



THE UNITED STATES' EXPERIENCE

TITLE:
**BUILDING A WATER TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER AND FOSTERING
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Country: United States

Coordinating Institution: The Water Council

Duration of the experience: September 2013 - present

Webpage: www.thewatercouncil.com



1) Objectives

Following the formation of a regional economic development organization in Southeast Wisconsin and the thorough assessment of the region's economic strengths, it was discovered that Milwaukee had an undiscovered and unique industrial jewel with a rich history in water technology manufacturing.

With companies that could trace their history many generations, and whose names were synonymous with the world's leading water businesses, along with university water research programs that had developed an international recognition, the challenge before a group of business, NGO, and academic leaders was how to coalesce this unparalleled cluster.

Whether you are in industry, academia, or government; the Milwaukee Region offers a confluence of expertise and resources providing current and leading-edge technology, as well as solutions needed to succeed in the world water marketplace.

In 2007, these leaders set an objective to build a world water hub in Milwaukee that would:

- Build cross-sector and global research in addition to business partnerships.
- Develop programs to train our talent.
- Solve the ever-increasing challenges within the international water space.
- Fostering new water-technology companies that would help shape the region in a world water hub.

2) Relevance

When the formation of The Water Council was first envisioned, the idea of industry clusters in the world was relatively new, with concentrations primarily focused on information technology and biotechnology. Not only was there no such thing as a water technology cluster, there was not even a true recognition by many business experts that the water technology businesses even existed. Companies that measured, moved, treated, and heated water were pigeon-holed into industry types that did not recognize their core feature of knowing how to work with water. Since 2011, when The Water Council was rapidly growing, other regions across the United States have picked up the banner of working to create water technology clusters that would align with their strengths.

The Water Council also spawned the development clusters in the Milwaukee region with the creation of clusters focused on Energy, Power & Control as well as Food & Beverage.

3) Concrete activities and actions

Co-founded by Paul Jones, retired Chairman & CEO of A. O. Smith Corporation, and Rich Meeusen, Chairman, President, and CEO of Badger Meter, along with the Council's founding President, Dean Amhaus and a cadre of business and education leaders set out to link together and leverage the existing water-related assets in the Milwaukee Region in order to build a world hub for water research, education and economic development. The Council aims to achieve this mission with the following approaches:

- Corporate - University Linkages
- Education & Talent Development
- Global Leadership on Water Quality
- Strategic Partnerships & Communication

Notable activities include:

- Designated as a UN Global Compact City, one of only 17 worldwide, with a commitment to serve as a source of global expertise in water.
- Creation of the only School of Freshwater Sciences in the United States.
- Six water summits that bring together industry, academic, and NGO experts annually.
- A National Science Foundation Industry/University Cooperative Research Center that unites two universities and six businesses.
- International business and research partnerships from China to France and several points in between.
- A Career Pathway Team that facilitates students' understanding of the career possibilities in water and associated education requirements.

4) Achievements and results

A historic moment for The Water Council occurred in September 2013 when the Global Water Center opened its doors and a vision became a reality. The Center is meant to support and nurture water-related startups to independence, while also providing research space for universities and established water-related companies.

The development of the Global Water Center is an important milestone as it established a highly visible base for The Water Council and a platform to grow Milwaukee's water technology cluster.

The Center is a one-of-a-kind research and business facility housed in a seven-story, century-old warehouse loft. Recognizing Milwaukee's historic past, the Center models how the City of Milwaukee is shifting from heavy manufacturing to a blue economy.

With the importance of creating a unique synergistic ecosystem encouraging innovative collaboration, The Water Council has created the world's only water technology accelerator, driving engagement between seasoned water professionals, researchers, and entrepreneurs.

One of the most exciting developments in the Center is the BREW (Business. Research. Entrepreneurship. In Wisconsin.) which is the first mentor-driven seed accelerator in the world that focuses on global freshwater challenges. The goal is to unleash unique water technology start-ups and create opportunities in the water industry for entrepreneurs.

5) Sustainability

Over the years, the Council has been fortunate to receive strong support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, as well generating income from its annual Water Summit – now in its 7th Year.

As the Council matures, it also diversifies its funding sources as it generates lease and rental revenue from the Global Water Center. The fact that the Center is expected to be fully leased by the end of 2014 has required the organization to look at purchasing a second building, which will drive additional lease revenue of water technology companies that wish to co-locate near the Center.

