

COLORADO GROWING WATER SMART

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

MARCH 1-3, 2027

The Land and Water Challenge

Colorado is navigating significant uncertainty around water availability, requiring local jurisdictions to fundamentally rethink water use and to assume new leadership roles.

Historically, planning for water resources and land use have been conducted separately. Yet, where and how we build impacts the quantity of water needed and the quality of water that supports our ecosystems.

Elected officials, water resource managers, and land use planners can increase resilience and create water smart communities even as populations grow by collaborating to identify and implement strategies that address local and regional water concerns.

Growing Water Smart



The Growing Water Smart Workshop

The Growing Water Smart workshop brings together community decision-makers in water and land use planning to collaborate on sustainable water use through planning, public engagement, communication, and policy implementation. Sonoran Institute and Denver Water are now accepting applications from municipalities, counties, and water district managers for the upcoming Denver Water Growing Water Smart workshop.

Location: Denver Water, Denver, CO

Date: March 1-3, 2027

Eligibility: Municipalities, counties, and water district members in the Denver Water service area.

Application Deadline: December 4, 2026

Costs: The workshop is free, including lodging and meals aside from dinner on the second night. Participants cover their own travel.

What makes this workshop unique?

Time: A rare opportunity to for local leaders to focus - away from competing priorities - on the connection between water and land use with a cross departmental and cross sector team.

Structure: A majority of the workshop is spent in team work sessions. Each team gets nearly twelve hours of professionally facilitated discussion to help teams develop a concrete plan of action.

Access: Staff from some of the state's leading organizations working to integrate water and land use and address drought, including the Sonoran Institute, Denver Water, the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Department of Local Affairs, CSU Colorado Water Center, and many additional leading water experts.

Action: The work sessions allow teams to create action plans developed by consensus. After the workshop, teams can apply for follow-up technical assistance grant funds to implement key components of the action plan.

Network: Spend time learning from your peers, and upon completion, teams join a Peer Network of communities across the Colorado River Basin who have participated in the GWS workshop.



J Armando Photography for Sonoran Institute



Jeremy Stapleton with Aerial Support by LightHawk

Program at a Glance

The Growing Water Smart workshop offers your team the time to collaborate and focus on the water resource challenges that overlap with growth and land use planning in your community. The program is comprised of the following elements:

Team-Oriented Work Sessions: Teams assess community data, trends, and existing policies; identify land use strategies to become more water resilient; develop succinct messaging around water; and develop an action plan to implement these strategies. Sessions are facilitated by professionals in the field who guide teams through strategic discussions.

Learning Best Practices: Presentations and written materials provide key knowledge around integrating water conservation, efficiency, reuse, and watershed protection into existing and future development.

Peer-to-Peer Networking: Participants meet and exchange ideas with peers from other jurisdictions and past workshop participants.

Follow Up Funding

Upon workshop completion, teams become eligible to apply for up to \$10,000 in technical assistance funding to help carry out a water and land use integration strategy identified in the team's action plan.

Previous projects have included:

- Land use code audits and policy recommendations
- The inclusion of water in Comprehensive Plan updates
- Collaborative stakeholder engagement and facilitation
- Metrics to measure water and land use integration

Eligibility and Team Composition

This workshop is designed to build and foster collaborative teams committed to taking local action. Applicants build a team of six to eight individuals with diverse knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to secure their community's water future and implement their action plan. Team composition varies to reflect the needs of each community, and often includes:

- Staff working on plans and policies around land use and development **(required)**
- Staff working on local water supply, efficiency, and/or drought preparedness **(required)**
- Elected officials **(highly recommended)**
- Economic development leaders
- Sustainability and resilience officers
- Parks and public works staff
- Community outreach and engagement staff
- Representatives of regional planning organizations
- Local non-profit organizational representatives
- Community task force members
- Consultants contributing to your current water and land use efforts

Multi-jurisdictional or regional teams may also apply. In this case, one or more representatives from each local government should be represented, and the team should be in pursuit of a common water goal.

"The Growing Water Smart workshop has been one of the most effective, best facilitated, and well-organized working sessions I've ever been a part of. I feel like our efforts just got jump-started by years, and our game plan is so much clearer and well thought out."

