

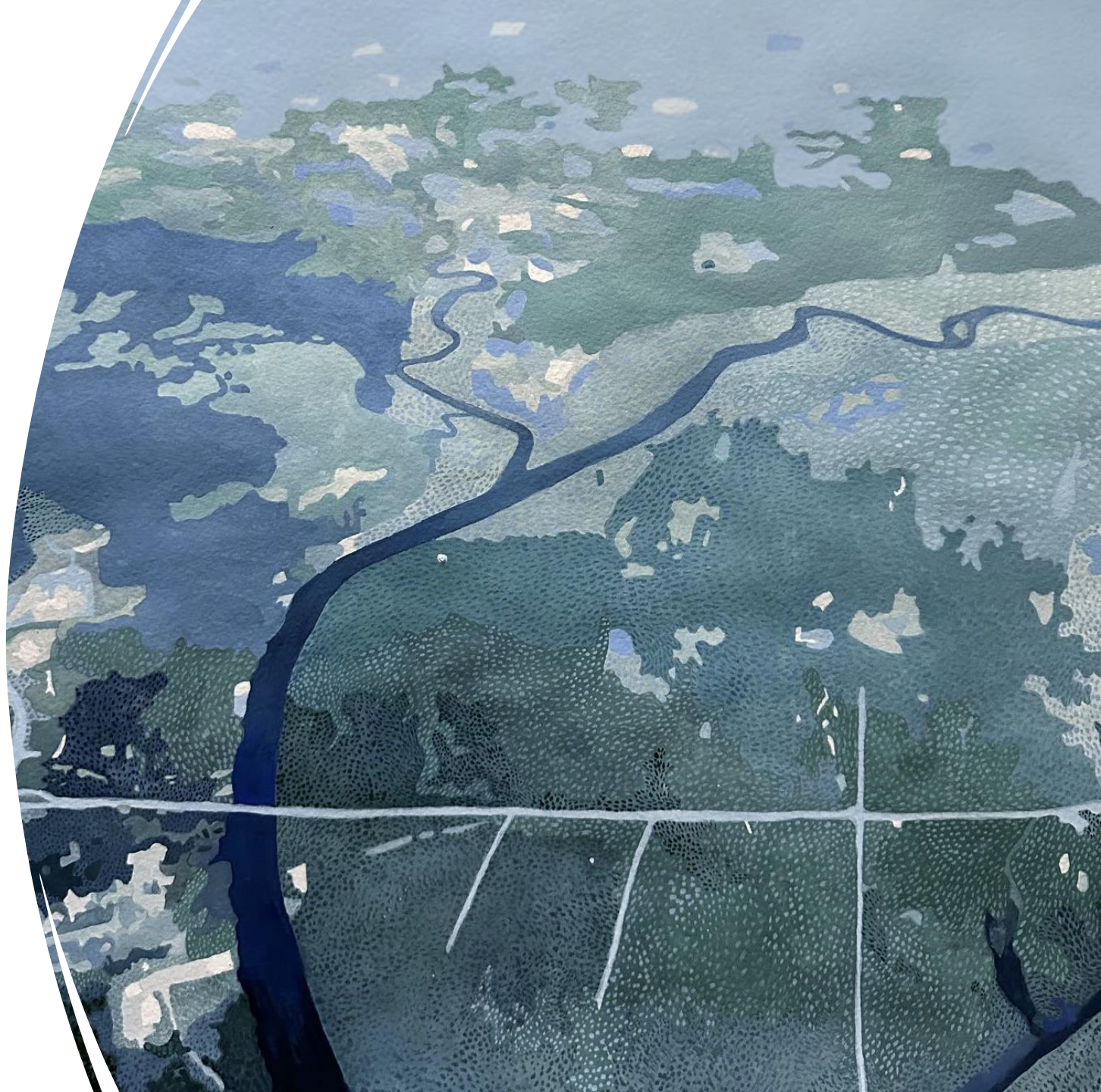
# Aspen National Water Strategy

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Newsha Ajami

with

Martin Doyle and Lilli Watson



# Grand Challenges



Over extraction of  
surface water and  
groundwater



Declining water  
quality and  
freshwater  
ecosystems



Uneven access to  
safe and affordable  
water services



Recurrent and  
unsustainable losses  
from water-related  
hazards



The U.S. has not had a truly comprehensive, unified National Water Strategy since 1950!

