

# Team Aqua Avengers Final Presentation

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**M** SCHOOL OF INFORMATION

# Overview of the Project

- Michigan struggles with the issue of its aging water system infrastructure and a significant lack of awareness among residents, particularly in vulnerable communities about what needs to be done to improve infrastructure.
- Socio-economic factors intersect with communication challenges to form a diverse set of infrastructure and information needs.
- Misinformation surrounding water infrastructure creates confusion, skepticism, and a decline in trust in public officials.
- Lack of community education and misinformation may lead to adverse health impacts, similar to past crises like the Flint Water Crisis.
- It's crucial to develop strategies to bridge the education gap and combat misinformation in order to improve Michigan's water infrastructure.

# Data Collection Process

## **Similarities between Public Service Official and Academic Professional**

**The goal of water infrastructure is to remain hidden from the public.**

- “I think [water infrastructure] used to be out of sight out of mind. We didn't want to be in the news. We wanted to be hidden.” (P-01)
- “Infrastructure is often not a major subject of discussion in social media due to its invisibility.” (P-02)

**The focus should be on ways to educate the public to support the cause.**

- “[The government is working on ] facilitating the conversation with people who are interested in what [the government is] doing. ”(P-01)
- “Implementing education about infrastructure can lead to increased respect for those who design, build, and maintain it.” (P-02)

# Data Collection Process

## P-01

**The city of Ann Arbor keeps the public informed by using digital distribution tools.**

- “[The city government] started to issue [the] newsletter and give people more real time information about their water quality. There are over 10,000 subscribers [and the city of Ann Arbor has] about 26,000 accounts.” (P-01)

**The city also tried to use other tools like “focus groups and surveys to get community feedback.” (P-01)**

## P-02

**Water infrastructure is not the most important issue to be fixed in certain areas**

- “Adding the burden of understanding infrastructure can be unreasonable due to their existing struggles.” (P-02)
- “The public is primarily interested in the services like clean water...rather than understanding infrastructure.” (P-02)

# Critical Reflection

- Perspective was limited to localized area and its population
- Only some stakeholder voices were heard directly
- Insights from the public are often too general and not constructive, with comments such as 'I do not know how trust could be restored' or 'I believe that nothing can be done to restore...' Even 'non-responses' combined account for more than one-third from the overall questionnaire conducted.
- Bias due to personal experiences of previously experiencing/not experiencing consequences of aging infrastructure

# Next Steps

- There must be a grassroots effort to fix aging infrastructure at the local level as state and federal funding and leadership is unreliable.
- Effective management of aging infrastructure requires public education while combating misinformation and public apathy to foster engagement even when not in crisis mode—act before fire catches eyebrow!
- Cooperation between all stakeholders is needed to solve the complex issue of aging infrastructure.
- Common sense education should focus on informing the community about water conservation, the importance of maintaining water quality, and the role of individuals in preserving water resources.

# Questions?

# References

Prompt:

Please summarize this into a single paragraph: Michigan is grappling with a critical issue concerning its aging water system infrastructure, and its most alarming aspect in regards to information is the pervasive lack of awareness among its residents, particularly those in vulnerable communities. This challenge is deeply rooted in the fact that many residents, including parents, children at home, and school students, are unaware of the potential health and safety risks of aging water infrastructure. The aging infrastructure is not merely a distant concern, but a present and immediate one, and the community's lack of knowledge on this matter exacerbates the problem.

Adding complexity to this issue is the widespread misinformation. Communicating false and misleading information concerning water infrastructure safety circulates widely, leading to confusion, mistrust, and skepticism within the community. This misinformation complicates educating residents about the genuine risks they face and further erodes trust in official sources of information. Failure to tackle the challenge of community education and misinformation can result in adverse health outcomes, financial losses for individuals and organizations, and reminiscent of past crises such as the Flint Water Crisis. Therefore, it is imperative to develop strategies that bridge the education gap to combat misinformation, ensuring the safety and security of Michigan's water systems for all residents.

Answer:

The state of Michigan is faced with a significant challenge regarding its aging water system infrastructure and a concerning unawareness of this issue among its residents, especially those in vulnerable communities. Many individuals, including families and students, remain uninformed about the potential health and safety risks associated with aging water infrastructure, turning the problem into a pressing concern. Complicating matters further is the spread of false information about water infrastructure safety, causing confusion, skepticism, and eroding trust in official information sources. The neglect of community education and the unchecked spread of misinformation could lead to harmful health effects and economic losses, reminiscent of severe crises like the Flint Water Crisis. Therefore, it's critical to devise strategies aimed at bridging the education gap and combating misinformation, to help safeguard Michigan's water systems for all its citizens.

Prompt: Summarize this text into three to four bullet points for a presentation slide:

The state of Michigan is faced with a significant challenge regarding its aging water system infrastructure and a concerning unawareness of this issue among its residents, especially those in vulnerable communities. Many individuals, including families and students, remain uninformed about the potential health and safety risks associated with aging water infrastructure, turning the problem into a pressing concern. Complicating matters further is the spread of false information about water infrastructure safety, causing confusion, skepticism, and eroding trust in official information sources. The neglect of community education and the unchecked spread of misinformation could lead to harmful health effects and economic losses, reminiscent of severe crises like the Flint Water Crisis. Therefore, it's critical to devise strategies aimed at bridging the education gap and combating misinformation, to help safeguard Michigan's water systems for all its citizens.

Answer:

The state of Michigan is struggling with the issue of aging water system infrastructure and a significant lack of awareness among residents, particularly in vulnerable communities.

Misinformation surrounding water infrastructure safety furthers the problem, creating confusion, skepticism, and a decline in trust in official sources of information.

The combination of neglect in community education and rampant misinformation holds potential for harmful health impacts and economic losses, similar to past crises like the Flint Water Crisis.

It's crucial to develop strategies to bridge the education gap and combat misinformation in order to protect Michigan's water systems.



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