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Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Program

Grant Program Overview

To accelerate career pipelines in the water utilities sector and provide access to water utility workforce opportunities Congress, under the American Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, authorized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop a grant program under Section 1459E of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The grant program will further the goal of ensuring a strong pipeline of skilled and diverse workers in the water utilities sector.

In addition, under Clean Air Act Section 138(b)(2), which was created by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, Congress authorized EPA to award grants for workforce development activities that help reduce green-house gas emissions and other air pollutants that benefit disadvantaged communities.

EPA's current priorities include the following:

- Provide infrastructure investments and technical assistance in disadvantaged or historically underserved communities.
- Advance environmental justice and equity.
- Address climate change.
- Responsibly support and implement the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, commonly referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act.

Recent Grant Awards

On July 11, 2024, EPA announced the selections for the Innovative Water Workforce Development Grant Program, which supports expanding career opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector and elevating public awareness about jobs in the water workforce. EPA is providing over \$20 million to 13 organizations across the nation.

- **Project Area 1:** Targeted internships apprenticeships for skilled water utility trades.
 - National Rural Water Association (Oklahoma)
 - The Water Tower Institute, Inc. (Georgia)
- **Project Area 2:** Education programs designed for elementary, secondary, and higher education students.
 - Board of Regents Nevada System of Higher Education (Nevada)
 - University of New Mexico (New Mexico)
 - Wichita State University (Kansas)
- **Project Area 3:** Regional industry and workforce development collaborations to hiring qualified candidates.
 - Baltimore City Department of Public Works (Maryland)
 - Center for Watershed Protection, Inc. (Maryland)
 - Grand Rapids Community College (Michigan)
- **Project Area 4:** Leadership development, occupational training, mentoring, or cross-training programs that support career advancement.
 - American Water Works Association (Colorado)
 - Multiplier/WaterNow Alliance (California)
 - Rural Community Assistance Partnership (District of Columbia)
- **Project Area 5:** Education and training programs designed for decentralized (septic) water workers to support public health for communities that rely on private wells for drinking water or septic systems.
 - Pacific International Center for High Technology Research (Hawaii)

- **Project Area 6:** Training and development for workforce development programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants to benefit disadvantaged communities.
 - Energy Innovation Center Institute, Inc. (Pennsylvania)

Frontline workers at water and wastewater treatment utilities across the country are central to public health, environmental, and economic well-being in all communities, big and small. The water industry is facing wide-spread shortages of qualified workers due to expected retirements, new investments in the nation's infrastructure, and new technical and scientific skill sets required to operate and maintain these systems. This grant program supports collaboration among federal, state, and local governments and institutions of higher education, apprentice programs, labor organizations, high schools, and other community-based organizations to provide access to workforce opportunities and build career pipelines in the water sector.

- EPA News Release about selections from the 2023 funding opportunity <<https://epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-invests-20-million-water-workforce-training-and-career-development-part-investing>>.
- EPA News Release about the 2023 funding opportunity <<https://epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-availability-20-million-grants-create-career>>.

Historical Funding

On October 15, 2021, EPA announced the selection of nine organizations to receive a total of \$3.8 million in funding under the Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Program. These grants will build the nation's water workforce and connect individuals to career opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector, as well as expand public awareness about the opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utilities. Information on the inaugural award announcement and recipients is below:

- EPA's October 15, 2023 Press Release <<https://epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-announces-selections-38-million-grant-funding-help-build-water-workforce>> on the water sector workforce grant program

-  Inaugural Grant Request for Application (RFA) (pdf)
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/documents/final_workforce_rfa_ow.pdf> (334.93 KB)
- FY 2020 and FY 2021 Inaugural Recipients:
 -  East Central University (Oklahoma) (pdf)
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/east_central_university-factsheet.pdf> (1.58 MB)
 -  Rowan University (New Jersey) (pdf)
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/rowan_university-factsheet.pdf> (1.44 MB)
 -  Wichita State University (Kansas) (pdf)
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/wichita_university-factsheet.pdf> (555.66 KB)
 -  Grand Rapids Community College (Michigan) (pdf)
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/grand_rapids-factsheet.pdf> (1.29 MB)
 -  Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Government (Ohio) (pdf)
<<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/toledo-factsheet.pdf>> (1.28 MB)
 -  Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust (Washington State) (pdf)
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-09/mountain_%20sound_factsheet.pdf> (1.05 MB)
 -  Syracuse University (New York) (pdf)
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/syracuse_university-factsheet.pdf> (1.02 MB)
 -  Rural Community Assistance Partnership (Washington, D.C.) (pdf)
<<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/rcap-factsheet.pdf>> (879.51 KB)
 -  American Water Works Association (Colorado) (pdf)
<<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/awwa-factsheet.pdf>> (1.06 MB)

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