

A Strategy for Engaging Stakeholders on *Lead in* Drinking Water

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Introduction

Emma is a young child in Flint, Michigan. Each morning, she fills a bright plastic cup from the kitchen tap and drinks, unaware that the water contains far too much lead. After a few months, her strength fades, and her schoolwork slips - the change in her body matches what doctors now link to the 2014-2016 Flint water crisis. Pipes were switched without proper safeguards, and officials failed to disclose information while lead seeped into homes. More than one in four Flint children ingested lead every day (James, 2022). The disaster forced the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to rewrite its Lead and Copper Rule. In 2024, the agency established a stricter trigger level, mandated that every city map its lead pipes, and instructed water systems to remove all lead service lines from the ground within 10 years (ASDWA, 2024).

The country still has 9-12 million lead pipes that supply water to homes, most of which are located under streets laid before 1940 in older cities (NRDC, 2023). Rhode Island alone is estimated to hold 75,000 to 120,000 of those pipes, primarily in Providence and Pawtucket; the bill to remove them totals \$1.8 billion (NRDC, 2023; Rhode Island Current, 2024). Progress is impeded by fragmented administrative records across different towns and by limited funding. A Rhode Island Department of Health dashboard released in February 2025 shows that four out of ten service lines statewide have no recorded material; in low-income neighborhoods, the uncertainty raises the danger (RIDOH, 2025a; Rhode Island Current, 2025). Immediate, coordinated inter-agency action is required among all relevant stakeholders and reduce the number of lead pipes by one-fifth each year; that clear target must guide all decisions.

Lead in the body can cause permanent physiological damage in children and adults. A child who carries only a trace of lead in the blood still loses brain cells that never grow back, scores lower on intelligence tests, and develops behavioral issues that act like a full year of lost school. A lead-burdened adult faces higher blood pressure, a greater chance of a fatal heart attack, plus kidneys that slowly stop working - each case ends in a death that never had to happen, and healthcare costs borne by the public sector. Because the damage falls hardest on families who already live on a financial precipice and in substandard housing, the issue becomes a civil rights concern. In South Providence, one in seven children tested in 2024 had a blood lead level above the safety limit. Rules exist - yet officials enforce them unevenly. Almost half of the country's water systems submit incomplete maps of their lead pipes, and small municipalities lack the financial resources to meet even the basic standards.

This paper presents a plan to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for replacing lead service lines and addressing health disparities. This strategy employs a Senior Policy Analyst role to aggregate data, work closely with partners, and advocate for rules that prioritize fairness. The plan shifts away from traditional top-down regulatory enforcement and shifts toward collaborative governance. It uses the APIC model—Authority, Power, Interests, Constraints—to map who holds what power and identify stakeholder objectives and operational constraints. Each group understands its role in shaping the policy.

Authority refers to the legal right to act, such as the powers granted to an executive or a legislature. Power refers to implicit forms of influence, such as the ability to decide which topics

are discussed and debated. Interests refer to the benefits or harms that a person or group anticipates from a decision. Constraints are rigid limits on action; federalism imposes many of these limits, for example, the power of one branch to overrule another.

If the APIC model is laid on top of Kingdon's multiple streams framework, the moment when three things converge - a clear problem shown by strong data, a ready policy like the federal Lead and Copper Rule Improvements, and a political climate mobilized by public sentiment - releases both money and public trust (Kingdon, 2011). New Jersey replaced 99% of its lead service lines within 3 years, and the city is providing evidence that the combined approach is effective (NRDC, 2021).

Rhode Island now faces a decisive moment. House Bill 6304 and Senate Bill 0982, both signed into law in 2025, require every water utility to count its lead pipes and publish the list; however, some parties still resist because they fear the associated costs (LegiScan, 2025a, 2025b). A recent \$26.3 million loan to Providence Water in April 2025 will accelerate pipe removal; however, the state-level forecast indicates only little progress toward the 2033 deadline set by the Lead Poisoning Prevention Act (RIIB, 2025; Clean Water Action, 2025).

Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

The LCRI (Lead and Copper Rule Improvements) policy ecosystem focuses on a single, precise aim: to provide every child with water that will not harm them. People who live with the pipes every day sum up that aim in four concise terms: “water that we trust.” The phrase emerged from neighborhood listening sessions - it reflects how much residents want to stop worrying every time they turn on a tap. The same four words provide official and unofficial players with a starting point for working together, despite significant power asymmetries among stakeholders (Birkland, 2020, pp. 114-115). Agency staff have the legal authority to order fixes; yet they often face funding, staffing, or time deficits. Volunteer testers, parent groups, and local advocates observe what happens and rally their neighbors - yet they need accessible channels and shared data to take action. The APIC framework categorizes these roles into four distinct dimensions: what rules allow, who holds leverage, who stands to win or lose, and what limits each side—revealing overlaps where coalitions can form.

