

## Community Equity Model Template

### Building Community Wealth Through Democratic Water Ownership

#### Overview

The Community Equity Model transforms water infrastructure from extractive investment into community wealth-building opportunity. Rather than creating dependencies on external utilities or private companies, this model enables communities to own, control, and benefit from their water systems while ensuring universal access and environmental sustainability.

**Core Innovation:** Combines cooperative ownership principles with innovative equity structures that build community wealth while maintaining affordability and universal access for all community members.

#### Key Principles:

- **Democratic Ownership:** Community members own and control water infrastructure
- **Universal Access:** Ownership structure ensures no one is excluded from water access
- **Wealth Building:** Infrastructure investment builds community assets and equity
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Ownership incentivizes long-term sustainability
- **Economic Justice:** Profits stay in community rather than extracting to external shareholders

#### Financial Structure and Equity Building

#### Capitalization Strategy

##### Initial Investment Sources:

Source	Percentage	Form	Community Control
Community Contributions	30%	Cash, labor, materials	Full democratic control
Public Investment	25%	Grants, low-interest loans	Community ownership maintained
Solidarity Finance	20%	Community loan funds, credit unions	Community accountability
Patient Capital	15%	Impact investors, foundations	Limited returns, no control
Cooperative Networks	10%	Inter-cooperative investment	Mutual support agreements

##### Equity Growth Mechanisms:

##### Infrastructure Value Appreciation:

- **Asset Building:** Infrastructure improvements increase total cooperative value
- **Efficiency Gains:** Technology and process improvements reduce costs and increase surplus
- **Expanded Services:** Additional services (internet, energy) increase revenue streams
- **Regional Integration:** Network effects with other cooperatives increase collective value

##### Community Wealth Multiplier Effects:

- **Local Employment:** Community members employed in construction, maintenance, management
- **Local Procurement:** Equipment and materials purchased from local businesses when possible
- **Skill Development:** Training and certification building individual and community capacity

- **Innovation Revenue:** Community-developed solutions licensed to other communities

## Affordability and Access Mechanisms

### Progressive Pricing Structure:

Usage Tier	Monthly Cost	Community Cross-Subsidy	Equity Building
<b>Basic Needs</b> (0-50L/day)	Free	Subsidized by higher tiers	Base equity allocation
<b>Household Use</b> (50-200L/day)	\$15-30	Cost recovery	Standard equity growth
<b>Comfort Use</b> (200-400L/day)	\$40-80	Contributes to subsidy fund	Enhanced equity participation
<b>High Use</b> (400L+/day)	\$100+	Major subsidy contribution	Premium equity and community investment

### Alternative Payment Methods:

- **Sweat Equity:** 4 hours monthly maintenance = \$20 credit
- **Community Service:** Teaching, organizing, advocacy = payment credits
- **Material Contributions:** Local materials, equipment = equity shares
- **Skill Sharing:** Technical expertise, professional services = reduced fees

### Universal Access Guarantees:

- **No Disconnection:** Service continues regardless of payment ability
- **Emergency Support:** Community fund for households facing financial crisis
- **Accessibility Features:** Infrastructure modifications for people with disabilities
- **Cultural Accommodation:** Service delivery respecting cultural and religious practices

## Surplus Distribution and Reinvestment

### Annual Surplus Allocation Framework:

#### Surplus Distribution Model:

1. Operating Reserve (20%): Maintenance, emergency repairs, insurance
2. Community Dividends (30%): Cash or credit returns to member households
3. Infrastructure Investment (25%): System expansion, efficiency improvements
4. Community Development (15%): Education, health, economic development projects
5. Solidarity Fund (10%): Support for other communities developing water cooperatives

### Dividend Payment Options:

- **Cash Dividends:** Direct payments to member households
- **Service Credits:** Reduced water bills for following year
- **Equity Reinvestment:** Automatic increase in ownership shares
- **Community Investment:** Member choice to invest in community development projects

### Community Development Integration:

- **Education Fund:** Scholarships, adult education, technical training
- **Health Fund:** Community health services, preventive care, health education
- **Economic Development:** Small business loans, cooperative development, job creation

- **Environmental Fund:** Ecosystem restoration, renewable energy, conservation projects

