

KanCap – the next steps for board/council training

My first exposure to KanCap, the recently introduced board/council training program to improve water systems, was nearly two years ago. It was more technical and detail oriented than most learning experiences. I spent two months assisting in the proofing and making corrections for the original print files before delivery to the State Printer in Topeka. It was a good primer for someone so new to the industry.

Background

KanCap has taken on more meaning for me during the year or so since my first look, as I've been writing, researching and conversing industry terms to produce magazine articles, brochures and press releases for KRWA.



Dan Knupp
Communications

Growing appreciation for the work put into KanCap comes daily the more I see, read and click. All the work on KanCap didn't happen overnight or during the two years of KRWA professionals worked at filling the KanCap Manual with content and readying it for production.

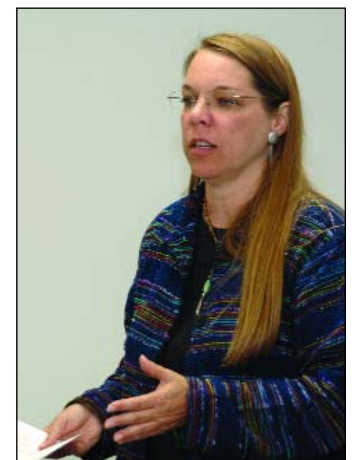
More than 10 years ago, KRWA printed and started selling the resource book, *The Water Board Bible*, by KRWA General Manager Elmer Ronnebaum and Ellen Miller. This 95-page resource book evolved through several print editions and was followed by a series of handbooks with topics on other water system issues. These topics

included: personnel management, financial/accounting, communications, working with experts, when developers come to town, and *The Water System Operator's Handbook*. The successful series has sold locally, regionally and nationally and has

Elmer Ronnebaum said, "Ever since I was first elected to a rural water board in 1972, I hoped that someone would develop a 'resource' that would contain information that people could use to better manage and govern their water systems." I can imagine that at the time he never



provided essential information for better management of water systems – KanCap improves on and wraps all the management, financial and



Left: Douglas RWDs 3 and 5 board members take an exam at the end of the managerial section training.
Right: KDHE Capacity Development Coordinator Cathy Tucker-Vogel makes a point during the session.

**"I want to get initial input from those who are attending, find any rough spots and make adjustments to course outlines before adding additional trainers."
– Cathy Tucker-Vogel**

technical topics into one 270-page manual and an electronic version on an interactive CD.

With the rollout of KanCap, KRWA has with the help of a statewide group of water system people and other industry professionals developed a truly remarkable resource, one that jumps over the "Water Board Bible" series by a country mile!

dreamed that KRWA would be that resource developer.

Train the trainer

Tucker-Vogel, Capacity Development Coordinator at KDHE, Topeka, is now in the process of evaluating the program training plan and is attending all of the preliminary KanCap training sessions. She explained further, "I want to get initial input from those

who are attending, find any rough spots and make adjustments to course outlines before adding additional trainers.”

KDHE hopes to see trainers volunteering from the ranks of stakeholders like the KRWA, the Kansas League of Municipalities, the Midwest Assistance Program, the Kansas Section American Water Works Association and state and federal agencies of Kansas. Building a statewide network of trainers for a

Training so far includes the initial sessions taught at KRWA’s March Conference in Wichita and sessions taught in the field at rural water districts in Douglas and Lyon counties.

The field sessions I attended were scheduled by Cathy Tucker-Vogel and attended by boards of directors from Douglas RWD 5, Douglas RWD 3 and Lyon RWD 1, in Americus, Kan., near Emporia. The two Douglas County boards

members from Phillips RWD 1. This group took the initial training at the March Conference.

Manager comments

Bruce Smith, manager, Douglas RWD 3 doesn’t want a board that becomes complacent. But issues like the likely increases in purchase price of Clinton Lake water has his board members, many who have been on the board for a number of years, wanting to know more about



Left: Second from right, John Haas, Ranson Financial Consultants, Wichita, discusses financial points with one of the board members taking training at the Douglas RWD 3 office building.



Right: KDHE Environmental Technician Vicki Wessel teaches the technical component of the training to staff and board members at Lyon RWD 1.

complicated training regimen is no small task – but a necessary one. This is true for not only RWDs but also for small Kansas communities having problems that the training could alleviate.

Training is underway

With KRWA finishing work on the KanCap manual and CD, contracted by KDHE, the training program has proceeded to the actual training of under the guidance of Cathy Tucker-Vogel. The management sessions, Tucker-Vogel; the financial, John Haas, Ranson Financial Consultants of Wichita; and the technical; KDHE Environmental Technician Vicki Wessel, Topeka and KRWA Training Director Gary Armentrout and KRWA Consultant Pat McCool.

attended a joint session at Douglas RWD 3. Additional sessions are being scheduled weekly and calendars are beginning to fill.

During the three, three-hour training sessions I followed course outlines, watched as the handbook and CD were demonstrated as they were used in the teaching mode and visited with board members and instructors to get impressions of KanCap as a resource.

Preliminary reactions

Both Douglas RWDs had great participation with the majority of board members attending and all but two board members from Lyon RWD attended the training. The feedback from board members and staff in my small sampling has been positive. I also spoke with board

handling new anticipated changes in their business.

“The complexity of our RWD’s business is increasing dramatically. Customer expectations on water quality and quantity are growing at a similar rate. KanCap training will help both RWD employees and board members take a more professional, comprehensive businesslike approach to our system goals,” said Smith, “Infrastructure growth and related costs during the next 10 years alone will be a challenge that KanCap training will help staff and board to meet head-on.”

