

Technical Assistance and Training (TAT) Grants FY 2024 Recipients

Alaska Forum, Inc. (AK)

Alaska Forum, Inc., proposes to enable underserved rural Alaska communities to assess and prioritize needed water, energy, and waste management process improvements; enable underserved rural Alaska communities to improve processes and implement best management practices including energy usage in water and waste disposal facilities; recognize Green Star® Communities annually; and encourage Green Star Communities to have all water/wastewater treatment operators certified, passing the State of Alaska Exam.

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Inc. (AK)

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Inc. proposes to provide hands-on technical assistance and training to the water/sewer operators; provide on-site evaluations and prioritize the deficiencies discovered during such evaluations; perform annual rate studies and recommend a rate structure that ensures water/sewer revenues meet expenses to maintain sustainability; provide on-site training and technical support to water/sewer operators; schedule off-site training for the operators as needed, both to build skills and maintain necessary certification levels; review, evaluate and recommend process control methods to improve the operation and maintenance of drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste facilities, as well as coordinate and facilitate hands-on and on-site technical assistance with local utility plants.

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (AK)

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council proposes to provide a water plant intern in two Yukon River Basin communities to train and provide hands-on experience to develop skills focused on operation efficiencies and management; provide safety and management upgrade plans for water and sewer plant facilities; map all primary and traditional water sources in eight communities and provide water sampling to detect polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) at these locations; provide and develop a preventative maintenance plan for operators to improve their best practices in four communities; and provide education for four city accounting staff members in basic bookkeeping and accounting.

Zender Environmental Health and Research Group (AK)

Zender Environmental Health and Research Group proposes to deliver three State of Alaska qualified sampler trainings to water operators, and one leveraged sampler training with job placement; provide direct, on-site assistance to address pollution mitigation through water quality sampling work; provide direct, on-site assistance for assessing how contaminants could impact water quality and vital subsistence resources; develop and distribute educational materials on impacts of climate change; provide one-on-one support to trainees using follow-up phone, email, and live video; assist 2 to 4 communities on-site including sampling program implementation to help meet the 3-month professional supervisory requirement for final qualified sampler certification and PFAS sampling; and assist requesting communities in preparing applications for water and waste grants.

Black Belt Unincorporated Wastewater Program (AL)

Black Belt Unincorporated Wastewater Program (BBUWP) proposes to refine the technical support and outreach model to attract women and girls to the technical and administrative roles in the water and wastewater industry; continue the International Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Foundation (iWSH) plumbing training programs and other ongoing training in coordination with the Lowndes Technical School; and teach local certified plumbers to train students and others in the performance of plumbing work to generate interest on a local level that will increase the overall workforce in the profession in the unincorporated areas of Alabama Black Belt.

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Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (AZ)

The Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. proposes to improve Tribal water utility capacity for complying with Federal regulations; strengthen the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of Tribal water utilities; and strengthen resiliency of Tribal water utilities through technical assistance and training.

Painted Desert Demonstration Projects, Inc. (AZ)

The Painted Desert Demonstration Projects, Inc. proposes to identify/evaluate solutions to water and wastewater disposal problems in distressed and socially vulnerable Native American communities, assist Native American applicants in preparing applications of water and waste disposal grants made by Federal, State, and private foundations, improve the management, operation, maintenance and sustainability of existing water and waste disposal facilities, address emerging contaminants issues on tribal lands, and help rural communities' recovery from negative impacts of COVID.

Earth Island Institute (CA)

The Earth Island Institute proposes to provide technical assistance and training to underserved communities in the United States Commonwealth of Puerto Rico that fall outside of their centralized water utility, called the Puerto Rican Aqueduct and Sewer Association (PRASA). The overall purpose of this project is to assist non-PRASA systems to build their organizational capacity so that they will improve their effectiveness in providing safe, clean drinking water to their respective communities. The key deliverables for this project include 2 workshops on nonprofit management and/or fundraising for non-PRASA systems; direct, one-on-one technical assistance to 5 non-PRASA water systems, to address their specific needs/concerns; a demonstration project to develop a collaborative, supportive organizational structure for water systems in central, western Puerto Rico; and distribution of educational materials and outreach to build awareness of chemicals of concern.

