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The webinar will begin shortly.

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A **copy of the slides** is attached in the chat.
The **recording will be posted**, and a link emailed to all registered and attendees 1-2 weeks after the webinar.

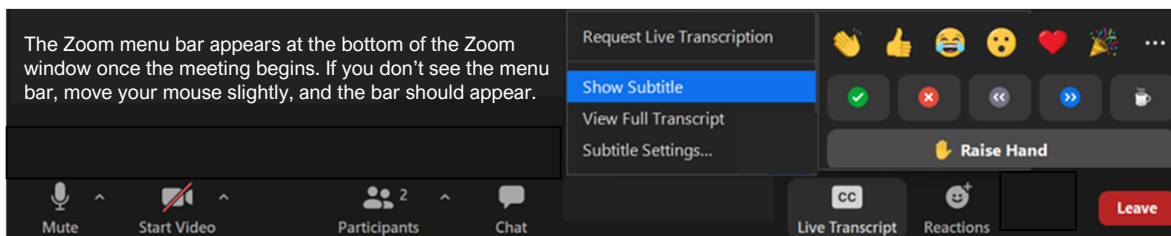


Check out <https://www.epa.gov/dwreginfo/drinking-water-training>
for more drinking water webinars and trainings.

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Using Zoom



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Workforce Development: National Challenges & Supporting Resources

Office of Ground Water & Drinking Water
and Office of Wastewater Management

June 5, 2025



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Water

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Today's Speakers

Edward Viveiros

EPA Office of Ground Water & Drinking Water

Jim Horne

EPA Office of Wastewater Management



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About Our Organizations

Office of Groundwater & Drinking Water, Capacity Development Branch

- ✚ **Provide** technical assistance to all drinking water systems, with a special focus on rural, small and tribal systems
- ✚ **Work collaboratively** with states, associations, and utilities to build the capacity of water systems and an effective and sustainable water workforce
- ✚ **Oversee** state implementation of Capacity Development and Operator Certification programs required under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)

Office of Wastewater Management, Sustainable Communities & Infrastructure Branch

- ◆ **Provide** technical assistance to all wastewater systems, with a special focus on rural, small and tribal systems, including decentralized systems
- ◆ **Work collaboratively** with water associations and utilities to build an **effective and sustainable water workforce** via outreach, webinars, and other resources
- ◆ **Oversee wastewater technology** clearinghouse/resources and the **Innovative Water Workforce Development Grant Program**



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About Our Agency

- EPA works to convene stakeholders across the water sector. Some Highlights:
 - *Workforce report to Congress (2024)*. Convened federal partners in developing and delivering this report.
 - *National Water Workforce Convening (2018)*. Brought together stakeholders to discuss water workforce challenges.
- These efforts support priorities under the Administrator's "Powering the Great American Comeback" Initiative
 - Pillar 1: Clean air, land, and water for every American
 - Pillar 3: Permitting reform, cooperative federalism, and cross-agency partnership



Today's Agenda

- Workforce Challenges and Capacity Development Nexus
- The 'Pillars' for Developing an Effective Utility Workforce
- Available Resources for Supporting Workforce Development

