



## **Isle Utilities launches Minority-Led US Utilities Trial Reservoir to advance innovation, climate and environmental justice in the water sector**

January 25, 2024 — Today, Isle Utilities announces the launch of the Minority-Led US Utilities (MLUU) Trial Reservoir, a groundbreaking initiative focused on empowering innovation and advancing climate and environmental justice in minority-led US utility companies.

The MLUU Trial Reservoir is part of Isle’s wider Trial Reservoirs initiative, which provides sources of loan funding to speed up the introduction of technologies in the water industry. It will be both led by, and offer support to, minority-led US utilities that supply water and sanitation services to disadvantaged communities.

Acknowledging the findings of the Water Research Foundation’s 2013 [survey](#), which highlighted underrepresentation of minority leaders, the MLUU Trial Reservoir strives to empower and amplify the voices of minority-led utilities by reducing financial and technical risks associated with innovation.

As well as fostering inclusivity within the water sector, the initiative acknowledges the environmental and social vulnerabilities faced by minority communities. Studies have shown that Safe Drinking Water Act violations are more likely to occur in communities with higher racial, economic, and social vulnerability. By supporting minority-led utilities, the MLUU Trial Reservoir aims to address both the underrepresentation of these communities in technology innovation discussions and the disproportionate environmental harms they face.

The Minority-Led US Utilities Trial Reservoir is unique in that it will support a trial of any technology that will solve the utility’s problems, with a special focus on making progress towards social and/or environmental sustainability goals.

Dr Reshmina William, Project Manager at Isle Utilities, said:

*“The Minority-Led US Utilities Trial Reservoir recognizes the unique challenges faced by minority utility leaders, including disproportionate expectations, pressures, and barriers to entry. This includes a lack of support to “fail forward” in order to drive innovation at their utilities.*

*“By providing financial de-risking for trials of novel technologies, methods and know-how, this new Trial Reservoir will help minority-led utilities and utility leaders overcome these challenges and drive meaningful innovation while also helping them meet their climate and environmental justice goals.*

*“The challenges addressed by the MLUU Trial Reservoir include mitigating the impact of climate change; improving access to clean, safe, affordable drinking water; and solving problems that disproportionately affect communities that have been historically marginalized.”*

The MLUU continues the Trial Reservoir legacy of spurring sustainable water innovation while ensuring an equitable playing field for all utilities, and has been designed with the leadership of minority-led utilities such as Greater Cincinnati Water Works and Louisville Municipal Sanitation District.

Dr Cathy Bernardino Bailey, Executive Director of Greater Cincinnati Water Works, said:

*“The water utility industry is still a very white, male dominated industry and it brings a lot of challenges in the expectations that people sometimes have of us; sometimes it's hard to move in this space. When I first started in this role, I was more guarded on some of the decisions that I would make, because I knew that a lot of eyes were on me.*

*“With innovation, you have to put [risky] things out there, and you have to fail forward, and you have to be open to failing, because when you fail you learn so much [...] you have a lot of information for the next time. But as a person of color leading a large water utility, you have to take guarded risks. You can't jump out there and be innovative as much as you want to, because that failure for a person of color could be the moment that puts you out in the street without a job, and so we look at innovation a lot differently, and many times we don't take the same risk that some other leaders might.”*

As part of Isle’s ongoing commitment to supporting technology and innovation in the water sector, the MLUU Trial Reservoir assumes 100% of the financial risk, offering utilities a unique opportunity to champion innovation without financial concerns.

For more information about the Trial Reservoirs and the Minority-Led US Utilities Trial Reservoir program, please visit: <https://www.isleutilities.com/trial-reservoirs/>

**Media Contact:**

For more information please contact —  
Dr Reshmina William (Project Manager, Isle Utilities) —  
reshmina.william@isleutilities.com

**Notes to editor****About the Trial Reservoirs:**

The Trial Reservoirs are sources of loan funding to speed up the introduction of innovations in the water and energy sectors, and adjacent industries. The Trial Reservoirs overcome barriers to innovation by blending a revolving loan financing instrument with a technology accelerator for innovators, providing a technology assessment service for end users and introductions to potential investors. Initial funding to establish the Trial Reservoirs was provided by the Isle Group. Following the success of the first Trial Reservoir launched in 2021, funding also comes from sponsors who share Isle's belief that adopting innovation is key to sustainable, equitable development. These sponsors include utilities, consultants, investors and technology companies.

**About Isle Utilities:**

Isle is a global innovation consultancy specializing in the development and commercialization of emerging technologies in the water and environmental sectors. We work across sectors from utilities and industry to finance and technology, helping clients identify, evaluate and adopt the best technologies and management practices. We understand the challenges the environment is facing and help find and create the solutions to solve them. We believe that accelerating the adoption of innovative solutions will improve communities, environment, and safeguard public health around the world.