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# Press Release

## For Immediate Release

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## Water Research Foundation Launches New Project on Forging Relationships Between Clean Water Agencies and the Community

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DENVER, CO (March 30, 2017) – The Water Research Foundation (WRF), a leading sponsor of innovative research supporting the water community, is pleased to announce a new project that will help clean water agencies explore how forward thinking utilities and companies leverage emotional motivators in public engagement programs to develop sustainable relationships with their customers.

Awareness of water scarcity is disconnected from the deceptive abundance of this resource in many developed countries. This poses a challenge to clean water agencies advocating water stewardship. Social scientists such as Paul Slovic and Daniel Kahneman have long recognized the power of emotional involvement (the affect heuristic) in decision making and hence community building. Effective messaging and educative materials and/or programs that takes advantage of research on emotional connectors is vital to tangibly demonstrate the value of water and the technology that creates clean water. WRF's new project, "Forging Powerful and Sustainable Relationships Between Clean Water Agencies and the Community" (#4678), has two main objectives:

1. Assess which emotional motivators and customer engagement practices are most pertinent to and effective in fostering sustainable community relationships for water utilities and for different local contexts
2. Identify leading practices in customer engagement (generation of value, use of technology, use of emotional motivators, measurement and evaluation of impact) to develop practical recommendations and tools that support water agencies' transition to adopting these practices, dependent on organizational context.

The project will develop a report and toolkit that provide best practices, lessons learned, and evaluation metrics for utilities to use when developing messages and education and engagement programs to create meaningful emotional connections in alignment with their specific communities using scientific and technical practices.

“There’s plenty of research out there showing that emotional connections lead to long-term bonds between organizations and their stakeholders,” said Rob Renner, CEO of the Water Research Foundation. “This innovative new project applies these concepts to the utility sphere for the first time.”

The Principal Investigator for this project is Sakis Kotsantonis, Managing Partner, KKS Advisors LLC.

#### **About the Water Research Foundation**

The Water Research Foundation is the leading not-for-profit research cooperative that advances the science of water to protect public health and the environment. Governed by utilities, WRF plans, manages, and delivers scientifically sound research solutions on the most critical challenges facing the water community in the areas of drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and reuse. Over the last 50 years, WRF has sponsored nearly 1,500 research projects valued at \$500 million, and serves more than 1,000 subscribing organizations. For more information, go to [www.WaterRF.org](http://www.WaterRF.org).

#### **About KKS Advisors**

KKS Advisors is an advisory services firm helping clients to find innovative solutions to create more sustainable business models and communities. KKS works with a diverse range of clients, ranging from NGOs to corporations and investors. A focus on sustainable strategies and a deep understanding of the water industry is exemplified by their extensive work with CERES in developing a water risk toolkit for investors that want to integrate water risks in their investment decision-making. KKS Advisors also worked with Stewart Investors to conduct a research project on water scarcity in global emerging markets.

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