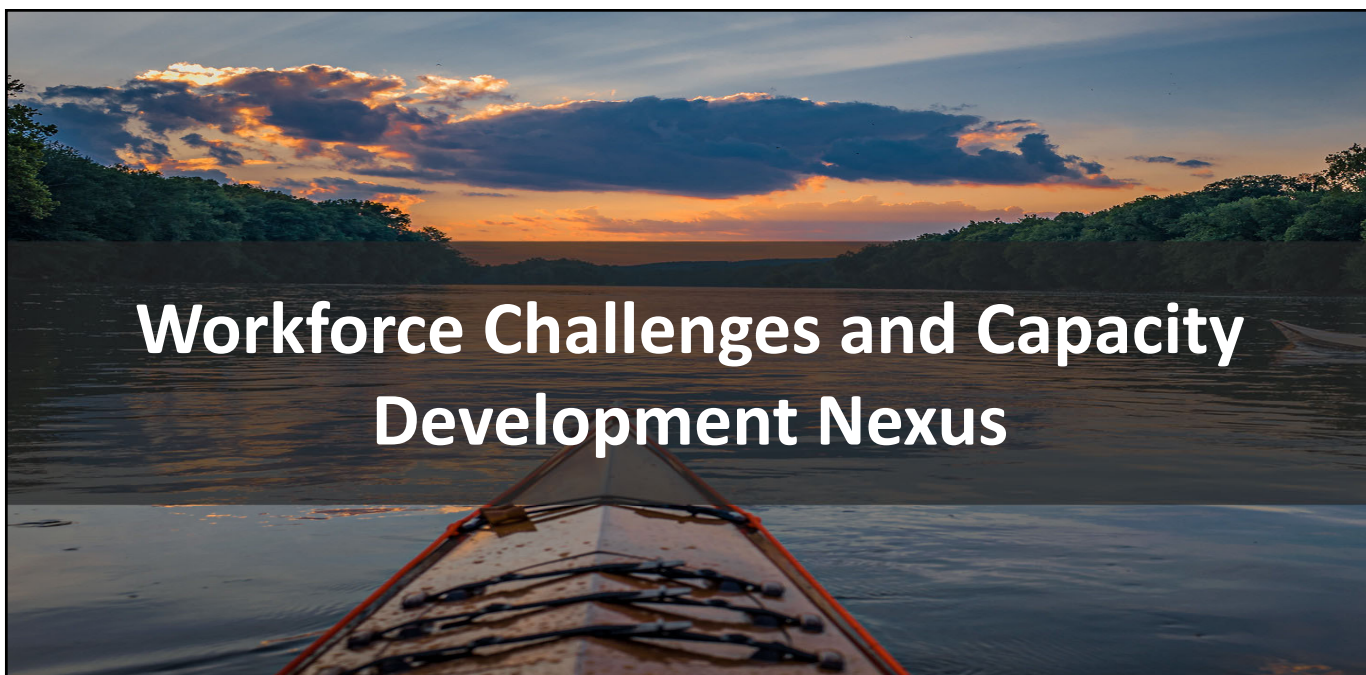


Webinar Goals

- Underscore the importance of workforce development and its relationship with the broader concept of system capacity.
- Explore the Key Pillars of an effective workforce and some examples of what they look like in practice.
- Highlight specific resources that can help utilities with their workforce needs.
- Equip you with the information to better connect utilities with the resources that will address their needs.

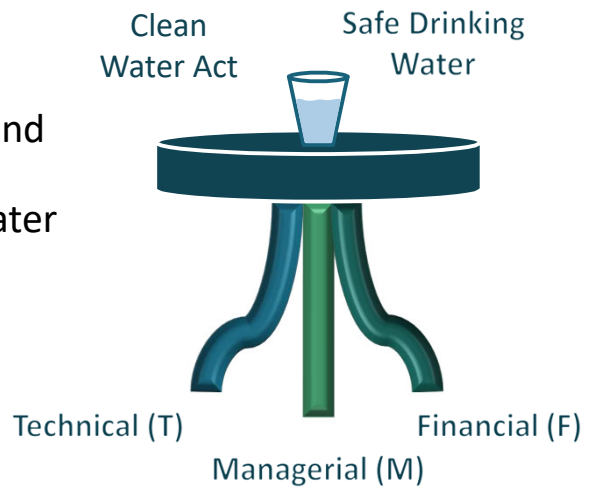


Workforce Challenges and Capacity Development Nexus



What is Capacity?

- A utility's ability to plan for, achieve, and maintain compliance with applicable drinking water standards and clean water requirements
- Encompasses three areas:
 - Technical
 - Managerial
 - Financial



Why is Capacity Important?



**Decreases Need For
Outside Assistance**



**Improves Compliance and
Strengthens Public Health
and Environmental
Protection**



**Increases Operational
Efficiency & Emergency
Preparedness**

Workforce Challenges

- Workforce challenges faced by water sector utilities, especially **smaller** utilities
 - Recruitment
 - Training
 - Retention
- Some examples:
 - Limited financial resources to recruit through locally competitive wages
 - Limited technical resources to train staff
 - Limited managerial resources to retain and provide growth opportunities
- All of these directly relate to capacity



Key Pillars of an Effective Utility Workforce

The Key Pillars

- 1) Proactive **recruitment**
- 2) Sustain and expand **training**
- 3) Strong focus on **retention**
- 4) Create and maintain strong **partnerships**



1) Recruitment

- Promote public awareness of the value of water careers
- Emphasize the critical importance of the water workforce and available career paths
- Example: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Kindergarten-to-Career Strategy



2) Retention

- Improve working environments
- Offer competitive salaries
- Develop clear career paths
- Example: Holistic **career** services at Hampton Roads Sanitation District