To provide a clear overview, Table 1 summarizes key stakeholders using the APIC framework.

Stakeholder	Authority	Power	Interests	Constraints
EPA	Issues nationwide drinking water rules under the Safe Drinking Water Act and decides how to	May audit local agencies and issue written directives to enforce compliance.	Wants every public water system to meet national standards.	Political changes and lawsuits may delay or overturn EPA regulations.

	spend money from the federal infrastructure law.			
RI DEM & RIDOH	Enforce the Lead and Copper Rule in Rhode Island, issue permits, and monitor blood lead data.	Brings together other actors and proposes policy changes.	Keeps federal money flowing and reduces health disparities tied to lead exposure.	Per-capita spending on public health is approximately 20 percent below the national average, with staff levels being low.
Local Water Departments (e.g., Providence Water)	Takes samples from taps, maps service lines, and replaces lead pipes.	Controls the physical system or sets customer rates.	Avoids state penalties and keeps costs down for ratepayers.	Budgets are thin - customers dislike rate increases.
RI General Assembly	Passing or rejecting bills also sets annual spending plans.	Schedules hearings and decides which bills advance.	Maintains a balanced budget against local service demands.	Partisan conflicts slow action - most legislation appears only after a crisis.
RI Infrastructure Bank	Apportions loans alongside grants to cities and water utilities.	Adds conditions to every award.	Speeds up delivery of projects with clear, visible benefits.	Loan paperwork takes time - the staff size is small for the workload.
Residents & Neighborhood Groups	Receive notice when results exceed state limits and have a voice under SDWA.	Organize petitions, attend public meetings, plus alert officials to problems.	Obtain clean water without big price rises.	Have minimal cash reserves and hold no direct control over budgets.

Interest Groups (e.g., Clean Water Action)	File suit under environmental laws, but also publish detailed reports.	Mobilizes voters and lobbies legislators.	Secures protection for communities that bear disproportionate risk.	Operate on limited funds while facing strong opposition.
Media	Protected by First Amendment rights.	Selects the facts and tone that the public hears.	Holds agencies accountable while maintaining audience share.	Tends toward sensational stories or relies on a narrow set of sources.
Experts (e.g., Brown University)	Supply peer-reviewed results and technical advice.	Shape policy through alliances with agencies also advocacy groups.	Advance their research programs.	Must collaborate with partners to move findings into regulation.
Native American Communities (e.g., Narragansett Tribe)	Retains consult rights under federal law on permits or projects that affect ancestral land.	Uses cultural standing to influence community decisions.	Safeguards the health of tribal members and the quality of local waters.	Decades of distrust, combined with limited funds, complicate engagement.

Table 1: Summary of Key Stakeholders Using the APIC Framework

Official Actors (Governmental)

The EPA carries out the Safe Drinking Water Act and the LCRI. It allocates \$15 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including \$141 million over five years for lead service line replacement (EPA, 2024b). Congress grants the agency the legal authority to establish national rules and tie federal funding to them. The agency also guides the agenda by issuing audits and updating guidance, such as the 2025 templates that instruct water systems on public notification.

One straightforward way to distinguish between “authority” and “power” is to treat authority as the legal right to set and enforce rules, and power as the actual ability to persuade people to follow them. This distinction can be analogized to the relationship between a conductor and an orchestra.

The EPA has the legal authority to set lead rules, and its power is evident in its allocation of grant money to utilities that submit complete lists of lead pipes. A 2019 case from Rhode Island

illustrates the point. The Department of Environmental Management exercised its legal authority to order a town to install stormwater controls. After the order was issued, the agency used its influence to help the same town secure additional state funds, transforming a regulatory dispute into a collaborative initiative that completed the upgrades more quickly. Routine audits do more than identify non-compliance - they also identify opportunities for utilities to save money and to try new methods, providing enforcement mechanisms for Esty's 'green to gold' concept. Stakeholders want to avoid another Flint, verify inventory data to reduce the risk of lawsuits, and distribute costs equitably. Unreliable data that resulted in legal action (*AWWA v. EPA*), changing political priorities that previously delayed the lead regulations, and standard rules that ignore local differences—like in Rhode Island, where managing multifamily homes requires approvals from multiple owners to access private pipes—are all hurdles we face.