**Journal**

**AMERICAN WATER WORKS ASSOCIATION**

**VOL. 43 • FEBRUARY 1951 • NO. 2**

## **A Water Policy for the American People**

***President's Water Resources Policy Commission***

*A summary of recommendations from the report of the President's Water Resources Policy Commission, published in December 1950 by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. The report itself is in three volumes: Vol. 1—General Report; Vol. 2—Ten Rivers in America's Future; and Vol. 3—Water Resources Law.*

A Water Policy for the American People

Author(s): President's Water Resources Policy Commission

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# The Aspen National Water Strategy Initiative (ANWSI)



# ANWSI Process



This was an 18-month process.



The report was released on Feb  
5<sup>th</sup> of 2026

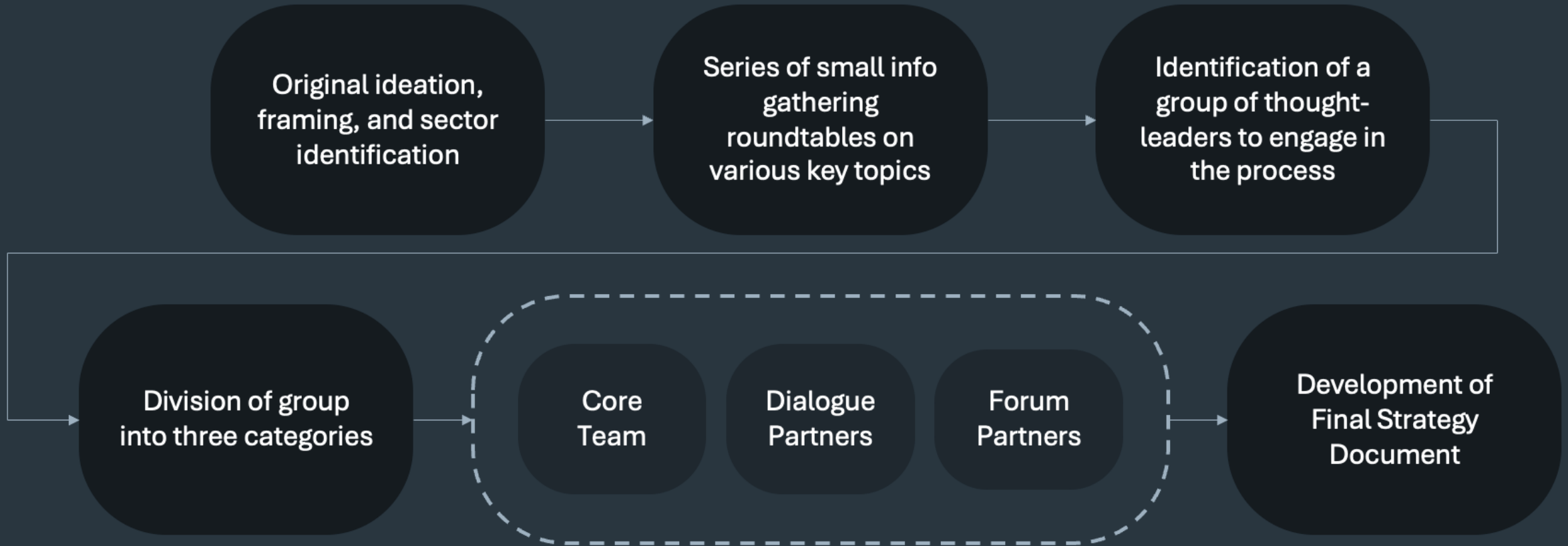
# The Aspen Water Strategy Initiative

**The goal of the Aspen Water Strategy is to ensure water security for the nation's communities, economy, and ecosystems**

- Co-led by Duke's Nicholas Institute and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, convened by the Aspen Institute
- Wide range of contributors from across the water sector:
  - Numerous individuals providing input on discrete topics
  - 35-member Water Strategy Group offering sustained engagement throughout the process
  - Forum participants who will challenge and strengthen the strategy



# ANWSI Process



## GRAND CHALLENGES



Over extraction of surface and groundwater



Declining water quality and freshwater ecosystems



Uneven access to safe and affordable water services



Unsustainable losses from water-related disasters

## ROOT CAUSES

Weak Governance

Market Failures

Capacity Deficits

Financial Barriers

Innovation Adoption Failures

Reactive Management



ASPEN  
NATIONAL WATER  
STRATEGY INITIATIVE

# Strategies

We propose 6 strategies, each of which addresses multiple Root Causes



Position water security as a cornerstone of the nation's economy



Equip communities to successfully address and adapt to increasing water-related risks and impacts



Reform water governance to establish clear structures and standards while enabling adaptive implementation of solutions



Redefine infrastructure to encompass alternative systems while maintaining and modernizing legacy assets.



Invest in rural water resources to strengthen both rural communities and regional water security.