The Council recognizes that it must continue to expand and grow its funding streams, and therefore, it is exploring an option of investing in start-up companies, seeking funding from national foundations as well as being part of a joint venture that would create a new micro water/wastewater/energy system that could be utilized worldwide. There is no question that The Water Council has established solid footing that will enable it to thrive for the long-term.

6) Lessons learned

Taking into account all that has been achieved in its brief history, there are three specific areas where The Water Council has demonstrated novel “best practice” approaches that can be beneficial to other cities/regions across the world:

1. Creation of a private sector driven cluster. Often times the idea of creating an economic cluster is driven by a government entity or economic development organization. For Milwaukee’s water technology cluster, it was entirely developed by and for businesses and academia that were directly working in the area of water innovation.
2. Creation of a vertical industry accelerator that embraces all components of a cluster. Typical business accelerators cater to a wide-range of entrepreneurs that, frankly, may encompass businesses that have nothing in common. The Water Council wanted to go one large step further by creating a facility that targeted one vertical industry – water – but also united entrepreneurs with medium and large water technology companies as well as university water researchers and graduate students.
3. Creation of a vertical industry entrepreneur-training program. The BREW is designed to provide entrepreneurs with the vital business training AND to provide the added advantage of working in the same vertical industry.

7) Capacity for the exchange of this experience

Cooperation modality	Cooperation modalities the institution can provide to others	The institution may be able to provide this cooperation to others by
Information Sharing	X	August 2014 and ongoing
Conference Calls	X	August 2014 and ongoing
Videoconferences	X	August 2014 and ongoing
Workshops	X	August 2014 and ongoing
Technical and Experts Visits	X	August 2014 and ongoing

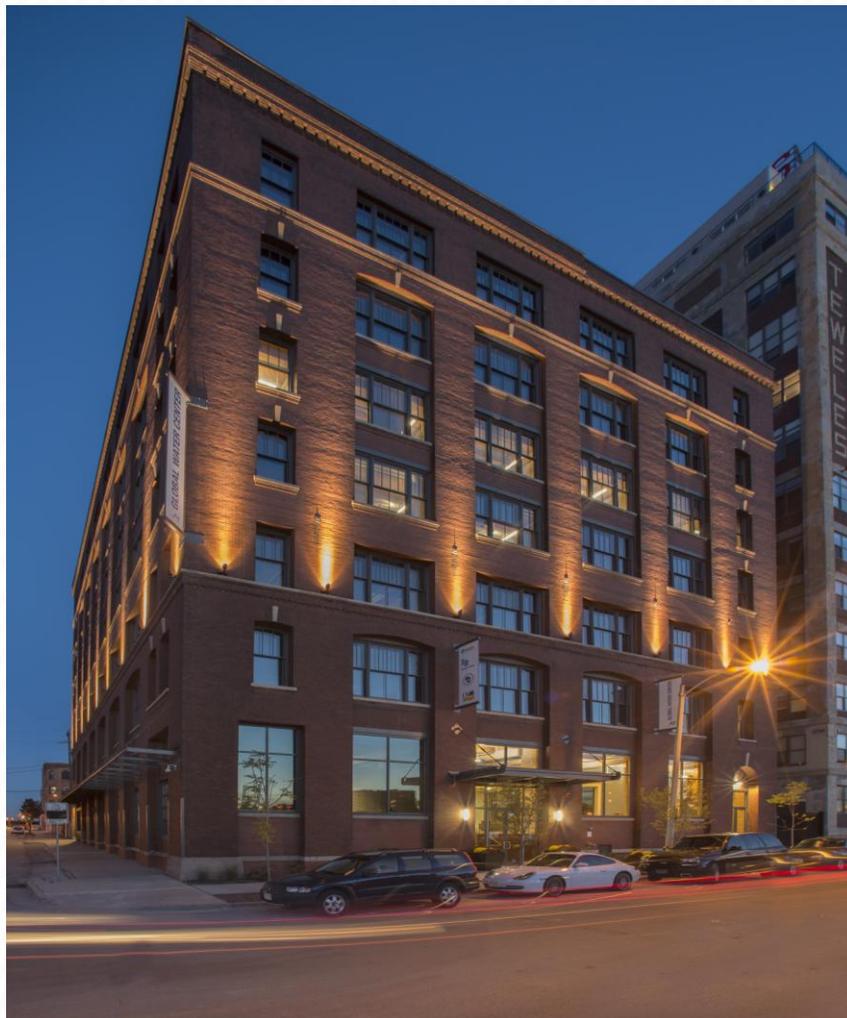
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9) Key persons involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the experience

9 a.

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