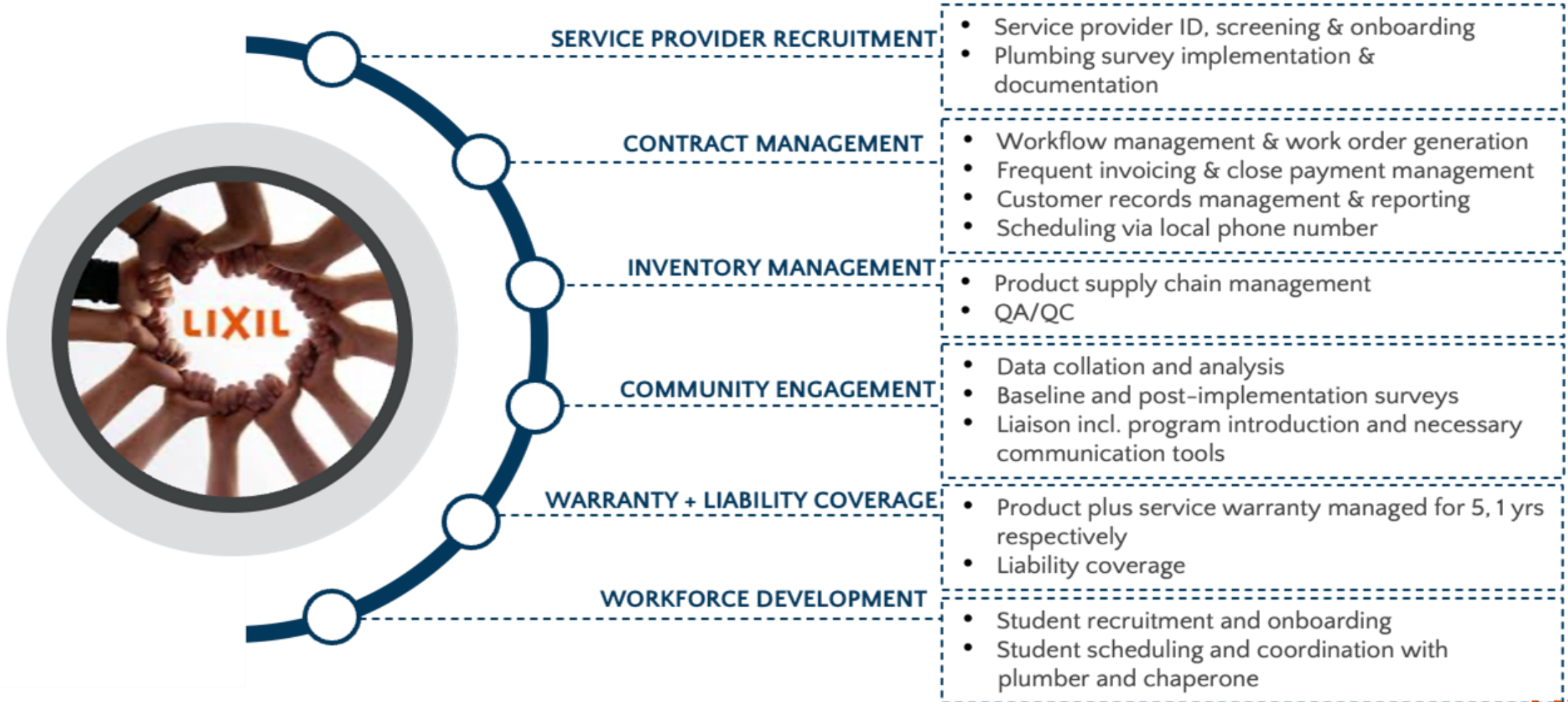


The variance **saved BBUWP 25-30% (\$3,000-\$5,000/hh)** in septic system CapEx, due to drainfield size reduction.

These savings **more than offset the \$2000** retrofit program costs.

