

2017 USDA ThinkWater Fellowship

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Overview

ThinkWater (www.thinkwater.us) is a systems thinking initiative funded by the US Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture to improve public understanding, scholarly research, and education and outreach around critical water issues. The 2017 USDA ThinkWater Fellowship is designed to develop the systems thinking capacity of professionals in water education, extension, and outreach from strategic states, regions, and American Indian nations across the country.

We are seeking professionals who work in positions that would allow them to plan and implement education and outreach programs to teach systems thinking to audiences working on or concerned with water. Fellows will be expected to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to integrate systems thinking into their water education, extension and outreach work. Fellows will receive focused training and professional development over the course of several months that will enable them to lead systems thinking education and outreach over the long term. The 3rd annual Cornell Systems Thinking Symposium will provide a venue for Fellows to present their statewide strategy and early insights about implementation in their state.

We will select up to 10 outstanding applicants who work on water programming at a state or regional level, including Indian nations. Fellows will be taught the skills, approaches, and theoretical frameworks of systems thinking to apply directly to their water programming. Specifically, they will be taught a proven method for teaching the universal rules underlying systems thinking that is suitable for all ages and populations. For the 2017 fellowship year, we are particularly interested in educators working on water programming in the following strategic states/regions: California, Colorado, desert Southwest, Southeast United States, Chesapeake Bay region, Great Plains, Great Lakes region, and the Mississippi River basin.

ThinkWater Fellows will receive 20-30 hours of cutting-edge training and consultation in systems thinking with Drs. Derek and Laura Cabrera and other ThinkWater staff over the course of a year. All training, professional development, and consultation will be conducted virtually through online trainings, video conference calls, etc. Fellows will have ongoing access to and support from these leading systems thinking experts and access to the extensive ThinkWater resources. More broadly, the fellowship enables participants to be part of a cohort with frequent opportunities for socializing and collaboration, and to enjoy increased exposure through presentation, networking, and media opportunities.

The 3rd annual Cornell Systems Thinking Symposium will provide a venue for Fellows to present their statewide strategy and early insights about implementation in their state. All expenses including travel and board associated with presenting at the Symposium will be covered by

ThinkWater. Fellows should expect to be in Ithaca, New York, a minimum of 3 days around the Symposium date.

A critical function of the ThinkWater Fellowship is to assess the application of systems thinking training to the ongoing work of professionals in water education and outreach. ThinkWater Fellows will be participants in a research study on the effects of systems thinking on state and regional water education and outreach.

As such, Fellows will be asked to participate in pre-assessment and post-assessment activities, including videotaped interviews (either in person or virtually), online training, surveys, journaling, focus groups, and 1-on-1 consultation. Their training will culminate in a 10-minute TED-style public presentation and development of state/regional level plan.

Benefits

Fellows will enjoy several benefits from their involvement in the ThinkWater Fellows program, including multiple additions to their curriculum vitae. Fellows can expect the following:

- Become part of a close-knit cohort of leaders on water education and outreach with opportunities for consultation, socializing, and collaboration;
- Support for your ongoing programs by leading experts in systems thinking and translational research, Drs. Derek and Laura Cabrera, state coordinators, and the ThinkWater team;
- Live broadcast TED-style talk of your work at the Cornell Systems Thinking Symposium;
- Receive certification in systems thinking;
- 2017 ThinkWater Fellow honorific title;
- Access to national leaders, scholars and practitioners in the fields of water policy, education, and systems thinking.

Requirements

Fellows must currently offer and be able to influence water-related programming at the state, regional, or Indian nation level (with priority given to those that are in the identified states or regions). All Fellows are expected to participate in all research elements, complete all elements of the training and professional development in its entirety, and participate in consultations as needed. Specific components of the Fellows program are as follows:

- Pre & Post surveys (1 hour)
- Participate in pre- and post-fellowship interviews (approximately 3 hours)
- Take online training (approximately 3 hours)
- Webinar Cohort Sessions (3 hours total)
- Consultation time working on your topic (approximately 5 hours)
- Presentation Practice session (5)
- Development of state/region/Nation programming plan to integrate systems thinking into water education and outreach (based on existing, pilot work in Wisconsin, under the direction of Dr. Jeremy Solin) (5-10 hours).
- 10-minute TED-style talk at Cornell Systems Thinking Symposium
- Agree to allow use of likeness and voice in media and research materials (i.e., release photo and video permissions)

Important Dates:

These dates are all tentative. Specific dates will be announced in the final 2017 ThinkWater Fellowship Request for Proposals.

- Applications due (February 17, 2017)
- Fellows announced (February 28, 2017)
- Brief Pre-Assessment Interviews (March/April 2017)
- Take online Systems Thinking 101 training (March/April 2017)
- Post-training interview, including needs assessment through focus group (April/May 2017)
- Individualized work and ongoing mentorship (May - September 2016)
- Live-streaming Cornell conference with 10-minute TED-style talks (**date TBD; likely Nov/Dec 2017**)
- Completion of state/regional plan and begin implementation (March 2018)

Application

Please complete the online application located at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017USDAFellows>

Your application will be reviewed by a national panel of water and systems thinking experts. All applicants are encouraged to contact Laura Cabrera, lac19@cornell.edu, with any questions.

Application will include:

1. demographic/contact details;
2. a short overview of your current position and programming;
3. a short write up of the potential of integrating systems thinking into your programming;
4. why you want to be a ThinkWater Fellow; and
5. any related supplemental materials (e.g., CV, published papers, etc.)