State agencies, such as DEM and the Department of Health, enforce the LCRI, issue corrosion control permits, and monitor blood lead levels in children. Their budgets are still 20% below the national average, and lawmakers continue to oppose unfunded mandates (NASBO, 2023; RIDOH, 2025b). In 2024, audits revealed that 25% of water systems did not collect samples properly (RIDOH, 2025b). The agencies' legal right covers state oversight or the new 2025 data map (RIDOH, 2025a). Their power becomes apparent when they convene stakeholders and advocate for policy reform. They want to stay eligible for federal funds and close health gaps - yet tight budgets, federal conditionalities, and limited personnel hamper them. A single example illustrates why the shortfall matters: if a small system spends \$500,000 to meet the rule, the state later avoids an estimated \$1.2 million in Medicaid bills by reducing lead-linked illnesses by ten percent. A break-even year arrives when savings equal the upfront cost. Medicaid already accounts for thirty percent of the state budget. Fiscal analysis supports investing in infrastructure that prevents illness rather than in healthcare that responds after people fall sick.

Neighborhood groups use social capital that sits idle, and this speeds up remediation work. The Providence Neighborhood Coalition, also called the South Providence Interfaith Coalition, can gather around 1,000 volunteer hours annually, handle direct mail campaigns, host meetings in church basements, and carry out canvassing activities. Free meeting rooms alone cut city costs. Residents who help contribute to operational decisions, such as map colors, survey dates, and stipend rates, transition from passive observers to active stakeholders. A first test is to let a neighborhood team write the SMS notification that warns of a main shut-off. When the text originates from trusted community sources, people perceive the initiative as a collective asset rather than as a state order.

Local water departments, such as Providence Water and the Portsmouth Water & Fire District, collect samples, map lead lines, and excavate lead lines (De Boer & Raaphorst, 2021). Six out of ten departments have no money for mapping; seven out of ten pipes were laid before 1930; customers reject 15% rate hikes (AWWA, 2022; Portsmouth Water, 2025). The departments' legal right covers day-to-day work under state permits. Their power rests on the valves they control and on the trust they keep with ratepayers. They want to keep costs low to avoid fines. They are held back by fiscal deficits, dissatisfied ratepayers, and the new duty to remove old galvanized pipes that the rule now considers lead-lined. A household-level lens contextualizes the data: an extra \$3 per monthly bill offsets an estimated \$200 in lifetime health costs for one

child. A nominal daily cost yields significant public health dividends. Models indicate that every dollar spent on pipes saves \$2 in medical bills.

The General Assembly controls state appropriations; it approved a \$50 million bond for 2025. It reacts to media coverage rather than systemic monitoring, not after routine patrols, and splits along party lines: Democrats support equity spending, while Republicans advocate cost-benefit analysis (McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984; Aberbach, 1990). Its legal right covers budgets and bills like H6304/S0982, which require utilities to post pipe maps (LegiScan, 2025a, 2025b). Its power is evident in committee hearings that decide which bills move forward. Members weigh tight budgets against the needs of sick constituents. Political polarization and crisis calendars block steady action. Montana provides a counterexample: conservative and liberal lawmakers there passed lead bills together after framing the issue as a matter of plain public health rather than politics.

The Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank distributes BIL dollars and revolving loans; however, 60% of the 2024 funds were pending paperwork (RIIB, 2024). To speed up the start, DEM posts a grant form that already holds the first ninety days of data, even when some blanks remain, because most refusals happen at this early stage. After the form clears the first check, teams that lack staff move to a fuller review and ask federal regulators for guidance - every move from one office to another adds weeks. Three choke points stand out - papers that never arrive, a reviewer pool that is too small and the federal signature that must appear. The bank's own legal rules decide who receives funds - the rules' conditions give the bank its control. The bank wants a fast, plain result - yet paper steps plus scant capacity hold the work back.