## Governance and Democratic Participation

### Democratic Decision-Making Structure

#### General Assembly Powers:

- Annual budget approval and surplus distribution decisions
- Election of board members and major policy changes
- Approval of major infrastructure investments or service changes
- Amendment of cooperative bylaws and membership policies
- Emergency decisions requiring community-wide consultation

#### Meeting Structure and Accessibility:

- **Quarterly Assemblies:** Regular meetings with childcare, interpretation, accessible venues
- **Special Assemblies:** Called by petition of 10% of members or board decision
- **Committee Meetings:** Working groups on technical, financial, social issues
- **Youth Assemblies:** Parallel governance structure for members under 25

#### Consensus and Voting Procedures:

- **Consensus Preference:** Strive for decisions everyone can support
- **Modified Consensus:** 80% agreement required for major decisions
- **Simple Majority:** Operational decisions and board elections
- **Supermajority:** Constitutional changes require 75% approval

### Board of Directors Structure

#### Composition and Representation:

- **Geographic Representatives:** Board members from different community areas
- **Demographic Balance:** Gender, age, cultural diversity in leadership
- **Skill-Based Seats:** Technical, financial, legal expertise represented
- **Rotation Requirements:** Maximum two consecutive terms to prevent power concentration

#### Board Responsibilities:

- **Strategic Planning:** Long-term vision and policy development
- **Financial Oversight:** Budget monitoring, audit review, financial planning
- **Management Supervision:** Hiring, evaluation, support for professional management
- **Community Accountability:** Regular reporting, transparency, member communication

#### Accountability Mechanisms:

- **Monthly Public Meetings:** Board meetings open to all members
- **Quarterly Reports:** Financial, operational, and community impact reporting
- **Annual Evaluation:** Member evaluation of board performance
- **Recall Procedures:** Member ability to remove directors for cause

### Conflict Resolution and Community Healing

#### Conflict Prevention:

- **Clear Policies:** Transparent policies preventing conflicts of interest
- **Communication Systems:** Regular information sharing and feedback mechanisms
- **Mediation Training:** Board and member training in conflict resolution

- **Cultural Protocols:** Respect for diverse cultural approaches to conflict

#### Resolution Processes:

- **Peer Mediation:** Trained community members facilitate dispute resolution
- **Restorative Justice:** Focus on healing relationships rather than punishment
- **Elder Councils:** Traditional authorities provide wisdom and guidance
- **External Mediation:** Professional mediators when community processes insufficient

#### Community Healing Approaches:

- **Ceremony and Ritual:** Cultural practices supporting community healing
- **Truth and Reconciliation:** Addressing historical conflicts and injustices
- **Community Service:** Conflict resolution through contribution to community welfare
- **Learning Opportunities:** Using conflicts as opportunities for community growth



## Performance Measurement and Community Accountability

### Community-Defined Success Indicators

#### Water Access and Quality Metrics:

- **Universal Coverage:** 100% of community members with reliable access
- **Service Quality:** Water quality, pressure, reliability meeting community standards
- **Affordability:** No household paying more than 3% of income for water service
- **Cultural Appropriateness:** Service delivery respecting cultural values and practices

#### Economic Justice Indicators:

- **Wealth Building:** Average household equity growth over time
- **Employment Creation:** Local jobs created through cooperative development
- **Cost Savings:** Community savings compared to alternative service providers
- **Economic Multiplier:** Local economic activity generated through cooperative spending

#### Community Empowerment Metrics:

- **Participation Rates:** Member attendance at assemblies and committee meetings
- **Leadership Development:** Community members gaining governance and technical skills
- **Decision-Making Quality:** Member satisfaction with democratic processes
- **Conflict Resolution:** Effective resolution of disputes through community processes

#### Environmental Sustainability Measures:

- **Resource Efficiency:** Water use efficiency and waste reduction achievements
- **Ecosystem Health:** Impact on local watershed and biodiversity
- **Carbon Footprint:** Greenhouse gas reductions through efficient operations
- **Regenerative Impact:** Positive environmental outcomes from cooperative activities

### Community Monitoring and Evaluation

#### Participatory Evaluation Methods:

- **Community Scorecards:** Members rate cooperative performance across multiple dimensions
- **Focus Groups:** Structured discussions with different community groups
- **Individual Interviews:** Confidential feedback from diverse community members
- **Youth Evaluation:** Separate evaluation process for younger members

