

# Collaborating with water utilities and local governments

## **Summary: Key Outcomes & Regional Implications**

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**Shared Waters,  
Shared Future**  
Northeastern Illinois Regional Water  
Supply Sustainability Workshops

# Workshop goal and objectives

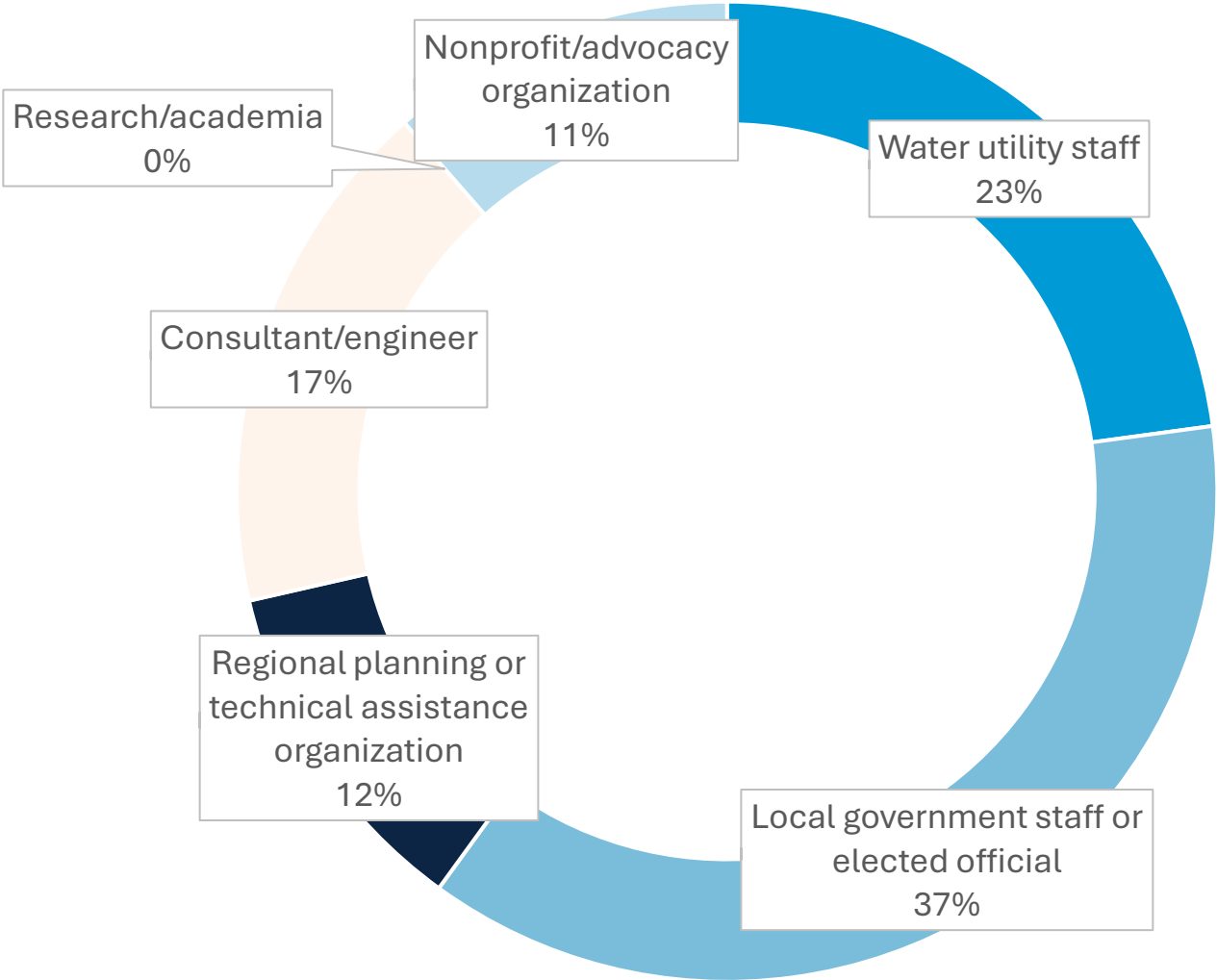
**Goal** Increase collaboration through coordinated water supply planning, shared investment, and stakeholder engagement across northeastern Illinois.