Sharon Dwyer, business office manager of Douglas RWD 5, has high hopes for the board’s participation and has concerns similar to neighbor Bruce Smith as she explained, “Learning is a positive experience. The KanCap program is helping both new and

From idea to completion – KanCap



PHOTOS BY DAVE ADAMS

Kansas stakeholders, including organizations such as the Kansas League of Municipalities, Kansas AWWA, Midwest Assistance, Kansas Ground Water Association, public health agencies, KRWA, identified that a ‘board/council training program’ to improve management of public water systems should be a top priority as they discussed the state’s Capacity Development Strategy. As a result, KDHE published an advertisement for a “Request for Proposal” to develop such a program. Several organizations and consultants, including KRWA, submitted project proposals. KRWA’s proposal was chosen by state agencies following their reviews and interviews with a short-list of potential providers.

“Our original concept was to produce one video in conjunction with a training manual,” said Elmer Ronnebaum. “But I wondered, ‘who will be the professional actors for this?’ People expect to see something close to MSNBC when they watch video and there was also the problem of putting enough information into a single video. The idea of having a multitude of topics on short videos made more sense,” Ronnebaum said.

The “whiz bang” wasn’t easy

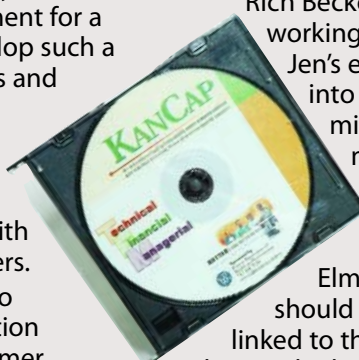
On a snowy Sunday afternoon in December 2003 while surfing the Internet Elmer and KRWA Web designer Jen Sharp happened to locate new software that could compile all the ideas that KRWA had envisioned for a board/council training

program. It was newly released software by a company in Sydney, Australia, Kookaburra Studios. A copy of the “KnowledgePresenter” software was ordered. At the time there were fewer than 30 users worldwide. (See www.knowledgepresenter.com)

Technical challenges were numerous in creating the interactive KanCap CD. As one example, no one had combined the use of Knowledgepresenter software with Flash Macromedia. Another example was tying that to a 270-page handbook PDF file that would operate on the many Adobe Reader versions. To top those issues, the project had to make sure that the integration of these three software programs would run on any version of any computer browser.

“The credit in building the KanCap interactive CD goes to Jen Sharp of JenSharp.com,” Ronnebaum explained. “Between Ellen Miller’s major contributions as co-author, making sure that the editorial outline was complete and being followed, to Rich Becker of Rich Becker Design working on a 4-color layout, and then Jen’s efforts to turn simple questions into quizzes we named ‘inter-active mind-meters’ – KanCap became a mother lode of a project,” he added. Instead of one video, there are 52. At about 85% of the way through the project, Elmer decided that KanCap should also have additional PDF files linked to the project. There are 216 of these – the largest of which were developed from Power Point presentations with as many as 190 frames. The video sizes were adjusted so that the project might fit on one CD.

“KRWA appreciates the confidence KDHE afforded to KRWA in contracting the development of the project to the Association,” Ronnebaum says. By having other organizations and many people involved in developing the editorial outline, KanCap resulted in a unique project. Public water systems in Kansas will be long and well-served by it – but we all have KDHE to thank for providing the funding to have it developed.



existing board members learn and better understand what it takes to make a water district viable. This training can help board and council members and their staffs make good decisions when facing growth issues and capital improvement requirements and have a better understanding of new regulations.”

Operator/manager Warren Shown, Lyon RWD 1, expressed some worry that larger districts would be the ones taking advantage of KanCap training. “Our customers are fortunate to have a very sharp board. They pretty much know how operations work and ask the right questions. They wanted this training. Smaller districts may be reluctant to invest the time,” Shown explained. On the use of the KanCap CD, Shown noted, “With what I and the board have learned in KanCap, it will be a priority to have the CD on the computer during our board meetings.”

Board reactions

New Douglas RWD 5 board member, Kurt Look, has KanCap enthusiasm that is apparent, “It

stimulated discussion in our last two board meetings. Video clips have come up in our discussion topics and these references can quickly put some authenticity behind a position in discussion. I can’t say enough about the well done, quality content in the manual.” As an example, Look explained, “The rate increase experienced in Hoisington is a real world KanCap example that can show us how things could be better done here!”

Two board members of Phillips RWD 1, a newly formed RWD just now finishing the USDA financing process and should see construction start this November, have a different take on how KanCap may help them. Board Member Kay Kinter, explained, “As volunteers and board members we’re novices in the water business. We’re looking for what it takes to get our new RWD up and running in the near future.” Board Chair Doug Kaup added, “We will use the KanCap manual and CD as a personnel resource to help hire people, get an office system built and get the board up to speed as the

construction phase on the project begins this fall. All of our board members have been using the CD to study at home.”

Board Chair, Claude Rosewurm, Lyon RWD 1, agreed with others on the quality content and added, “This training gives a board a foundation, the who, what, when, where and how things should be done. It all will help staff do a better job. It also will allow us to give any new board members a great orientation – that orientation is all in the book.”

Claude also had the observation about the training presenters, “Besides doing a great job, being patient and exact in communicating some very technical concepts, explaining them very well. I also want to commend them and KDHE for coming out to present this to us. We couldn’t ask for better service!”

A good future

From comments heard and experiences with the program at this early date, the KanCap program is on the way to being the standard for training it was designed to do.



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