3) Training

- Essential to workforce retention
- Must focus on developing competencies over time
 - Advanced certifications
 - New technology
 - Specialized expertise
 - A career, not just a job!
- Example: Grand Rapids Community College – Water & Wastewater Program



4) Create and Maintain Strong Partnerships

- Will vary in type, scope, and duration
- Can include:
 - Other utilities
 - Community colleges
 - Job training organizations
 - Social service organizations
 - Local workforce development boards
- Connects utilities with local leaders and advocates to support the other pillars
- Example: Philadelphia PowerCorpsPHL



Workforce Resources

EPA Water Workforce Resources

[From M.O.S. to J-O-B \(Recruiting Resource\)](#)

- Highlights Military Occupation Specialties (M.O.S.) that are transferable to the drinking and wastewater sectors.
- Offers tips for evaluating candidates with military experience.

[Summary of State Certification Programs for Drinking Water Operators \(Recruiting Resource\)](#)

- A helpful reference to states & operators who are processing/requesting reciprocal certification from a separate state. Cross-compares certification requirements between states.

EPA Technical Assistance – WaterTA

- EPA also provides technical assistance through our WaterTA initiative
- WaterTA offers a comprehensive suite of services that help utilities address capacity challenges, including workforce-related challenges.

Did You Know?

WaterTA provides direct assistance to water utilities to help with:

- Water quality concerns
- Regulatory compliance
- Workforce development
- Operator training
- Applying for federal funding
- And more!

EPA Technical Assistance – WaterTA

- **Klamath Tribes, OR.** Technical assistance to support the utility with internal training and certification of its drinking water operators.
- **Town of Victoria, VA.** Technical assistance and training to help internal candidates gain the certifications they need for supervisory roles, improving the long-term operation and stability of the utility.



Connecting with WaterTA

There are multiple pathways for communities to access EPA's water technical assistance:

- Recommended by a State or EPA Region
- Directly contacted/referred by a WaterTA provider
- Referred by stakeholder, partner organization, or utility
- Community submits a [WaterTA Request Form](#)



Department of Labor

[Apprenticeship.gov Portal \(Recruiting Resource\)](#)

- This apprenticeship portal supports both jobseekers and employers
- Includes hundreds of water-related positions from locations across the nation
- Includes apprenticeship opportunities for water operations, pipefitting, utilities maintenance, etc.

Department of Agriculture

[Resource Guide for Rural Workforce Development \(Recruiting & Training Resource\)](#)

- Offers a consolidated summary of job creation, technical assistance, and training opportunities for individuals in rural areas.
- Centers on workforce planning, education, training, and apprenticeship
- Illustrates how communities have leveraged USDA programs towards these areas
- Provides supplemental information about USDA funding opportunities and other federal resources

Department of Veterans Affairs

Training and Work Experience Program (Recruiting & Training Resource)

- Provides technical training and practical work experience that can help veterans develop skills and proficiency in the water sector
- Work experience is specific to positions in federal, state, or local government
- Provides monthly allowances directly to participants, at no cost to the hiring agency

Department of Education

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins V) (Recruitment, Training, and Retention Resource)

- Supports development and implementation of career and technical education programs
- Focused on aligning the programs with local workforce needs
- Can be leveraged for a wide range of activities, such as development of training curricula, work-based learning opportunities, and professional development.

Resources from Water Associations

[NRWA Apprenticeship Program \(Recruitment, Training, & Retention Resource\)](#)

- The National Rural Water Association (NRWA) offers classroom instruction and on-the-job training to operators over a two-year period at little-to-no-cost.

[RCAP Water Operator Trainings \(Training & Retention Resource\)](#)

- The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) offers training on a wide variety of topics, including water utility operations, management, and treatment operator exam preparation.

Resources from Water Associations (Continued)

[AWWA Transformative Water Leadership Academy \(Training & Retention Resource\)](#)

- The American Water Works Association (AWWA) annually conducts a 10-month program that offers experiential learning and mentorship for early-career water utility workers.
- Each cohort consists of about 50 participants.

In Summary...

- Water system capacity and workforce development needs are interlocking pieces.
- The key pillars offer a framework that helps utilities identify workforce development approaches that meet their needs.
- The resources discussed today are available to help utilities address recruitment, training, and retention needs.
- See the [report to Congress](#) for more information about the challenges, key pillars, and supporting resources that are currently available.



Q&A

For more information, contact:

Edward Viveiros at viveiros.edward@epa.gov or

Jim Horne at horne.james@epa.gov