**Objectives:** By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- Have a shared language around collaboration
- Become familiar with differing water supply collaboration options
- Explore benefits and challenges of different collaboration models
- Practice identifying collaboration opportunities

# Who Participated?

# Which best describes your primary role?

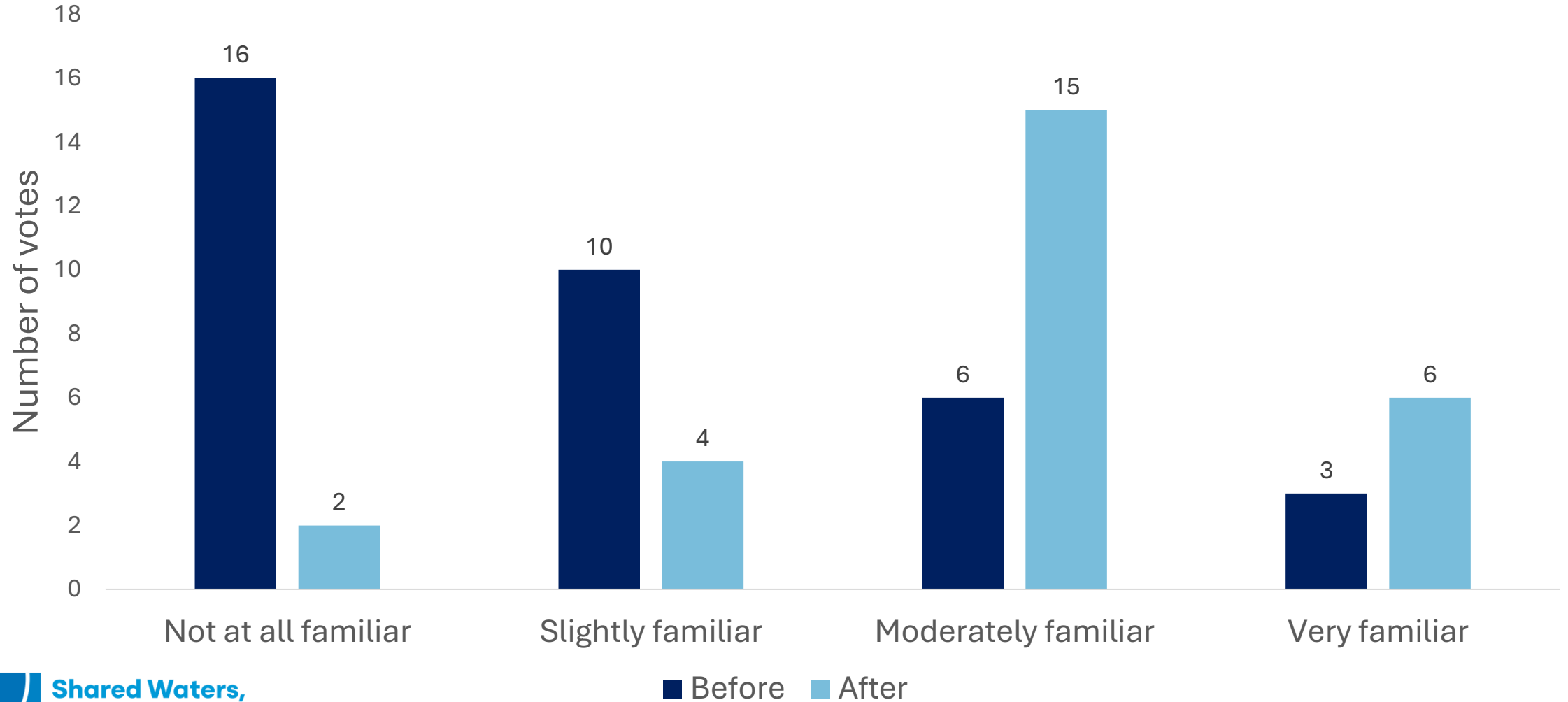


# What's your biggest water challenge right now?

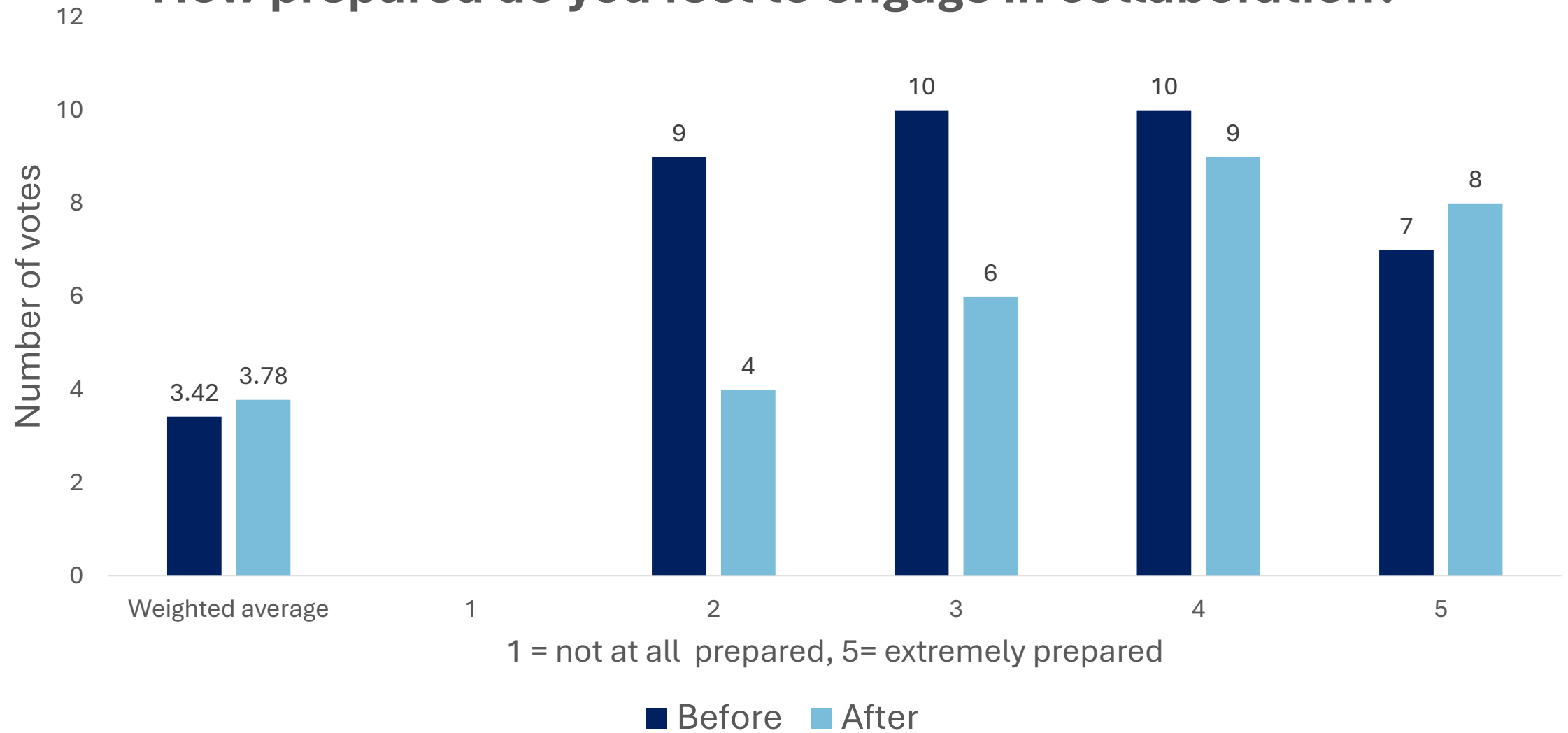


# Participant baseline and growth

# How familiar are you with collaboration models?



# How prepared do you feel to engage in collaboration?



# **Regional Themes Emerging from Workshop 1 Discussions**

# Scenario A – Large System with Regional Dependence

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## Scenario summary:

A large metropolitan system supplies neighboring communities that vary widely in capacity and are advancing capital investments at different paces without a shared regional planning framework.

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## Breakout insights:

- Informal coordination is insufficient for aligning capital investments
- Need for a shared regional asset inventory and planning baseline
- Smaller communities face funding and technical capacity disadvantages
- Affordability and lead service line replacement are increasing pressure

# Scenario B – Multi-Community Shared Infrastructure

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## Scenario summary:

Several communities rely on shared water infrastructure but face uneven financial capacity and governance challenges as major reinvestment decisions approach.

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## Breakout insights:

- Governance clarity and voting structures are critical
- Capital reinvestment and affordability pressures are uneven
- Systemwide capital needs assessment recommended as first step
- Shared staffing and technical resources could reduce disparities

# Scenario C – Regional Planning Without Binding Authority

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## Scenario Summary:

