

Technical Assistance and Training (TAT) Grants FY 2021

Project Narratives

FY 2021 TAT PROJECTS RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING:

Alaska Forum (AK)

Requested: \$180,745.00

Proposed: \$163,000.00

The Alaska Forum will conduct an assessment in each participating community. They will assist communities in implementing sustainable practices that maintain safe drinking water and sanitary, environmentally sound waste disposal facilities and identify and evaluate solutions to water and waste disposal issues. This comprehensive look at the full range of environmental issues facing a community will guide the development of a five-year Work Plan and Training Schedule for landfill operators, community environmental personnel and others engaged in the operation and maintenance of water and waste disposal facilities.

Alaskan Native Tribal Health Consortium, Inc. (AK)

Requested: \$283,855.00

Proposed: \$257,000.00

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Inc. (ANTHC) will provide technical assistance and training to water and sewer operators of the Alaska Rural Utility Collaborative, perform rate studies for each community and recommend a rate structure that will maintain sustainability. ANTHC will also provide on-site training and technical support, and schedule off-site training for operators to build skills and maintain necessary certification levels.

Auburn Research and Technology Foundation (AL)

Requested: \$235,000.00

Proposed: \$213,000.00

The Auburn Research and Technology Foundation will provide hands-on technical training and public outreach to our Black Belt service area. This will allow for 65 participants to receive hands-on training to gain the knowledge required to develop and deploy effective Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) during construction activities. In addition, technical materials (i.e., brochures and posters) will be developed and delivered to our service area to provide public education and outreach to residents.

Coral Bay Community Council, Inc. (VI)

Requested: \$185,512.92

Proposed: \$168,000.00

The Coral Bay Community Council, Inc. proposal will: (1) assure that best water and waste treatment technologies and methods for local conditions are being recommended, installed and maintained properly; (2) increase public, government and end-user awareness about implementing drinking water purification measures and highly-effective onsite wastewater treatment options and the importance of proper O&M; (3) motivate & help to improve operator

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and user practices with feasible solutions and training; (4) analyze drinking water quality for potential contaminants and determine the most effective treatment system options for owners and renters; (5) continue to develop a clearer understanding of the nutrient and bacteria concentrations from the effluent of wastewater treatment systems, as well as those currently occurring in our coastal and groundwater sources, in order to determine the priority for replacing current potentially failing OSDS; and (6), analyze and share the above data to determine the most effective and appropriate OSDS for Coral Bay, and similar localities.

Earth Island Institute (CA)

Requested: \$69,033.00

Proposed: \$62,000.00

The Earth Island Institute, and its affiliates, will provide technical assistance and training that will have gain capacity to seek and identify funding opportunities and prepare and apply for grants. The goals and deliverables of this project are to: (1) direct technical assistance in the form of one-on-one support to non-PRASA Aqueduct Systems Organization of Puerto Rico (OSAN) staff to build fundraising capacity and submit at least three grant applications; (2) provide workshops on: Identifying Funders, Preparing LOIs, Writing Grants and Preparing Applications, tools for effective communication, understanding your audience, how to communicate the value water system to customers, and video making techniques, organization capacity issues such as: building a BOD, developing a funding plan, finance and budgeting, leadership, disaster preparedness and response, marketing/communications, voting structure for members, measurement and evaluation etc.; and, (3) work with five water systems to provide direct technical assistance to water system managers to more effectively communicate water issues to their communities.

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

Requested: \$1,132,734.00

Proposed: \$1,024,000.00

The Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. will implement four project activities: (1) strengthen tribal water utility resilience by providing resiliency technical assistance (TA) and conducting resiliency training; (2) strengthen tribal utility managerial and financial (M&F) capacity by providing M&F-TA, conducting Tribal Utility Tune-Up (EUM “workshop in a box”) Workshops, and conducting training—Tribal Utility Management Certification training, as well as training on utility finance, asset management, and water loss control; (3) strengthen tribal utility operations & maintenance (O&M) capacity by providing O&M-TA, conducting operator fundamentals trainings and free regional tribal operator certification training events, offering travel reimbursement stipends, and creating a new type of tribal operator certification for tribal wastewater lagoon operators; and, (4) improve tribal water utility capacity for complying with federal regulations by conducting federal regulations training events.