Accelerate the adoption and deployment of innovative water solutions at scale.

# Strategy 1: Position water security as a cornerstone of the nation's economy.



**1A. Economic Value:** Quantify and communicate the economic value of water across critical sectors of the economy.

**1B. Critical Water Systems:** Invest in critical water resources and infrastructure to ensure economic competitiveness.

**1C. Human & Technological Capital:** Invest in the research, talent, and innovation systems needed to secure the nation's water future and fuel long-term economic growth.

## **Strategy 2:** Reform water governance to establish clear structures and standards while enabling adaptive implementation of solutions.



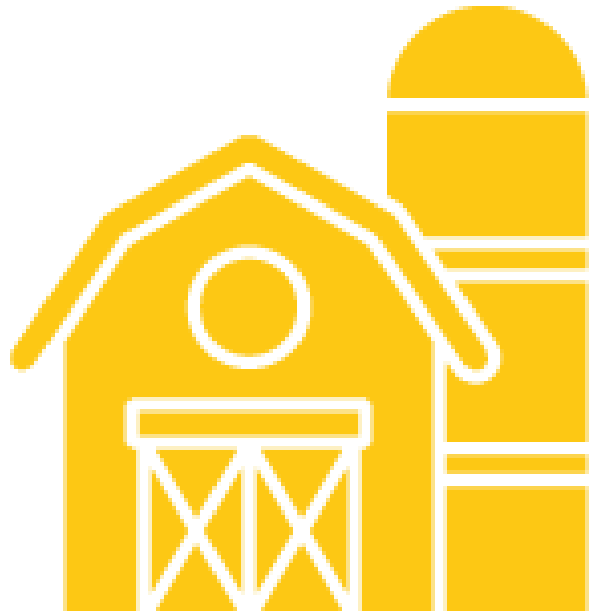
### **2A. Basin & Regional-Scale Governance:**

Make use of basin and regional-scale governance for compliance, financing, planning, and management.

**2B. Coordinated Action:** Ensure water regulation, permitting, funding, and management are efficiently administered and effectively coordinated across branches and levels of government.

**2C. Regulatory Modernization:** Update laws and regulations to address systemic gaps in existing water governance.

## Strategy 3: Invest in rural water resources to strengthen both rural communities and regional water security.



**3A. Rural Water Utilities:** Strengthen rural water services by ensuring safe, affordable, sustainable water in rural communities.

**3B. Basin Planning:** Facilitate collaborative surface water and groundwater planning and management by rural communities and their regional partners at the basin-scale.

## **Strategy 4:** Equip communities to address successfully and adapt to increasing water-related risks and impacts.

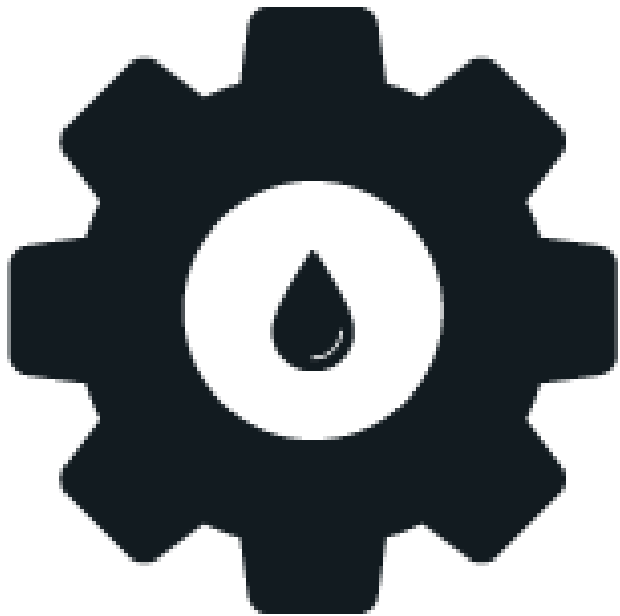


**4A. Risk Quantification & Disclosure:** Quantify and publicly disclose water-related risk information.

**4B. Disaster Preparedness & Recovery:** Enhance water system preparedness, expand risk-transfer mechanisms, and improve access to disaster funding.

**4C. Resilience & Adaptation:** Align development patterns and infrastructure standards with evolving water risks through forward-looking land-use and building policies.

# Strategy 5: Modernize water infrastructure while renewing existing assets.



**5A. Next Generation Infrastructure:** Expand the definition of infrastructure to encompass natural, built, digital, and human systems, and accelerate the adoption of modernized infrastructure systems.

**5B. Sustained Funding & Finance:** Ensure consistent sources of public and private capital are available to meet the most critical needs to update aging water systems and enable strategic asset decisions.

