



Resources Guide

Water System Partnerships Workshop

This guide is for attendees to strengthen their understanding of water system partnerships and to help them create their own partnerships. These resources can also help with identifying next steps and additional resources to support water systems after a Water System Partnerships Workshop.

EPA Water System Partnerships

Water System Partnerships Homepage

<https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/water-system-partnerships>

EPA's website for water system partnerships is a one-stop-shop for states, water systems, and the general public to find cooperative tools to address their drinking water challenges. The website leads the user through the story of partnerships, exploring the different types of partnerships to consider, and outlining examples of successful partnerships across the country. There are pages with resources, at the national and state-level, to assist water systems in the partnerships process.

Water System Partnership Handbook

<https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/water-system-partnership-handbook>

EPA's Water System Partnership Handbook is an interactive tool to assist state drinking water programs in identifying, assessing, and implementing water system partnerships. Technical assistance providers may also find this tool useful. Additionally, it is intended to provide states and their drinking water programs, including tribal water systems, an opportunity to identify potential water system partnerships, by walking states through a series of interactive steps.

Types of Partnerships and Examples

<https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=a99dcae5390449e88ea74e4a7e3fcb07>

EPA's interactive website contains a map of partnership case studies organized by location and by partnership type (informal cooperation, contractual assistance, joint power agency, ownership transfer, and layered partnership). Each case study includes a summary and an overview of key players and benefits.

Water System Partnerships – Collaborative Approaches to Address Drinking Water Challenges

<https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=cfccb8b4975d4d72869bd0770510c1b0>

EPA's Water System Partnerships website allows users to explore an overview of water system partnerships, learn about partnership benefits, and review resources including an in-depth case study and state programs supporting partnerships.

Resources for Beginning a Water System Partnership

<https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=b66053d1b56747df9a66c1a4057afc1c>

EPA's Resources for Beginning a Water System Partnership website allows users to explore capacity development, managerial resources, workforce resources, financial resources, and relevant webinars.



Capacity Development

Capacity development is a wide-ranging topic that focuses on a water system’s ability to have adequate technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity, which can help a water system consistently provide drinking water that meets federal regulations. Every state is required to implement a Capacity Development program. Water systems and technical assistance providers can use the following tools and resources to learn more about capacity development:

- Prior to entering a partnership, water systems may find it helpful to assess their TMF capacity. There are many available tools and examples of how to conduct this analysis [including this form from the California Department of Public Health Drinking Water Program](#).
- The Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA) has guidance documents and tools to help water systems learn more about capacity development practices. These can be found on the [ASDWA Capacity Development Resources](#) website.
- [The Effective Water Utility Management Initiative](#) includes resources that can help utilities improve utility management (i.e., through TMF and overall capacity development).
- EPA has a webpage devoted to providing [capacity development resources](#) to water systems.

Funding

Funding for partnerships work can come from many sources. EPA has established Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs) in each of the 10 EPA Regions, which may have funding available for partnerships that struggle to find funding sources. The contact information for these sources can be found on EPA’s [EFC website](#). The following resources can help water systems find available funding sources:

- EPA’s [Water Finance Clearinghouse](#) allows users to browse through hundreds of resources and funding opportunities. The Clearinghouse also hosts learning modules on drinking water funding and financing topics.
- Each state implements a state revolving fund (SRF); one for drinking water activities and one for clean water activities.
 - Information on project eligibility for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) is available in the [DWSRF Eligibility Handbook](#).
 - Information on project eligibility for the Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF) is available in the [Overview of CWSRF Eligibilities](#) document.
- National organizations, such as the Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE), produce online guides and tools for water systems focused on financing water projects. [AWE’s website](#) includes information about maintaining financial sustainability.
- If considering a feasibility study, see the California State Water Resources Control Board’s [Feasibility Study template](#).
- If considering a rate study, see [RCAP’s Formulate Great Rates Guidebook](#).