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National Rural Water Association (OK)

Requested: \$12,857,635.00

Proposed: \$11,627,000.00

The National Rural Water Association will expand to 94 technicians and provide the following: (1) Partner with RUS State Offices to support the sound development of rural communities and growth of our economy without endangering the environment; (2) Enhance the sustainability of utility system governance, management, and operations through project development and the delivery of the *Sustainable Utility Management* program, and hands-on technical assistance in all 50 states; (3) Enhance sustainability, reduce costs, and provide technical assistance and training to modernize and upgrade infrastructure to prioritize climate change solutions (i.e., reduce energy consumption, encourage conservation, reduce footprints, improve efficiency); (4) Continue to target and prioritize TAT toward the smallest communities with the lowest incomes and poor sanitation, emphasizing designated Opportunity Zones and areas where at least 20% of the population is living in poverty; (5) Create nine new positions dedicated to providing assistance to projects located in Substantially Underserved Trust Areas (SUTAs); (6) Provide education and implementation support that assists utility systems in addressing emerging contaminants of concern, including PFAS chemicals; (7) Maintain a highly competent technical field staff of Wastewater Technicians who deliver quality services; and, (8) Provide emergency planning, rapid response, and recovery assistance during disasters.

National Rural Water Association (OK) – Energy Efficiency

Requested: \$3,262,829.00

Proposed: \$2,951,000.00

The National Rural Water Association will develop energy efficiency optimization recommendations for 840 utility systems in 28 states. This will be accomplished by: (1) enhancing the sustainability of RUS customers by conducting Energy Efficiency Assessments; (2) assisting systems in modernizing and upgrading infrastructure to more energy-efficient technology and equipment; and, (3) promoting and enhancing the utilization of green energy and accelerate renewable energy deployment in rural communities.

National Rural Water Association (OK) - Apprenticeship

Requested: \$5,000,000.00

Proposed: \$4,522,000.00

The National Rural Water Association will continue to create a career pathway for water workers through the National Apprenticeship/Workforce Development Program, to enhance quality of life, create jobs, and promote economic development opportunities in rural America while improving water and wastewater infrastructure across the country. Activities will be provided to ensure workforce development. The specific goals and objectives for this proposal are: (1) establish a nationally recognized credential that certifies occupational proficiency, is portable, and provides a pathway to economic opportunity; (2) build a qualified workforce that will protect USDA's investment in rural America, and improve service to rural customers; (3) develop a systematic approach to training that ensures highly skilled employees for rural water and wastewater utilities, with a focus on technology and innovation; (4) create and maintain a

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nationwide clearinghouse for training materials and resources; (5) establish nationwide water industry training courses and certifications; (6) enhance workforce participation in rural America, with a special focus on women, youth and veterans; (7) enhance retention of water workers in small and rural communities through the proven earn-and-learn training model of apprenticeship; and, (8) increase emergency preparedness and resiliency to natural disasters in RUS-eligible communities through a well-trained workforce.

Native American Water Association (NV)

Requested: \$235,520.00

Proposed: \$213,000.00

The Native American Water Association proposes a combination of activities including network group coalition building among Tribal entities nationwide, development and delivery of classroom style and online course training opportunities including Workshop in a Box and Wastewater systems training, and direct on-site and webinar based tribal follow-up activities that address specific tribal needs requested by participating tribes. Activities will be provided to support workforce development.

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA)

Requested: \$152,765.00

Proposed: \$138,000.00

The OCT Water Quality Academy will: (1) provide intensive training (in-person or one-on-one virtually) to small and very small water and wastewater disposal system operators throughout California, Arizona, Washington, and Hawaii who lack time and funds to attend existing programs in North Highlands, CA and other larger communities; (2) increase the ability of small and very small water systems to comply with EPA water quality standards, for both drinking water and wastewater; and, (3) increase the ability of small water/wastewater system operators to improve operations and maintenance of their systems.

Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (WA)

Requested: \$454,418.00

Proposed: \$411,000.00

The Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center is proposing to provide technical assistance training in Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOG) abatement to small, rural communities throughout the western United States. Specifically, Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center will: (1) Organize and conduct 20 *FOG Abatement Technical Trainings* across the nation (10 virtual and 10 in-person), all with interactive components, and to create and provide a new access-based tool so trainees can establish and maintain a data-driven FOG Abatement Program; (2) Enhance the *National Resource Reference Guide (NRRG)*, the online, supplemental information resource that programs use for further clarification, details, instruction and best management practices following training to enhance implementation of their FOG abatement program; and, (3) *Measure Success* of programs trained in FY21 and past years.

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Painted Desert Demonstration Projects, Inc. (AZ)

Requested: \$168,720.00

Proposed: \$153,000.00

The Painted Desert Demonstration Projects, Inc. will continue the STAR School Water Technical Assistance and Training Program in the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribes by providing outreach and education services. The project team will: (1) conduct on-going community needs assessment; (2) interview members of the community as well as tribal leaders to gather input; (3) disseminate educational materials with the goal of improving the management, operation, and maintenance of water/wastewater disposal facilities; and, (4) host in-community workshops focusing on basic water/wastewater topics. The proposal will resolve pressing water/wastewater issues by providing direct technical assistance that will: (1) identify and evaluate alternative solutions; (2) develop projects based on recommended solutions; (3) estimate project costs; and, (4) develop funding strategy. Additionally, the project will increase disadvantaged groups' access to Federal/State financial assistance programs including grants and loans by: (1) matching the nature of the projects with available Federal grant/loan programs; (2) developing 1-2 sound water/wastewater projects in Navajo, Hopi, or other Native American communities; and (3) assisting Native American individuals and groups with the preparation of 2-3 water/wastewater loan and/or grant applications. Finally, the project will demonstrate water/wastewater technologies, provide hands-on training to Native American youth and adults utilizing the demonstration systems/projects that have been developed or will be developed in Navajo, Hopi, San Carlos Apache, and White Mountain Apache communities.

Ridge to Reefs, Inc. (MD)

Requested: \$539,832.50

Proposed: \$332,000.00

The Ridge to Reefs, Inc. will provide training to wastewater professionals and stakeholders in the place-based project development, siting, design, construction, and maintenance of appropriate solutions for wastewater treatment, with a focus on low cost, highly effective green infrastructure.

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

Requested: \$820,000.00

Proposed: \$742,000.00

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), Inc. will provide on-site technical assistance to at least 55 projects benefitting over 12- Priority 1 and 2 Colonia areas. At least five projects will be 'regional'. RCAP will develop a pipeline of Colonia 306C projects, secure engineering, legal and other professional services, assist with organizational (and regional) creation, and with preparation of loan/grant applications.

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

Requested: \$10,000,000.00

Proposed: \$9,043,000.00

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP) will provide training and on-site technical assistance to 810 systems. Additionally, RCAP will provide GIS services to an additional 60 systems and assist with asset inventory and the completion of vulnerability assessments and emergency response plans. RCAP will present 150 training sessions, to at least 1,000 system personnel, including Workshop in a Box-based trainings.

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

Requested: \$515,000.00

Proposed: \$465,164.34

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP) will provide training and on-site technical assistance to at least 20 systems serving large numbers of tribal members (tribal systems) in at least 10 states, which shall be selected in consultation with state RD offices and other federal agencies, as appropriate. Additionally, RCAP will provide 28 trainings for tribal systems or gatherings of Native American Water Masters Associations.

Syracuse University – Environmental Finance Center (NY)

Requested: \$187,246.00

Proposed: \$169,000.00

The Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center will host five workshops, present at four to six sessions of non-host conferences and hold two workshops each in New York State and Puerto Rico. They will host three webinars to be recorded for future review and develop and distribute publications based on information gathered from the Community Needs Survey results from 2018 and 2019. They will provide technical training and individualized assistance to rural municipalities in New York State and Puerto Rico for community planning, water resource management, and utility resilience.