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA) – Mobile

OCT Water Quality Academy proposes to provide intensive training (in-person or one-on-one virtually) to small and very small water and wastewater disposal system operators who lack time and funds to attend existing programs larger communities; to increase the ability of small water systems to comply with EPA water quality standards, for both drinking water and wastewater; to increase the ability of small water/wastewater system operators to improve operations and maintenance of their systems; to assist rural communities in recovering economically through more and better market opportunities by providing technical assistance through training of water districts/plants.

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA) – Lab Technology and Water

OCT Water Quality Academy proposes to advertise laboratory and sampling training availability, prioritize contacting existing active laboratories, host Certified Sampling training for operators, host Laboratory Technician training for operators, achieve a minimum of 75% pass rate for operators testing to become certified lab personnel, achieve a minimum of 80% pass rate for operators testing to become a certified water sampler and provide 100% of operators who attend OCT Water Quality Academy classes with sufficient instruction and curriculum materials to successfully complete their course and be successful in following job endeavors.

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Self Help Enterprises (CA)

Self Help Enterprises proposes to create, promote, and sponsor opportunity for up to 10 aspiring water operators to access the academic coursework and hands-on experience necessary to take the state certification exam; facilitate access of rural residents to high-quality education about drinking water distribution and treatment, flush hydrants, fire protection, water math, and public service, while opening up employment opportunities for youth and farmworkers; bring extra help to understaffed, under-resourced rural water systems by hosting operators-in-training; assess success of the demonstration water operator education program; build regional relationships among rural water systems that will enhance their resiliency by establishing a network of shared resources, mutual aid, and commitment to working together; increase access to safe, affordable, potable water by low-income rural families; advance communities' progress toward meeting regulatory requirements and local need for certified operators and realizing the human right to water; and enhance opportunities for economic development from infrastructure development.

Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (DC) – Colonias

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership proposes to help Priority Colonia communities (focusing on those with previous and updated Priority 1-3 rankings) access safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation services through training and technical assistance, with the ultimate goal of improving public and environmental health and quality of life in the Colonias. Provide training and hands-on technical assistance to a minimum of 48 projects across four states benefiting at least 100 Colonias areas, which will be selected in consultation with state/area Rural Development offices. A minimum of 12 projects will be “regional” in nature, creating systems or arrangements that serve multiple communities and allow them to achieve economies of scale to be more sustainable.

Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (DC) - Technitrain

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) proposes to provide in-depth on-site Technical Assistance (TA) through at least 660 projects, selected in consultation with (RD) offices. RCAP will provide Geographic Information System (GIS) services through 60 projects for effective operations, asset management, and emergency response and will be paramount for lead service line inventories and replacement tracking. Serve Manufactured Housing Communities via 30 TA projects. Will present 96 interactive training sessions to system operators, managers, and board members. Will host an in person, multi-day train the trainer workshop. Will share case studies, lessons learned, and best practices to a broad national audience through print/digital media including impact-based storytelling emphasizing challenges/solutions and success stories in rural America, especially in underserved areas facing environmental justice and equity issues.

Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (DC) - Tribal

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP) proposes to provide on-site technical assistance and training via technical assistance projects to systems serving large numbers of Tribal members/Tribal systems, selected in consultation with state USDA offices and other federal agencies, as appropriate. RCAP will also convene trainings for Tribal systems or gatherings of Native American Water Masters Associations, to bring Tribal operators together to share their common water/wastewater challenges, receive related training, promote operator advancement, and build capacity to create stronger utilities.

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The Hanalei Initiative (HI)

The Hanalei Initiative proposes to identify a range of spatially explicit wastewater management scenarios that are technically feasible and relevant for the study area based on existing information and groundwater elevation monitoring, and considering the effects of climate change; calculate the costs in US dollars of each scenario as a whole and average cost per homeowner incorporating equipment, construction, permitting, etc.; analyze the environmental/health benefits and impacts for each scenario incorporating sea level rise; report results and provide recommendations regarding environmental benefit, cost, and other stakeholder-defined objectives, including public funding opportunities; conduct training and outreach to stakeholder groups including homeowners, builders/contractors, and engineers throughout the project and at its conclusion to communicate the results.

