

EPA National Priorities Project: Winning the Race on Competing Risks June 2024 Stakeholder Workshop Summary

About the Workshop

EPA recently funded our research team to address concerns with disinfection byproducts (DBP) and opportunistic pathogens (OPP) in water systems across the US. The goal of our project is to better understand and predict occurrence of DBPs, OPPs and the associated health risk tradeoffs posed by them in drinking water distribution systems across the continental U.S. Our project team hosted a workshop on June 3-4, 2024 at Michigan State University with 12 utility partners, several topical experts, and the research team to learn from one another, prepare for sampling, and solicit feedback on the project. We had several goals for the workshop:

- Develop a better understanding of utility water quality concerns and needs;
- Work with utility partners to gather data on specific operations, treatment processes, and distribution system characteristics necessary for the project; and
- Optimize our sampling and monitoring protocol based on feedback from partners and stakeholders.

Over the course of the two days, we facilitated discussions and conducted “deep dives” which paired utilities and project team members to discuss system characteristics and sampling sites. The information and feedback collected during the workshop is being used to refine our research questions and sampling plans.

Key Findings

Workshop participants went through several rounds of facilitated discussion to address the following questions:

- What are your long-term needs and concerns?
- What would you need/want to address those needs & concerns?
- What information do you need to improve communication with your own stakeholders and the public?

We summarized all the feedback and identified the following themes among responses from utility partners and experts:

| <u>Challenges</u> | <u>Needs</u> | <u>Communication</u> |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uncertainty regarding new regulations• Poorly understood testing requirements• Changing system characteristics• Sustainable staffing• Lack of resources• Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better understanding of the relationships between DBP, OPP, & other contaminants• Co-treatment options• Technical assistance• Workforce development• Risk-based communication strategies• How to address different residence times | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop risk-based language about DBP & OPP• Develop common messages among utilities, public health, & building managers• Target communications to sensitive groups• Better understand public audiences & their needs |

To learn more



Visit the project website to learn more:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/riskmodeling/Consortium-for-Drinking-Water-Risk-Trade-Offs/>