

# WE KNOW WATER AND RATE ADJUSTMENT PROCESSES

Bodewell Group offers a depth and breadth of experience in all things water. We built from our water and wastewater roots and now support a full range of projects, from water supply diversification and treatment technologies to infrastructure construction and rates. We partner with agencies large and small, urban and rural, on projects ranging from neighborhood pipelines to multi-billion-dollar capital improvements.

Public outreach and communication are critical as utilities seek to raise awareness about projects that safeguard their community's economy and quality of life. From cost of service studies to Prop 218 notifications and education programs, our team has a deep understanding of the rate-setting process and the essential elements that foster community understanding and acceptance. We develop informational materials that translate technical information into easy-to-understand language—and we know community acceptance is much greater when awareness of water and wastewater services is built before it's time to ask for a rate increase.

## Bodewell Group Rates Experience

- 1 Prop 218 Notice Development and Communication Support**  
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District
- 2 Infrastructure Investment Education Program**  
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
- 3 Rates Outreach Support**  
Napa Sanitation District
- 4 Prop 218 Notice & Infrastructure Investment Education Program**  
Central Contra Costa Sanitary District
- 5 Utility Rates Outreach Services**  
City of Fairfield
- 6 Rate Structure Changes and Rate Adjustment Communications**  
Contra Costa Water District
- 7 Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Prop 218 Communications**  
City of Fresno
- 8 Water and Wastewater Rates Outreach**  
City of Santa Barbara
- 9 Water Rates & Public Involvement**  
City of Santa Monica

*The above is a representative example of our work, not a full project list.*



If you have a specific question or are interested in learning more about this specialty within our water practice, please contact Emily P. Otis, Director, at [eotis@bodewellgroup.com](mailto:eotis@bodewellgroup.com) or visit [bodewellgroup.com](http://bodewellgroup.com).

## No One Wants to Talk About Rates... But You Can (and Should)

Communicating about utility rate changes is one of the most challenging tasks for public information professionals. But all California utilities need to adjust rates under Prop 218 to ensure they are covering costs and that rates are fairly distributed. These processes require all parts of the organization to come together, and every effort is different. There will be protest letters and people who are upset—that is normal and expected. The goal with outreach is not to win people over, but to inform the community about the changes coming and help them understand the WHY.

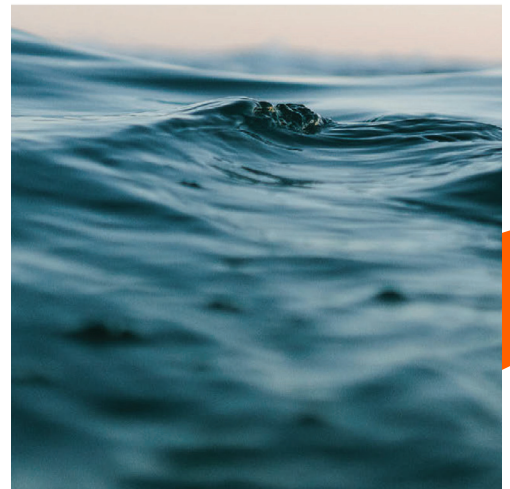
### QUESTIONS TO ASK

As you embark on a rate adjustment process, here are some questions to ask internally to set you up for success:

- What are the key drivers for the rate increases? Anything unique?
- What are the rate increases/impacts? Does it involve rate structure changes?
- Can you connect the rate increases to infrastructure upgrades or replacements?
- What value are ratepayers getting? Are you adjusting to cost pressures (inflation, regulatory costs), or are increases tied to specific projects that add value?
- How can you support ratepayers? (discounts, programs)

### COMMON RATES MESSAGING THEMES

- Replacing and investing in aging infrastructure
- Ensuring sufficient rates to support and maintain critical systems
- Rates fund services and must be fairly allocated among customers
- Plain language explanation that the agency does not make a profit and that Prop 218 requires rates to reflect the true cost of service
- Responding to rising costs while ensuring compliance
- Minimizing customer impacts while ensuring quality service and commitment to operational efficiency



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