#### Data Collection and Analysis:

- **Community Data Collectors:** Trained members gather performance data
- **Peer Review:** Cross-community evaluation with other cooperatives
- **External Verification:** Independent confirmation of community-reported data
- **Participatory Analysis:** Community members analyze data and identify improvements

#### Feedback and Improvement Cycles:

- **Quarterly Reviews:** Regular assessment and adjustment of cooperative operations
- **Annual Planning:** Community priority setting and goal development
- **Strategic Planning:** Long-term vision and development planning every 3-5 years
- **Continuous Learning:** Ongoing experimentation and adaptation

### Financial Transparency and Accountability

#### Open Book Management:

- **Monthly Financial Reports:** Income, expenses, and equity changes shared with all members
- **Budget Participation:** Member input in annual budget development
- **Audit Results:** Annual independent audit results presented to community
- **Investment Decisions:** Community participation in major financial decisions

#### Community Financial Literacy:

- **Education Programs:** Training in cooperative finance and accounting
- **Financial Committee:** Member committee overseeing financial management
- **Budget Training:** Annual workshops on budget analysis and financial planning
- **Transparency Tools:** Simple financial reporting tools accessible to all members

## Implementation Tools and Templates

### Cooperative Formation Checklist

#### Legal and Regulatory Steps:

- ☐ Research state/national cooperative laws and registration requirements
- ☐ Develop cooperative bylaws adapted to local legal framework
- ☐ File incorporation documents and obtain necessary permits
- ☐ Register with appropriate government agencies and tax authorities
- ☐ Obtain insurance coverage for operations and liability

#### Community Organization Steps:

- ☐ Conduct community education on cooperative ownership and governance
- ☐ Form organizing committee with diverse community representation
- ☐ Hold community meetings to develop vision and membership policies
- ☐ Recruit founding members and collect membership commitments
- ☐ Elect initial board of directors and establish governance procedures

#### Financial and Technical Preparation:

- ☐ Develop business plan and financial projections
- ☐ Secure initial capitalization through member contributions and external funding
- ☐ Conduct technical feasibility study and system design
- ☐ Establish banking relationships and accounting systems
- ☐ Develop partnerships with technical support providers

## Operational Readiness:

- ☐ Hire or train management and technical staff
- ☐ Establish operational policies and procedures
- ☐ Develop member communication and participation systems
- ☐ Create emergency response and crisis management protocols
- ☐ Launch operations with community celebration and commitment ceremony

## Membership Agreement Template

### Community Water Cooperative Membership Agreement

#### Member Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Household Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Type:

- ☐ Full Member (voting rights, equity shares, full benefits)
- ☐ Associate Member (service access, limited voting)
- ☐ Youth Member (equity building, partial voting)

#### Initial Contribution:

Cash Contribution: \$\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Labor Contribution: \_\_\_\_\_ hours Value: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Material Contribution: \_\_\_\_\_ Value: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Total Initial Equity: \$\_\_\_\_\_

#### Member Rights and Responsibilities:

- ☐ I understand my voting rights and governance participation opportunities
- ☐ I commit to attend at least 2 general assemblies annually
- ☐ I agree to pay monthly service fees according to cooperative policies
- ☐ I will contribute to cooperative maintenance and community activities
- ☐ I support the cooperative's values of equity, sustainability, and community control

#### Financial Obligations:

Monthly Service Fee: \$\_\_\_\_\_ (subject to sliding scale adjustments)

Annual Capital Contribution: \$\_\_\_\_\_ (optional equity building)

Special Assessments: As approved by membership vote

Emergency Contributions: As needed for system maintenance

#### Member Benefits:

Water Service: Guaranteed access regardless of payment ability

Equity Building: Annual equity growth based on cooperative performance

Dividends: Share of annual surplus as approved by membership

Governance: Voting rights and leadership opportunities

Community: Access to cooperative educational and social programs

#### Signatures:

Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperative Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Equity Tracking and Distribution Calculator

### Annual Equity Calculation Worksheet:

### Step 1: Determine Total Cooperative Value

- Asset Value (infrastructure, equipment, reserves): \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Annual Operating Surplus: \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Debt and Liabilities: (\$\_\_\_\_\_)
- **Net Cooperative Value:** \$\_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2: Calculate Individual Member Equity

- Base Household Equity Share: % = \$\_
- Contribution-Based Equity: % = \$\_
- Participation Equity (meetings, labor): % = \$\_
- Length of Membership Bonus: % = \$\_
- **Total Individual Equity:** \$\_\_\_\_\_