Asset Management

Asset management is an important part of any water system partnership where resources will be shared or transferred. Developing or implementing a robust asset management program may be challenging, but there are many resources that can help:



- [The American Water Works Association](#) (AWWA) has created multiple technical resources to improve asset management including manuals and standards.
- An important component of asset management includes developing an asset management plan. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection created a [spreadsheet to develop a basic asset management program](#).
- EPA has a webpage dedicated to [asset management resources for states and small systems](#).
- New York Department of Environmental Conservation developed an [asset management guide](#) specific to municipal sewage systems.

Communication

Ensuring appropriate communication between a water system (or multiple systems) and stakeholders is vital to creating a partnership that customers understand and support. There are many tools that can help water systems communicate with stakeholders, including:

- [A sample utility communications plan](#) from AWWA.
- [An example communications plan](#) for a sanitation district.
- A list of resources on WaterOperator.org including tools available to [facilitate communicating with customers](#).
- Some states provide drinking water communication tools or risk communication toolkits for water systems, like this example from [Minnesota’s Department of Health](#). Water systems can check their state websites for additional resources.

Setting up a Partnership Agreement

Appropriately documenting partnership activities and services in a way that establishes partners’ roles and responsibilities can be invaluable to setting up, organizing, and maintaining a successful partnership. This could be done through a contract, memorandum of understanding (MOU), or other clear and binding document. The following resources could be used by water systems to draft such contracts:

- The Department of Homeland Security has developed a guide on [how to draft an MOU](#).
- The Centers for Disease Control has published a [sample template](#) of an MOU, which water systems could utilize when establishing their partnership.
- The Water and Wastewater Agency Response Network’s (WARN’s) Utilities Helping Utilities initiative published [a guide that serves as an action plan](#) for water systems to establish mutual aid and assistance networks to increase their resilience.

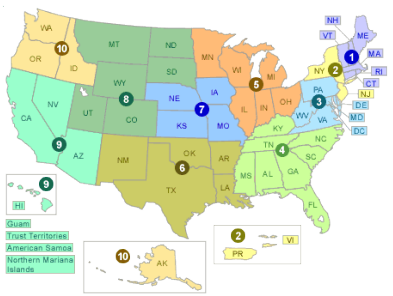
Other Helpful Organizations

National Rural Water Association (NRWA)

<https://nrwa.org/>

NRWA is a water and wastewater utility membership program. NRWA resources provide training for problem solving and water system optimization, support, and technical assistance to utilities. These resources cover utility operation, management, financing, and more.





Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs)

<https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/efcn>

EPA EFCs partner with and provide technical assistance to states, tribes, local governments, and the private sector. Technical assistance can include leadership development, capacity development, and training. Assistance is provided to water systems for innovative solutions and program management, which may be helpful to water system partnerships. There is an EFC for each of the 10 EPA Regions.

Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)

<https://rcap.org/>

RCAP provides assistance to small and rural communities' water systems. RCAP can help with water system assessment, problem-solving, project management, and long-term support. RCAP also provides trainings across the U.S., including trainings specific to compliance and other trainings for drinking water operators. The RCAP online library contains resources for developing plans, financial auditing, and troubleshooting.

Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)

<https://www.rcac.org/>

RCAC provides assistance to rural communities, including trainings, technical and financial resources, and advocacy. Trainings cover a broad range of topics including for rule compliance, asset management, and capacity building. RCAC guidebooks have been created for utilities, small rural water systems, and project development.

American Water Works Association (AWWA)

<https://www.awwa.org/>

AWWA has a variety of technical reports, resources, programs, and tools to help water systems with management. Their programs "Partnership for Safe Water" and "Partnership for Clean Water" are successful alliances of water systems to optimize water system performance for delivering drinking water. Their Benchmarking Tool can help improve water systems efficiency, and their resources can mitigate risk and resilience and improve infrastructure needs.

Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA)

<https://www.asdwa.org/small-systems/capacity-development/>

ASDWA has a variety of resources for state Drinking Water Programs including capacity development of small water systems, regulatory guidance, data management, and drinking water utilities partnering for success.

National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA)

<https://www.nacwa.org/home>

NACWA has technical resources regarding water management and sustainability that support the development of partnerships across the U.S.

Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA)

<https://www.acwa-us.org/>

ACWA strives to protect and restore watersheds to achieve clean water everywhere for everyone. They have resources that will be applicable to wastewater systems as they begin their partnerships.