Cooperative Development Institute (MA)

The Cooperative Development Institute proposes to establish a “one-stop-shop” program for Nonprofit Manufactured Housing Communities (MHC) to access water infrastructure technical assistance, which will enhance technical, managerial, and financial capacity of nonprofit MHCs; provide comprehensive water infrastructure resources, including funding sources for each state; and improve nonprofit MHC water infrastructure.

Native American Water Association (NV)

Native American Water Association proposes to plan and coordinate in scheduling program courses to develop and deliver up to six (6) domestic drinking water and wastewater system information. Up to 5 virtual online courses will be promoted and up to ten (10) days of follow-up onsite face to face Technical Assistance and Training provided. NAWA will develop Tribal Domestic Drinking Water and Wastewater Utilities network group coalition building, information sharing and on-site Tribal Domestic Drinking Water and Wastewater Utilities training program follow-up activities. Hands-on technical assistance and Webinar based training.

Syracuse University Center for Sustainable Community Solutions – Environmental Finance Center (NY)

Syracuse University Center for Sustainable Community Solutions - Environmental Finance Center proposes to provide technical assistance and training to rural and underserved communities in New York State and Puerto Rico for investing in water infrastructure to increase economic opportunities and quality of life for rural residents.

National Rural Water Association (OK) - Apprenticeship

National Rural Water Association (NRWA) proposes to enhance water workforce development by increasing the number of USDA-funded Apprenticeship Coordinators (coordinators) from 25 to 36. NRWA will continue to support State Rural Water Association coordinators and expand training offerings, which will continue to include a formalized training pathway – the NRWA Apprenticeship Coordinator Certification. NRWA will further develop a series of courses on the WaterPro Academy Learning Management System (LMS) that will lead to certification.

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National Rural Water Association (OK) – Decentralized Wastewater

National Rural Water Association (NRWA) proposes to address the specific challenges faced by small, rural, tribal, disadvantaged, and distressed communities that rely on decentralized wastewater systems or do not have their wastewater needs sufficiently met. Collectively, this program will engage and empower 100 communities, as NRWA's Decentralized Technical Assistance and Training program leverages Water Quality Action Specialists (specialists) to craft tailor-made Wastewater Community Assessment Reports.

National Rural Water Association (OK) – Energy Efficiency

National Rural Water Association (NRWA) proposes to continue to expand this successful program until they can realize its full potential nationwide. This year's proposal requests funding to expand the current program by four additional states for a total of 35 state programs. Energy Efficiency (EE) technicians will perform 716 initial EE Assessments and conduct 124 follow-up implementation consultations with systems that have previously received Assessments for a total of 840 EE Assessments. Additionally, EE technicians will perform a total of 35 Project Development Plans (1 per state).

National Rural Water Association (OK) – Manufactured Homes

National Rural Water Association (NRWA) proposes to address the specific challenges faced by these communities by providing hands-on, onsite technical assistance and training to identify and evaluate solutions to water and waste problems; help communities prepare applications for water and waste disposal loans and grants; assist with improving the management, operation, maintenance, and sustainability of water and wastewater facilities in eligible rural areas; and address emerging contaminants of drinking and surface water supplies in AL, KY, LA, MI, MS, TX, and VT.

National Rural Water Association (OK) - Wastewater

National Rural Water Association (NRWA) proposes to enable the deployment of 95 full-time wastewater technicians, an increase of 20 field staff, to work toward ensuring that all rural residents have equitable access to USDA Rural Development (RD) programs and benefits from USDA RD-funded projects. NRWA will perform a minimum of 33,948 contacts.

Coral Bay Community Council, Inc. (VI)

Coral Bay Community Council, Inc. proposes to continue to take steps to improve drinking water quality and wastewater systems and operation/maintenance practices with feasible solutions; analyze drinking water quality for potential contaminants and determine the most effective treatment system options for owners and renters; obtain a clearer understanding of the nutrient and bacteria concentrations from the effluent of wastewater treatment systems; determine the most effective and appropriate onsite sewage disposal system for Coral Bay and similar localities; and update plan documents to guide water and waste developments.

West Virginia University Research Corporation (WV)

West Virginia University Research Corporation proposes to improve and expand water and wastewater infrastructure through technical assistance and training provided in rural areas throughout KY, TN, VA, and WV; ensure continued operation of water utilities in rural areas; and improve efficiency of technical assistance to water utilities.