### Step 3: Annual Distribution Options Member chooses distribution of annual equity growth:

- Cash Dividend (%): \$\_
- Service Credit (%): \$\_
- Reinvested Equity (%): \$\_
- Community Development (%): \$\_

### Step 4: Sliding Scale Assessment

- Household Income: \$\_\_\_\_\_ annually
- Ability to Pay Rating: \_\_\_\_\_ (1-5 scale)
- Service Fee Adjustment: \_\_\_\_\_%
- Cross-Subsidy Contribution/Benefit: \$\_\_\_\_\_

## Democratic Governance Toolkit

### General Assembly Planning Template:

#### Pre-Meeting Preparation:

- ☐ Agenda development with member input (2 weeks prior)
- ☐ Financial reports and background documents distributed (1 week prior)
- ☐ Childcare, interpretation, and accessibility arrangements confirmed
- ☐ Venue setup with inclusive seating and technology support

#### Meeting Agenda Template:

1. Welcome and Community Recognition (15 minutes)
  - Acknowledge traditional territory and community values
  - Recognize member contributions and achievements
2. Cooperative Business (60 minutes)
  - Board report and financial update
  - Committee reports and recommendations
  - Old business and follow-up items
3. New Business and Decision-Making (45 minutes)
  - New proposals and discussion
  - Budget amendments or policy changes
  - Elections and appointments
4. Community Sharing and Vision (30 minutes)



- Member concerns and suggestions
- Community development updates
- Future planning and visioning

5. Closing and Next Steps (15 minutes)

- Decision summary and action items
- Next meeting date and agenda preview

### Consensus Decision-Making Process:

1. **Proposal Presentation:** Clear statement of proposal and rationale
2. **Clarifying Questions:** Understanding the proposal without debate
3. **Discussion and Concerns:** Open sharing of perspectives and concerns
4. **Proposal Modification:** Adjustments based on member input
5. **Consent Test:** Check for consensus or need for further discussion
6. **Decision Recording:** Clear documentation of final decision

## Community Partnership Agreement Template

### Inter-Cooperative Collaboration Agreement

#### Participating Cooperatives:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Collaboration Purpose:

- ☐ Shared purchasing for reduced costs
- ☐ Technical assistance and knowledge sharing
- ☐ Emergency mutual aid and support
- ☐ Joint infrastructure development
- ☐ Regional advocacy and policy work

#### Resource Sharing Framework:

- Equipment Sharing: \_\_\_\_\_
- Expert Exchange: \_\_\_\_\_
- Bulk Purchasing: \_\_\_\_\_
- Emergency Support: \_\_\_\_\_
- Training and Education: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Governance Structure:

- Coordination Committee: Representatives from each cooperative
- Decision-Making: Consensus required for joint decisions
- Financial Contributions: Proportional to size and benefit
- Dispute Resolution: Mediation through neutral cooperative

#### Financial Arrangements:

- Shared Costs: Distributed according to \_\_\_\_\_
- Shared Benefits: Distributed according to \_\_\_\_\_
- Emergency Fund: \$\_\_\_\_\_ contributed by each cooperative
- Annual Budget: \$\_\_\_\_\_ for joint activities

#### Timeline and Evaluation:

- Agreement Duration: \_\_\_\_\_ years



- Annual Review Process: \_\_\_\_\_
- Success Metrics: \_\_\_\_\_
- Renewal Criteria: \_\_\_\_\_

## ★ Success Stories and Case Studies

### Case Study 1: Mondragón Cooperative Corporation (Spain)

#### Model Adaptation for Water:

- **Multi-Cooperative Structure:** Network of water cooperatives sharing resources and expertise
- **Education Integration:** Cooperative university training water engineers and managers
- **Financial Solidarity:** Cooperative bank providing patient capital for water infrastructure
- **Democratic Innovation:** Advanced governance balancing democracy with technical expertise

#### Key Lessons for Water Cooperatives:

- **Scale Benefits:** Large cooperative networks achieve economies of scale while maintaining local democracy
- **Education Investment:** Substantial investment in member education strengthens democratic participation
- **Financial Innovation:** Cooperative banking enables patient capital for infrastructure development
- **Long-term Vision:** 60+ year success demonstrates sustainability of cooperative ownership