Marty Pool | City of Durango

Selection Criteria

This workshop is targeted to serve municipalities, counties, and water district members in the Denver Water service area. In this round, we will select a maximum of **seven community teams** to participate in the program, creating a setting where teams can truly get to know their peers while fostering a diverse range of communities.

Teams will be selected based on:

- Team has a connection to Denver Water's service area.
- Team composition includes required representatives.
- Demonstrated local commitment to addressing water sustainability.
- Severity of need around current and/or projected water conditions.
- Capacity to foster dialogue or partnerships among agencies and entities overseeing land use planning and water resource management.

This Workshop Is Made Possible Through Sponsorship By:



Denver Water's mission is to serve our customers by being a national leader in delivering clean water, operating and maintaining a reliable and resilient system, and protecting the water resources of the West.

How to Apply

To apply to participate in Growing Water Smart, please download this pdf and complete the application beginning on page four. Email the completed application to:

growingwatersmart@sonoraninstitute.org.

Deadline

Applications are due on Friday, **December 4, 2026**.

Contact Information

We are here to help! If you are interested in applying or have questions about the program, please contact:

Eliza Stokes, Program Manager, Growing Water Smart
Sonoran Institute

growingwatersmart@sonoraninstitute.org

Visit growingwatersmart.org for more information.

Funding and Financial Assistance

This Growing Water Smart workshop is offered free of charge to selected teams, thanks to the generous support of Denver Water. We actively fundraise to sustain and expand this program, ensuring that all communities can access the tools and resources needed to address water and land use challenges.

The only cost for selected teams is the travel to the workshop location and dinner on the second night. If this presents a challenge for your team, please contact Eliza Stokes to discuss financial assistance options.

Growing Water Smart is a joint program of the Sonoran Institute and the Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy.

About the Sonoran Institute

The Sonoran Institute's mission is to connect people and communities with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them. Learn more about how you can help expand programs like Growing Water Smart at SonoranInstitute.org/Membership/

About the Babbitt Center

The Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy, a center of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, seeks to advance the integration of land and water management to meet the current and future water needs of Colorado River Basin communities, economies, and the environment.

Connect With Us

Go to SonoranInstitute.org to learn about our programs, history, and recent news. Or find us on social media:

 facebook.com/sonoraninstitute

 [@sonoraninstitute](https://twitter.com/sonoraninstitute)

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BABBITT CENTER
FOR LAND AND WATER POLICY

A Center of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy



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Team Composition

1a. Provide the names, titles, organizations, and email addresses of the 6-8 team members who will participate in the workshop. (For the greatest impact, we recommend including mid-to-senior level staff on your team.)

Category Represented	Name	Title	Organization	Email
Land Use & Development Planning/Policy (Required)				
Water Supply, Efficiency, and/or Drought Preparedness (Required)				
Elected Official (Highly Recommended)				

1b. Please briefly describe why you chose this combination of participants to attend and represent your community at the Growing Water Smart workshop.

1c. Which team member will serve as the lead for pre-workshop communications?

Water Awareness

2a. Please describe your community's most pressing water challenges. (Examples may include water demand exceeding supply, stormwater management/flooding, water quality/watershed health, etc.)

2b. What are the biggest barriers to addressing these challenges? (Examples may include lack of political will, competing priorities, community support, funding, etc.)

2c. What is your community's projected population growth rate? Is land use in your community changing, and if so, in what sectors (residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural)?

Plans & Processes

3a. What plans currently govern or significantly address your water goals? Are any of these plans being updated now or in the near future?

3b. Is your community in the process of updating any land use codes or standards (such as landscape, zoning, subdivision, building, or plumbing code)? If so, please describe.

Collaboration

4. How are your land use planning and water resources staff currently collaborating around water and land use? Please describe any opportunities or challenges that you want to address during this workshop.

5. What are the opportunities for collaboration among communities in your region toward water resilience, if any?

Desired Outcomes

6. What outcomes does your community hope to achieve from participation in the Growing Water Smart workshop?

7. Do you have any further comments or questions that have not yet been addressed? (Optional)

Thank You!

Please email your completed application to growingwatersmart@sonoraninstitute.org.