**5C. Infrastructure Interdependencies:** Create efficiencies and manage risks by leveraging the interconnected nature of water, energy, and transportation systems.

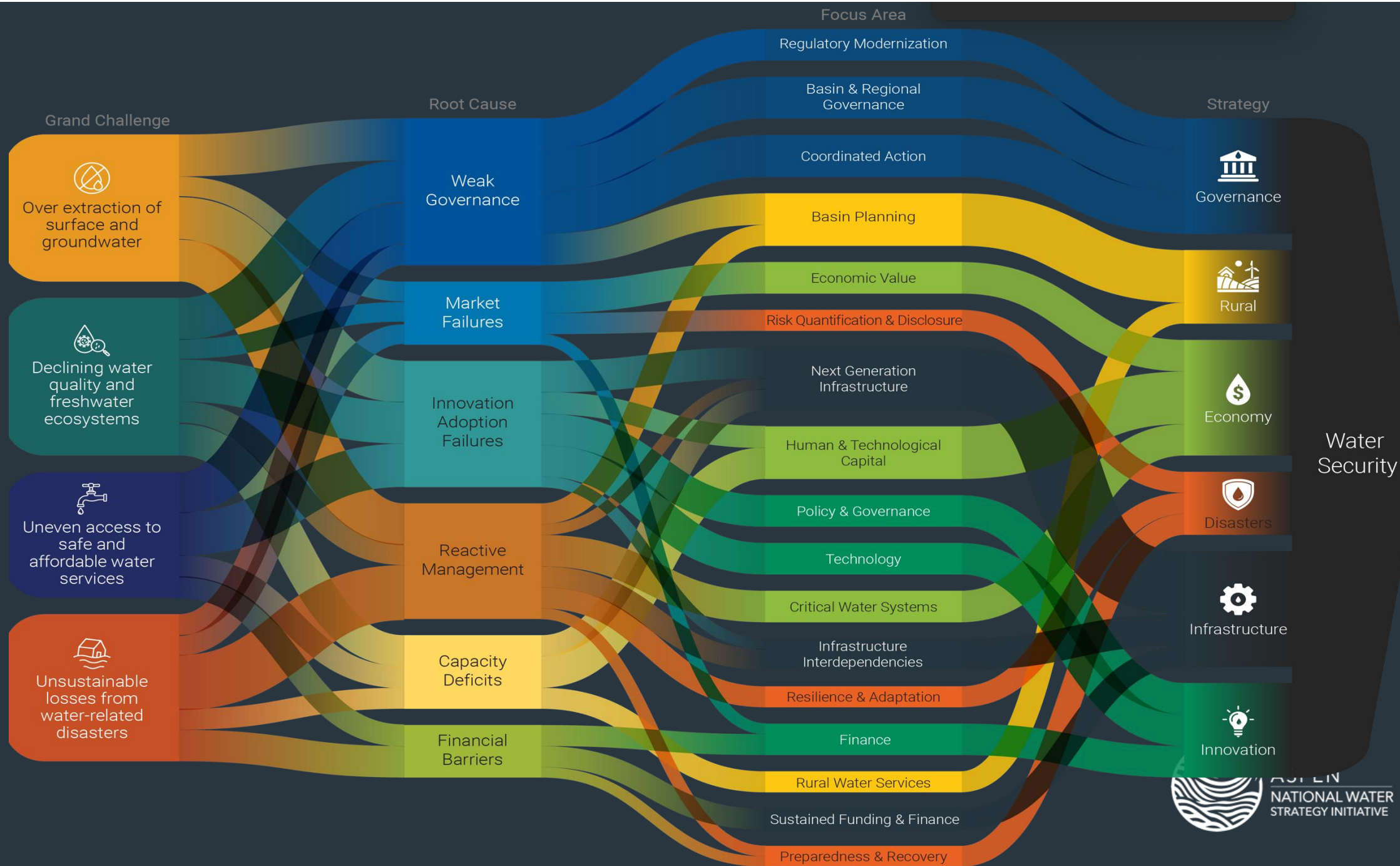
# **Strategy 6:** Accelerate the adoption and deployment of innovative water solutions at scale.



**6A. Policy and Governance:** Create a governance framework that enables transformative innovation in the water sector.

**6B. Technology:** Accelerate the development and deployment of next-generation solutions.

**6C Finance:** Reimagine investment and business models to unlock capital and accelerate deployment.



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Aspen National Water Strategy



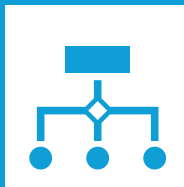
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of 2026



Dissemination & implementation  
of the strategy

# Thank you!

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