#### Water-Specific Adaptations:

- Universal access guarantees integrated with cooperative membership
- Environmental sustainability as core cooperative principle
- Community development integration with water service provision
- Regional coordination for watershed-scale management

### Case Study 2: Evergreen Cooperatives (Cleveland, Ohio)

#### Community Wealth Building Model:

- **Anchor Institution Partnerships:** Hospitals and universities commit to purchasing from cooperatives
- **Worker Ownership:** Employee ownership creating middle-class jobs in low-income communities
- **Community Development:** Cooperative surplus invested in community development and education
- **Network Effects:** Multiple cooperatives supporting each other and building community wealth

#### Water Cooperative Adaptation:

- **Community Anchor Strategy:** Local institutions commit to supporting community water cooperative
- **Job Creation:** Water system employment providing living wages with ownership stakes
- **Surplus Reinvestment:** Cooperative profits invested in community health and education
- **Regional Network:** Cooperation with other community cooperatives for shared resources

#### Measurable Outcomes:

- \$46 million in economic impact over 10 years
- 200+ employee-owners earning average \$40,000+ annually

- 80% employee retention rate demonstrating job quality
- \$3.8 million in community development investment

### Case Study 3: Jackson, Mississippi Community Water Justice

#### Crisis Response and Community Ownership:

- **Infrastructure Failure:** City water system crisis creating opportunity for community control
- **Community Organizing:** Grassroots organizing for community ownership rather than privatization
- **Technical Assistance:** Engineering support for community-controlled system development
- **Policy Innovation:** Municipal policy supporting community cooperative development

#### Community Equity Model Implementation:

- **Sliding Scale Affordability:** Income-based pricing ensuring universal access
- **Sweat Equity:** Community labor reducing capital costs and building ownership
- **Democratic Governance:** Community assemblies making major system decisions
- **Regional Solidarity:** Connections with rural communities for mutual support

#### Ongoing Development:

- Community-controlled feasibility study for cooperative water system
- Policy advocacy for municipal support of community ownership
- Technical training for community members in water system management
- Coalition building with environmental justice and cooperative development organizations

## Implementation Roadmap

### Phase 1: Community Preparation and Organizing (Months 1-6)

#### Community Education and Awareness:

- **Information Sessions:** Community meetings explaining cooperative ownership benefits
- **Study Circles:** Small group discussions about community values and water needs
- **Site Visits:** Trips to successful water cooperatives for firsthand experience
- **Cultural Integration:** Connecting cooperative principles with community cultural values

#### Organizing and Leadership Development:

- **Organizing Committee:** Formation of diverse leadership group to guide development
- **Community Mapping:** Assessment of community assets, needs, and leadership capacity
- **Vision Development:** Community-wide process to develop shared vision for water cooperative
- **Leadership Training:** Skill building for community leaders in governance and organizing

#### Feasibility Assessment:

- **Technical Study:** Engineering assessment of water system options and costs
- **Financial Analysis:** Cooperative business plan development with community input
- **Legal Review:** Analysis of regulatory requirements and legal structure options
- **Market Research:** Assessment of community willingness to participate and contribute

### Phase 2: Cooperative Formation and Capitalization (Months 7-18)

#### Legal and Organizational Development:

- **Incorporation:** File legal documents establishing cooperative as legal entity
- **Bylaws Development:** Community process to develop governance rules and policies

- **Board Election:** Democratic selection of initial board of directors
- **Policy Development:** Creation of membership, service, and financial policies

#### Resource Mobilization:

- **Member Recruitment:** Outreach and education to achieve target membership
- **Capital Campaign:** Fundraising from members, supporters, and external sources
- **Grant Applications:** Seeking foundation and government funding for cooperative development
- **Loan Packaging:** Securing low-interest financing for infrastructure development

#### Infrastructure Development:

- **System Design:** Community-participated technical design process
- **Contractor Selection:** Democratic process for selecting construction and equipment providers
- **Construction Management:** Community oversight of infrastructure development
- **Testing and Commissioning:** Community participation in system testing and startup

### Phase 3: Operations Launch and Stabilization (Months 19-36)

#### Service Delivery Initiation:

- **Soft Launch:** Limited service delivery to test systems and procedures
- **Community Training:** Member education in system operation and maintenance
- **Service Expansion:** Gradual expansion to full community coverage
- **Quality Assurance:** Community monitoring of service quality and member satisfaction

