

AGENDA

8:00: Light Breakfast Available

**8:30-9:00: Opening Interactive Session:
Pre-Survey Review & AI 101**

9:00-9:30: Keynote: Navigating the AI Frontier: Transforming Communications & Strategy for Water Utilities An overarching look at how AI is fundamentally reshaping communication, public relations, and strategic decision-making in regulated industries. This keynote will explore the “why” and “what's next” of AI, focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities for water utilities, including maintaining public trust and bolstering infrastructure resilience. It will also briefly touch on the landscape of major AI players and emerging trends that will impact the industry.

15 Minute Break

9:45-10:30: Leading External Affairs in the AI Era: Culture, Judgment and New Ways of Working

Generative AI changes what's possible about how your team works. But the hard part isn't the technology—it's leading the shift. How do you move an experienced, relationship-driven team from individual experimentation to systematic adoption? How do you build a culture where AI sharpens strategic thinking rather than just speeding up production? This session will explore what it looks like to lead an external affairs operation with skillfulness and wisdom when the ground is shifting—covering the real-world leadership challenges of driving meaningful adoption, maintaining quality and judgment, and ensuring AI amplifies your team's strategic value.

15 Minute Break

10:45-11:30am: Beyond the Buzzwords: Generative AI as a Strategic Thinking Partner for Policy & Advocacy This session will demonstrate how generative AI can elevate and speed “deep judgment work” in government affairs and strategic communications. Attendees will learn a framework for using AI to pressure-test policy positions (e.g., rate affordability, PFAS positioning), surface blind spots, stress-test assumptions before engaging with opponents or regulators, and develop robust advocacy strategies.



Strategic Connections:
AI in Water Utility Engagement & Reputation

May 19, 2026 | PHILADELPHIA

Prepare to elevate your influence at this full-day, in-person community engagement seminar relevant to all roles within your water company, from communications and legal to business development and executive leadership. The seminar will explore how AI is revolutionizing how we engage, advocate and manage reputation. Learn to leverage AI for everything from critical policy analysis and hyper-personalized customer outreach to ethical implementation and future-proofing your team in the public sphere.



NAWC Community Engagement Seminar

Navigating the AI Frontier to Enhance Community Engagement, Stakeholder Relations and Communications

Tuesday, May 19, 2026 | Philadelphia, PA

AGENDA

LUNCH: 11:30-12:15pm

12:30-1:15pm: Hyper-Personalized Engagement: AI for Next-Gen Customer Communications and Reputation Management Dive into how AI analyzes diverse customer data (e.g., consumption patterns, demographics, reported issues) to segment audiences and deliver highly tailored messages. Also learn how AI-powered tools provide unparalleled real-time media monitoring (traditional and social media), sentiment analysis, and issue identification to support proactive reputation management.

15 Minute Break

1:30-2:15pm: Owning the Narrative: AI for Digital Discoverability & Content Strategy In an AI-driven information landscape, controlling your utility's online narrative is paramount. This session will equip water utilities with strategies to leverage generative AI for superior online visibility and to ensure their public information is the "source of truth." It covers advanced AI for SEO, content creation (blog posts, FAQs, service descriptions), and optimizing for generative AI interfaces (like chatbots and AI search engines) to ensure accurate synthesis and presentation of critical utility information (e.g., water quality reports, emergency procedures). We'll also explore different AI engines (Gemini, Copilot, etc.) and their strengths for content strategy.

15 Minute Break

2:30-3:15: Ethical Foundations: Navigating Bias, Data Privacy and Trust in AI Communications A foundational discussion on the ethical imperatives of using AI in public-facing roles for water utilities. This session will delve into ensuring fairness and mitigating bias in AI outputs, rigorously protecting sensitive customer data, maintaining transparency in all AI interactions (e.g., clearly disclosing chatbot use), and building and maintaining public trust in AI-driven communications. Legal and regulatory compliance considerations will be thoroughly reviewed.

WRAP-UP: 3:15-4:00pm