



FY 2020-2021: Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant Program

Rural Community Assistance (RCAP) Partnership Inc: *Train and Credential Drinking Water Administrative Professionals*



INTRODUCTION

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) authorized the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to award grants to nonprofit professional or service organizations, nonprofit labor organizations, nonprofit community colleges, institutions of higher education, or other nonprofit training and educational institutions to (1) assist in the development and use of innovative activities relating to water workforce development and career opportunities in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector, and (2) expand public awareness about drinking water and wastewater utilities and to connect individuals to careers in the drinking water and wastewater utility sector.

A total of 9 organizations were recently selected by EPA to receive grant funding under this program. EPA has developed Fact Sheets on each of these projects that includes the language from the grant submission.

To learn more about the range of activities EPA is undertaking to support our Nation's water workforce, please go to [Sustainable Water Infrastructure-Water Sector Workforce](#).



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

RCAP proposes to create a training and credentialing program designed specifically to enhance the management and leadership skills of drinking water administrative professionals through the psychometric process. RCAP's technical assistance providers have worked extensively with drinking water administrative professionals across the country, and some of the technical assistance providers themselves worked in administrative roles at a utility prior to joining RCAP.

RCAP staff are also knowledgeable about drinking water capacity development. Certainly, RCAP staff could sit down and develop training curriculum and exams to measure competency based solely on that experience today, and the results would be decent. However, our goal is to look beyond basic competencies in order to understand what makes administrative professionals effective managers and leaders, and the best way to reach that understanding is by following the psychometric process. Psychometricians are experts within the psychology and education fields devoted to testing, measurement, and assessment. The psychometric process is designed to identify the key competencies necessary to be successful in any job, and the resulting credentialing examination is valid, reliable, and fair. The final certificate exam will be a reasonable measure of job performance, and the psychometric process will ensure that the exam adequately covers the defined scope of the job and fairly discriminates between those who can perform and those who cannot.



MAJOR ACTIVITIES

1. Identify the key knowledge, skills, and abilities that drinking water administrative professionals need to assume management and leadership responsibilities for utilities, leading to increased regulatory compliance and system sustainability. These competencies will be developed through the psychometric process by a group of experts including leading utility administrative professionals, capacity building specialists, and administrative experts. The competencies will be described in a job analysis and need-to-know criteria.
2. Use the job analysis and need-to-know criteria to develop curriculum for drinking water administrative professionals. RCAP's training approach utilizes proven adult-education techniques and incorporates interactive strategies that will increase knowledge retention, including training that includes networking between participants and engagement

FACT SHEET





January 2022- June 2023



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

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MAJOR ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

with the content, opportunities for follow-up technical assistance after training, and blended learning programs that combine self-paced eLearning and live instructor-led learning.

3. Use the job analysis and need-to-know criteria to develop a certificate exam for drinking water administrative professionals. The certificate exam will be given in conjunction with the educational events designed around the curriculum. The questions for the certificate exam will be developed using the psychometric process to ensure that the exam is valid, reliable, and fair. The certificate will be jointly offered by RCAP and the International Association of Administrative Professionals.

4. Deliver educational programs to existing and prospective utility clerks and drinking water administrative professionals, with an opportunity to sit for the certificate exam at the end of the session. The certificate sessions will be 2.5 days in-person or an equivalent amount of classroom time spread over eight weeks online.



OUTCOMES

- ◊ Increased knowledge and competency of drinking water administrative professionals to maintain compliance and to sustain systems over time, measured by the number of individuals passing the certificate exam and by training pre- and post-test results
- ◊ Increased number of drinking water administrative professionals receiving management and supervisory responsibilities and opportunities
- ◊ Increased number of drinking water administrative professionals receiving internal promotions and job title improvements
- ◊ Increased retention of drinking water administrative professionals
- ◊ Increased appreciation for the contributions of administrative professionals to the utility from managers, board members, and system owners
- ◊ Increased number of public water systems in compliance with SDWA or making substantial progress toward compliance which leads to

better public health outcomes, as indicated by measured performance, reduced enforcement priority status, or other indicators.



PARTNERS

For this proposed project, RCAP's national office will coordinate the development of the job analysis and the need-to-know criteria for drinking water administrative professionals. Each of RCAP's six regional partners will contribute subject matter expertise developed from years of providing technical assistance to rural and tribal communities and by working directly with drinking water administrative professionals in the field.

This project also builds a partnership between RCAP and the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP). IAAP is the leading national expert in developing the leadership skills of administrative professionals broadly across many sectors and industries.

RCAP will partner with other outside parties including drinking water administrative professional leaders from across the U.S. and staff from EPA, USDA, and primacy agencies to ensure that a broad set of perspectives and expertise are included in the job analysis and need-to-know criteria. ASDWA will be a key partner in sharing information about the project with primacy agencies and in securing their attendance for the project webinars.

The International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), which provides certification for clerks who work in local government in the United States, will review any educational offering developed through this program for pre-approval for their continuing education requirements.