#### Governance Development:

- **Assembly Rhythm:** Establish regular schedule of member meetings and decision-making
- **Committee Formation:** Create working committees for ongoing governance and operations
- **Conflict Resolution:** Develop and test procedures for addressing member concerns
- **Accountability Systems:** Implement transparency and accountability mechanisms

#### Financial Sustainability:

- **Revenue Optimization:** Adjust pricing and service delivery for financial sustainability
- **Cost Management:** Efficient operations and community participation in cost control
- **Surplus Planning:** Community decisions about surplus distribution and reinvestment
- **Reserve Building:** Accumulate financial reserves for maintenance and emergencies

### Phase 4: Growth and Network Development (Years 4-10)

#### Service and Impact Expansion:

- **Service Diversification:** Addition of complementary services (internet, energy, waste management)
- **Community Development:** Investment of surplus in broader community development
- **Regional Integration:** Collaboration with neighboring communities and cooperatives
- **Policy Advocacy:** Engagement in policy advocacy supporting cooperative development

#### Knowledge Sharing and Replication:

- **Documentation:** Systematic documentation of cooperative development and operations
- **Technical Assistance:** Support for other communities developing water cooperatives
- **Network Building:** Participation in regional and national cooperative networks
- **Innovation Development:** Community-controlled innovation and technology development

#### Long-term Sustainability:

- **Intergenerational Planning:** Systems ensuring cooperative sustainability across generations
- **Leadership Succession:** Development of next generation of cooperative leaders
- **Infrastructure Renewal:** Long-term planning for infrastructure replacement and upgrade
- **Community Resilience:** Integration of cooperative with broader community resilience and development

## Resources and Support

### Cooperative Development Organizations

#### National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA):

- Cooperative development training and technical assistance
- Model bylaws and governance templates for various cooperative types
- Advocacy for cooperative-friendly policy and regulatory environment
- Network connections with other cooperatives and development organizations

#### Cooperative Development Foundation (CDF):

- Funding and technical assistance for cooperative development
- Research and education on cooperative economics and governance
- International cooperation and knowledge sharing programs
- Support for cooperative networks and regional development

#### University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives:

- Research and education on cooperative development and management
- Training programs for cooperative leaders and staff
- Publications and resources on cooperative governance and finance
- Technical assistance for cooperative feasibility studies and business planning

### Water Sector Technical Support

#### Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP):

- Technical assistance for small community water system development
- Training in water system management and compliance
- Financing assistance and grant application support
- Environmental compliance and sustainability planning

#### Water For People:

- Community-led water system development support
- Local capacity building and leadership development
- Sustainability and monitoring frameworks
- Global network of community water practitioners

#### Circle of Blue:

- Water policy analysis and advocacy support
- Community organizing and campaign development assistance
- Media and communication strategy support
- Research and data on water access and equity issues

### Financial and Legal Resources

#### National Cooperative Bank:

- Financing for cooperative development and expansion
- Technical assistance for cooperative financial management
- Specialized lending programs for community development cooperatives
- Educational resources on cooperative finance and governance

#### **Cooperative Development Financial Institution (CDFI):**

- Patient capital for cooperative infrastructure development
- Technical assistance for business planning and financial management
- Grant funding for cooperative education and organizing
- Network connections with other community development organizations

#### **Sustainable Economies Law Center:**

- Legal assistance for cooperative formation and governance
- Model legal documents and policy templates
- Advocacy for cooperative-friendly legal and regulatory frameworks
- Education on cooperative law and governance innovations

### **Educational and Training Resources**

#### **Cooperative Education Materials:**

- "Cooperative Primer" - Basic education on cooperative principles and practices
- "Democratic Governance Handbook" - Tools for democratic decision-making and conflict resolution
- "Community Finance Guide" - Resources for cooperative financial management and planning
- "Organizing for Equity Toolkit" - Strategies for inclusive cooperative development

#### **Online Learning Platforms:**

- Cooperative Virtual University courses on governance and management
- University of Wisconsin cooperative studies certificate programs
- Cooperative Development Institute training workshops and conferences
- International Cooperative Alliance educational resources and global network

#### **Community Organizing Resources:**

- National Training Institute organizing methodology and tools
- Industrial Areas Foundation community organizing approach
- Popular education resources for cooperative development
- Cultural organizing approaches integrating art, culture, and cooperative development