> LIXIL'S OFFERING

Managing complexity and adapting preemptively to community and client needs



LIXIL

> iPIP BY THE NUMBERS

Program Basics

Project Duration:
July '24 – Jan '25

78 Households
Repaired

Plumbing Conditions

40% of toilets found
leaking

30% of toilet rated at
>1.6gpf

109 leaks identified
and repaired

Replacement Rates

62 new toilets (42%)

64 new bathroom
faucets (40%)

41 new kitchen faucets
(52%)

65 new showerheads
(57%)

Water Savings

5,800 gal/hh/year in
YR 1 and 3,800
gal/hh/year in
thereafter

452,400 gal/year in
year 1 and 294,400
gal/year in thereafter

Customer Satisfaction

100% happy with the
functionality and the
aesthetic of their
fixtures and valued
their money saving
potential.

100% gave the iPIP
plumber an 'excellent'
rating.

Program Cost /hh

\$2000 / hh (Appx)

including: product,
recruitment, management,
warranties

➤ EVOLVING PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER SANITATION ACCESS

In home plumbing installation program (iPIP) – multi-year, multi-partner commitment to closing the sanitation access gap

From contributor of water efficient fittings and fixtures to demonstrate a working model for 100 home pilot aimed at recruiting program participants and unlocking federal funding...



to implementation partner, delivering in-home water savings for cost effective onsite sanitation system roll out.

to solutions provider brokering partnership between BBUWP and ATU provider FujiClean and enabling design variance through water efficiency retrofits program design...



LARRY E. SPEAKS
& ASSOCIATES, INC.



> VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

“I don't worry about sewage on the ground, my grandchildren can play in my backyard when they come over and we can enjoy outside events.”

“The plumbing is working well, no more leaks and I am thankful for everything.”

“I have better efficiency toilets, faucets and don't have to worry about leaks.”

“[My] grandchildren don't have to worry about when to use the bathroom.”

“I notice that my [water] bill has dropped so if that's in regard to the system and the plumbing, that's great!”

Audience Q&A



Small Group Discussions



Discussion Prompts

Turn to your neighbors, and discuss the following prompts:

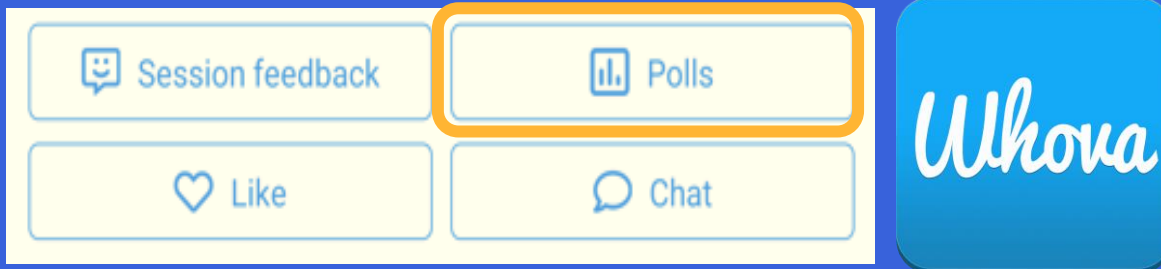
- Where do you see overlaps and opportunities among water efficiency and issues like affordability, energy, housing, or public health?
- If you were to design a pilot like the ones shared today, what local challenge would you address—and who would you partner with?
- What information or resources would you need to get started?



Live Polling

Open your Whova apps to participate in a few session polls!

Navigate to the Whova app → Go to this session → Click on “Polls” → Select and respond to the question you see displayed on the screen



Reminders & What's Next

Thank you all for participating in this session!

- **CEUs:** AWWA CA-NV Water Use Efficiency Practitioner



- **Next:** Tracked Sessions **(11:15 – 12:30 pm)**
 - CII Opportunities Part 2. The Inside Scoop: Tackling Indoor Water Use in CII Facilities **(Room 300)**
 - Stronger Together: Amplify through Partnerships **(Room 400)**



Thank You to Our Sponsors





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