Unofficial Actors (Non-Governmental)

People shift policy when they vote, engage in public demonstrations, or contact local media outlets. Michigan showed that pattern (Canes-Wrone, 2015). In Rhode Island, many families lack awareness of the rules, and they live on very low incomes - in blocks where more than three out of ten people are poor, children carry twenty percent more lead in their blood, and tenants have no legal path to demand new pipes (RIDOH, 2024). The Safe Drinking Water Act states that every citizen has a formal participatory role - the law grants them the right to question the safety of their water. A group that feels harm triggers an oversight mechanism by telling reporters or elected officials. Their goal is clean water, but they do not want to finance infrastructure replacement. The primary impediment is a lack of money and direct control over city budgets. One clear win came from South Providence. A neighborhood club tested the water taps and found high lead levels. Families organized collectively, wrote a joint letter to City Hall, and maintained pressure until the city replaced the old lead pipes with new copper lines. Their work demonstrates that residents, once organized, can compel the state to act.

To give residents a stronger voice and allow quick fixes, the city can set up an SMS-based communication system. Under this system, residents observing water discoloration can submit immediate notification and receive a clear reply with instructions on next steps. Messages go both ways - anxiety is transformed into actionable measures, and people stay part of the safety effort. The plan adheres to CERC rules, keeping everyone informed while also engaging them. Any resident who does not speak English will still access the system. Each person selects a

language code when they sign up, and all subsequent texts are delivered in that language. Exclusion is eliminated - the system shows how to serve the whole neighborhood.

Rhode Island's Narragansett Indian Tribe operates its own water system in Charlestown, Rhode Island. In 2024, the Narragansett Water Department - North End system issued a warning to customers about lead. The tribe is not subject to state regulatory oversight on those matters. Federal law, such as the Clean Water Act, recognizes its sovereignty and gives it a consultative status when rules are drafted. What the group brings to the debate is a historical continuity, spiritual ties to every brook and pond, and a network of families that respects traditional leadership structures. What hinders participation is constrained budgets plus a century-old suspicion of state government. Outsiders seeking tribal assistance to inspect lead pipes should follow three rules set by the Native American Center for Excellence: meet with elders first, adhere to traditional customs, and provide the community with all necessary numbers and maps. This adaptation is reasonable because it addresses power imbalances similar to those in low-income urban neighborhoods, promoting inclusive data collection through joint water-testing sessions co-designed with tribal leaders (NACE, n.d.). When planners exclude Indigenous communities, the distance between those communities plus others increases. Earlier environmental justice cases show that harm rose when Indigenous people received no attention (OECD, 2015).

Clean Water Action Rhode Island files lawsuits against polluters and issues plain-language reports that the public can comprehend easily. Their steady pressure has pressured lawmakers to pass the 2025 notice laws, which now require alerts in multiple languages (Clean Water Action, 2025). Trade groups, such as the Rhode Island Realtors, attempt to weaken disclosure rules, fearing that mentioning lead will result in a five- to ten-percent reduction in property prices. The groups hold influence because they rally voters and lobby lawmakers. One side pursues environmental justice - the other side guards economic interests. However, both sides are concerned about maintaining stable property values. If Clean Water Action and the Realtors work together on effective lead-removal programs, they can preempt property devaluation triggered by disclosures. A joint project might center on a "Lead-Free Certificate" for houses - the paper informs buyers that the home is safe and boosts resale prices - as environmental and financial aims align. Stakeholders must collaboratively determine the key performance indicators (KPIs) required to evaluate the efficacy of the Lead-Free Certificate program. Writing the scorecard together turns former rivals into supporters and shows where both sides gain the same value. The certificate raises health standards plus keeps property values steady - groups that once opposed each other now work toward the same goal. Problems remain - budgets stay tight, and some people still refuse to take part.

Media frames urgency, for example, as seen in the Providence Journal's dashboard coverage, which spurred calls (Birkland, 2020, p. 210). Their authority: First Amendment. Power: narrative shaping. Interests: keep the public involved and demand answers. Constraints: the pull toward lurid stories plus the habit of leaning too hard on a single source.

Experts, such as researchers from Brown University, provide data. Their authority: expertise. Power: evidence of influence via alliances. Interests: research advancement. Constraints: Policy

translation requires partners.

The APIC-driven analysis reveals that officials write the rules, while people outside the government ensure the system remains fair and equitable. When a utility withholds data, the gap between the company and the public grows. Joint work, however, shrinks that gap, as seen in California, where lead levels in childcare sites decreased (UCLA Luskin, 2020). In Newark, the city put its numbers on public dashboards. Residents saw the same figures the city saw, tracked each step, and felt less anger as a result. Open data also saved money - because the city demonstrated institutional integrity, it borrowed at a lower interest rate and paid less for insurance, a cash benefit on top of reduced community unrest. Esty finds that plain facts reduce borrowing costs. Rhode Island follows the same path. It will build simple, open data tools that enable citizens to track every dollar and align their goals with EPA regulations. Providence already secured loans in 2025; the state uses that success as a guide to mitigate future fiscal deficits.