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## **Call to Action: Building Community Wealth Through Water**

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### **For Communities Ready to Start**

#### **Immediate First Steps:**

1. **Community Education:** Organize information sessions about cooperative ownership benefits
2. **Leadership Development:** Identify and train community leaders in cooperative principles
3. **Feasibility Assessment:** Conduct preliminary assessment of technical and financial feasibility
4. **Coalition Building:** Build partnerships with supportive organizations and potential funders

#### **Six-Month Goals:**

1. **Organizing Committee:** Form representative committee to guide cooperative development

2. **Community Vision:** Develop shared vision for community-owned water system
3. **Technical Study:** Complete engineering feasibility study with community participation
4. **Resource Assessment:** Identify potential funding sources and community contributions

#### Two-Year Vision:

1. **Cooperative Formation:** Legal incorporation with democratic bylaws and governance structure
2. **Infrastructure Development:** Construction or acquisition of community water infrastructure
3. **Service Launch:** Begin providing water service to community members
4. **Democratic Operations:** Functioning democratic governance and member participation

### For Supporters and Allies

#### Technical Professional Support:

- **Pro Bono Services:** Engineers, lawyers, accountants providing volunteer professional services
- **Capacity Building:** Training community members in technical and financial management
- **Mentorship:** Ongoing support and guidance for community cooperative leaders
- **Network Building:** Connecting communities with resources and peer cooperatives

#### Financial Institution Engagement:

- **Cooperative Banking:** Financial institutions developing specialized cooperative lending programs
- **Community Investment:** Local investment in community-owned infrastructure development
- **Patient Capital:** Long-term, low-interest financing for cooperative development
- **Grant Making:** Foundation and government funding prioritizing community ownership

#### Policy and Advocacy Support:

- **Regulatory Advocacy:** Working for policies supporting community cooperative development
- **Technical Assistance Funding:** Advocating for public funding of cooperative technical assistance
- **Cooperative Education:** Supporting cooperative education in schools and community organizations
- **Research and Documentation:** Documenting cooperative impacts and best practices

### For Policymakers and Government Officials

#### Enabling Policy Framework:

- **Cooperative-Friendly Regulation:** Streamlined procedures for community water cooperative formation
- **Technical Assistance Programs:** Public funding for cooperative development and training
- **Community Ownership Incentives:** Tax incentives and grants prioritizing community ownership
- **Regional Development Support:** Planning and funding supporting cooperative networks

#### Resource Allocation:

- **Infrastructure Investment:** Public investment in community-owned infrastructure development
- **Capacity Building:** Funding for cooperative education and leadership development
- **Research and Development:** Support for cooperative innovation and best practice development
- **Network Development:** Funding for cooperative associations and regional development organizations

#### Integration with Existing Programs:



- **Rural Development:** Integration of cooperative development with rural development programs
  - **Community Development:** CDBG and other community development funding supporting cooperatives
  - **Environmental Programs:** Environmental funding supporting community-owned green infrastructure
  - **Economic Development:** Small business and economic development programs supporting cooperatives
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**Transform Your Community Today:** Community equity models offer proven pathways for building wealth, ensuring universal access, and creating democratic control over essential services. Whether you're facing water privatization threats, infrastructure failures, or seeking community empowerment, cooperative ownership provides sustainable solutions that serve people and planet over profit.

**Start With What You Have:** Every community has assets, knowledge, and leadership capacity that can be built upon. Begin with community education, build relationships and trust, develop shared vision, and take concrete steps toward community ownership and control.

**Join the Movement:** Connect with the growing movement of community-owned utilities, cooperative enterprises, and democratic economy initiatives transforming how communities meet their needs through mutual aid and collective ownership.

**Contact and Connect:**

- Email: [globalgovernanceframework@gmail.com](mailto:globalgovernanceframework@gmail.com)
- Subject: "Community Equity Model Implementation"
- Include: Community location, current situation, technical assistance needs, timeline

**The Future is Cooperative:** When communities own and control their essential infrastructure, they build wealth, ensure universal access, create good jobs, and demonstrate that another economy is possible—an economy that serves life, justice, and sustainability over extraction and profit.

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*The Community Equity Model Template is part of the Global Framework for Water & Sanitation (WASH) Governance. For complete framework access, implementation tools, and global network connection, visit [globalgovernanceframework.org](http://globalgovernanceframework.org)*