Multiple communities depend on a shared groundwater source, but planning remains voluntary and uncoordinated despite declining water levels.

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## Breakout Insights:

- Groundwater decline and land use decisions are misaligned
- Voluntary planning lacks implementation tools
- Stronger reporting compliance and shared modeling needed
- Incentives required to move from planning to action

# Scenario D – Capacity Gaps in Smaller Communities

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## Scenario Summary:

Smaller or under-resourced communities struggle to participate in collaboration due to staffing, technical, and administrative limitations.

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## Breakout Insights:

- Staffing and expertise constraints limit engagement
- Need for formalized shared services and technical support
- Centralized information hubs could reduce barriers
- Relationship-building seen as a practical entry point

# Common threads across scenarios

**Data & baseline gaps** - Communities lack shared asset inventories, consistent reporting, and unified capital planning

**Governance & alignment challenges** - Informal coordination is common, but clearer decision-making structures are needed to align investments and policies

**Capacity constraints** - Smaller and under-resourced communities face staffing, technical, and funding limitations that restrict participation

**Affordability & capital pressures** - Lead service line replacement, aging infrastructure, and uneven financial capacity are driving urgency

**Interest in collaboration, but limited mechanisms** - Participants expressed willingness to collaborate, but identified few tools or incentives to move from voluntary planning to implementation.

**What's next?**

# Next workshop



**Collaborating with water utilities and local governments (February 18)**



**Creating a water sustainability plan (April 23)**



**Addressing utility climate and drought preparedness (June 3)**



**Modernizing Illinois' well impact review process (September 10)**



**Understanding water governance and management in Illinois (November 12)**

# Thank you!

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