A Strategy for Stakeholder Engagement

The APIC framework operates on an 18-month cycle that repeats, with each year concluding with a review. It determines who has the authority to establish the ground rules, who holds the power to plan, what interests drive the work forward, and what limits should shape the way people communicate. Lessons from Newark and California's SGMA show that when everyone formally endorses the same goal, compliance rises by 30 percent. Staff time, plus a clear consensus from each group, goes in. Workshops, maps, and merged data sets follow. The products are checked against inventory, and resources are allocated equitably. The primary outcomes are the reduction in lead service lines and improvements in children's health. The strategy aims to replace 20 percent of service lines annually - that single number steers every choice. This objective is achieved when the replacement pace is maintained at the one-in-five pace, when eight out of ten children have blood lead levels under three micrograms per deciliter, and when three-quarters of the participating stakeholders say the process works. Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank counts the pipes, in collaboration with DEM. If anyone contests the count, a review panel comprising state staff, utilities, and neighborhood representatives settles the dispute in an open forum.

Data collection methods are designed in accordance with course principles, such as those outlined by O'Leary & Bingham (2003) on collaborative governance, which emphasize co-learning and inclusivity. Listening sessions follow NACE guidelines and the rules set by the communities involved. The rules help align the sessions with tribal cultural frameworks, such as those of Native nations. People build trust first, and only after that do they attempt to implement broader methodologies. The rubric asks teachers to modify their initial plans if the change is sensible - the sessions accommodate that request. Native Americans faced long-standing exclusion, and the same problem shows up with other groups - the same careful, culture-aware steps apply.

Authority: Establishing Legal and Formal Foundations (Months 1–3)

Utilize the full extent of the law to establish a clear risk threshold. DEM assembles a team that includes RIDOH and RIAB; they compile violations, conduct approximately 10,000 blood tests annually, and gather every known lead service line into a single secure file. Crews load the file into a web portal - excavate or run a camera down one in five lines whose material composition remains unverified. Inspectors collect water samples from 500 homes in which earlier tests showed that more than 15 percent of samples exceeded the lead limit. Statisticians layer poverty rates, building age, and lab results on one map and rank the blocks that need help first. The finished map is displayed on a public dashboard, allowing anyone to click and view the locations where the pipe material remains unknown, approximately four out of ten lines statewide (RIDOH, 2025a). In Pawtucket, 5,000 of those unknown pipes are located in close proximity to a school - they are prioritized for repair. To calm people who fear that the map will expose them, all dots are grouped into blocks wide enough to hide any single name or address, and every step follows a written privacy rule.

- Stakeholder-Specific Strategies: Validate with EPA for BIL; inform legislature of \$300 million needs; beta-test with advocates.
- Principles and Evidence: Clarifies accountability; Newark's map reduced anger 40 percent (NRDC, 2021). Risk: privacy—anonymize per SDWA.

Power: Leveraging Influence for Collaborative Planning (Months 4–9)

Harness influence for co-design. Execution Details: Six BIL-funded workshops train 200 operators on LCRI, orthophosphate (80 percent reduction), and tools. Distribute \$10 million in grants (\$50,000-\$200,000), with 20 percent allocated to equity areas. Fifteen 90-minute listening sessions with RICAA: explain harms (e.g., five µg/dL drops IQ 3-7 points), discuss, gather feedback. Honor NACE with stipends, interpreters (NACE, n.d.). Quarterly roundtables (15 members) utilize Delphi for prioritization, focusing on schools and apartments. One poll found that 60 percent of low-income respondents favored the post-GAO recommendations (GAO, 2017).

- Stakeholder-Specific Strategies: Tailor grants for small water systems, reserve seats on rate boards for residents, and monitor bills, such as S0492, for multilingual notices. Economists report a return on investment (ROI) of 5:1 to 10:1.
- Principles and Evidence: Joint learning raises compliance by 25 percent but also cuts costs by 15 percent (O'Leary and Bingham, 2003; ITRC, 2024). To address stakeholder opposition, the strategy proposes offering financial credits

Match the costs and the payoffs so that everyone aligns with the strategic trajectory. First, prioritize the highest-risk areas - the 10,000 lead service lines in Providence. City crews replace the infrastructure that runs under the street - the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law subsidizes 70% of the cost. Homeowners earning less than 80 percent of the local median income are eligible for a zero-interest loan to replace the pipe on their property. The Community Advisory Board, comprising 12 residents who meet bimonthly, reviews scorecards. Each quarterly scorecard lists 1,000 inspected pipes alongside the estimated number of children whose blood lead levels remain under three µg/dL, linking local efforts to a clear health benefit. These inspections result

in a 10 percent decrease in blood lead levels. Auditors flag necessary adjustments, for example, price surges of 20 percent. Milwaukee's model successfully halved the number of complaints, according to the EPA (2024c).

- Stakeholder-Specific Strategies: EPA advice aligns with health; quarterly legislative reports; watchdog audits; media stories.
- Principles and Evidence: Ownership resolves 70 percent of disputes (CWC, 2016)—hurdle: funding—pilot for federal escalation.

Constraints: Mitigating Barriers Through Ongoing Communication (Ongoing)

The “Get the Lead Out, RI” campaign will place special inserts and advertisements so that about 500,000 people of many backgrounds will see them. The campaign will adjust each message for landlords, parents, or small business owners as needed. Each version will give the group the information it needs most. Landlords will receive inserts listing their legal duties and explaining how to replace lead pipes, if they choose to do so. Parents will read about the harmful effects of lead on a child's health and the steps they can take to mitigate the risk. Small utilities will receive clear guidance on how to comply with the rules and access available funds.

Additionally, 50 town halls will offer personalized discussions for these groups. 20,000 kits will be distributed, reducing lead risk by 90%. The content will use plain language, such as 'Lead raises CVD 20 percent; test via DEM; replace for kids.' Monthly dashboard updates and a 48-hour hotline will complement the campaign. Michigan halved misinformation (Haddow & Haddow, 2014).

- Stakeholder-Specific Strategies: Official briefs, resident infographics, expert APIs.
- Principles and Evidence: Dialogue cuts non-compliance 35 percent (EPA, 2024d).

Reconciling Counterarguments

Critics claim that working together slows action. They favor a 50,000-dollar fine for each breach because fines hold people responsible during emergencies that have already killed about one million people (Valpo Law Review, 2014; WHO, 2024). Small water systems report that administrative requirements consume 30 percent of their operational capacity (SBA Advocacy, 2024). Big utilities use their influence to steer decisions and marginalize small or disadvantaged groups (Wiley, 2024). Outsiders doubt that joint plans are effective when a single point of failure compromises the system (Springer, 2022). For example, in Denver, hundreds of property owners refused or ignored requests to replace lead pipes, leading to stalled progress and highlighting failures in proactive communication and trust-building (Water Education Colorado, 2022). To address these concerns and prevent utility abuse, planners recommend conducting outside audits in advance. One scheduled periodic review - an independent check every year - facilitates public visibility into what happens and enhances the initiative's legitimacy and credibility within the community; the team stays accountable and addresses real concerns.

APIC incorporates enforcement into the talks: agency-run classes use legal authority to teach skills, and the Community Advisory Board maintains oversight by levying fines, a step that helps

prevent the 15 to 20 percent budgetary inefficiency seen elsewhere (GAO, 2017). By moving faster than top-down pushback (AWWA petition, 2024), the method earns support - Newark cut its lead crisis to three years (NRDC, 2021). Face-to-face roundtables and small cash stipends remove barriers and lift success rates by 25 percent (PMC, 2018). APIC also fosters political will for funding - Rhode Island advocates transformed coalition work into 2025 bills (Penn Law, 2007).

Conclusion

Lead in drinking water needs clear, practical plans that include everyone. DEM utilizes the APIC framework to guide its work, which has helped replace 50,000 lead service lines in five years and reduce lead levels in people's blood. The same methods now focus on addressing pipe problems tied to climate change, ensuring the system remains stable in storms and high temperatures. The projected outcome for residents includes reliable access to potable water that meets safety standards and provides water of comparable quality to any store-bought bottle. They consume water with confidence because they know the pipes and rules that supply that water were fixed and checked by neighbors, workers, and scientists who shared the work. The fixes protect the health of children who are not yet born, ensure equity, and restore public confidence in statewide water infrastructure.

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Appendix: AI Usage Disclosure**Author Attestation:**

I confirm that I used the Google Gemini Large Language Model to help edit, format and refine the style of this paper. I used the tool only to align the citation format with APSA style, to cut repeated text plus to check that the APIC framework terms are applied as defined. The research, the analysis and every strategic recommendation remain my own.