Tanana Chiefs Conference (AK)

Requested: \$222,519.00

Proposed: \$201,000.00

The Tanana Chiefs Conference, Office of Environmental Health, will provide five free training classes, along with two Workshop in a Box community visits, and follow-up on-site training for water treatment operators, utility managers and tribal/city councils.

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United South & Eastern Tribes, Inc. (TN)

Requested: \$2,773,345.00

Proposed: \$2,508,000.00

The United South & Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) will provide technical, managerial and financial training to USET member tribal leaders, board members, and utility managers, identify and evaluate solutions to water problems of four USET member Tribal Nations in rural areas relating to source, storage, treatment, or distribution, create four engineering reports for four different Tribal Nations specifically targeting a lack of potable water at the Tribal Nation or potable water that does not meet the SDWA, identify and evaluate solutions to waste problems of USET member Tribal Nations in rural areas relating to collection, treatment, or disposal by providing six site visits to USET member Tribal Nations that require hands on personal service to achieve operator success or assistance to resolve compliance, maintenance, or process issues, assist USET member Tribal Nations in the preparation of water and/or waste loan and/or grant applications for the four water facilities receiving an engineering study under this program to move the project to the next step for delivery of safe drinking water to Tribal citizens, and will pay expenses associated with providing technical assistance and authorized training for 95 Tribal Nation utility team members to attend events listed above.

Walking Shield (CA)

Requested: \$100,000.00

Proposed: \$90,000.00

The Walking Shield, Inc. will: (1) assist in building the capacity of tribal leadership to identify, implement, and sustain improved water infrastructure on the reservations; (2) establish five year workplans as Tribal Council Guide to Complete and Manage Comprehensive Water Infrastructure Projects on the reservation; and, (3) Provide comprehensive technical assistance and training to complete water projects, to secure required financing of projects, and to supervise and manage new water systems.

West Virginia University Research Corporation (WV)

Requested: \$497,118.00

Proposed: \$450,000.00

The West Virginia University Research Corporation has instituted the Appalachian Community Technical Assistance and Training (ACTAT) Program to focus on counties in West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee with water systems serving populations less than 2,500. Assistance is targeting those systems deemed viable, marginal or failing, design and validate training program model, and provide training to multiple communities within the targeted areas. They will provide Workshop in a Box trainings per state as well as hands-on, one-on-one technical assistance with the communities previously identified as well as new communities derived from the latest Workshop in a Box training sessions.

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Zender Environmental Health and Research Group (AK)

Requested: \$295,908.00

Proposed: \$268,000.00

The Zender Environmental Health & Research Group will conduct provide Qualified Sampler Training to operators, PFAS Sampling & Water Quality Refresher Training, Waste Management Utility Workshop in a Box & Developing a Budget, and Backhaul facility operator trainings; direct technical assistance to Metlakatla for project development for Rural utility Implementation of action Plan, & Establishment of Water/PFAS Sampling program; direct technical assistance to Skagway to establish a program that addresses contaminants and provide education and outreach material development and distribution.

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FY 2021 TAT PROJECTS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING:

Amari Kai 2M Inc. (GA)

Requested: \$1,000,000.00

Amari Kai 2M Inc., proposed to high quality learning experience using interactive exercises, examples, and instructional resources to create a rich learning environment, through self-paced training and assessment modules. A variety of topics related to the management, operation, reporting and maintenance of water and waste facilities would have been presented.

American Water Works Association (CO)

Requested: \$867,109.00

The American Water Works Association would have delivered 70 training workshops to 1200 rural water system attendees throughout the U.S., Puerto Rico, and associated US Territories in the north Pacific. Workshops would have included PSW, Self-Assessment and Water Loss Control, Setting Effective Rates, Cybersecurity, RD Apply, and a newly developed course, Asset Management. Goals of the project include changing perceptions of small and very small operators and owners in finding financial assistance for capital improvement projects, moving from raising awareness to the development of an action plan, and enhancing program metrics to share data regarding program successes and outcomes with USDA staff.

Auburn Research and Technology Foundation (AL)

Requested: \$235,000.00

Application withdrawn by applicant following funding offer: The Auburn Research and Technology Foundation would provide hands-on technical training and public outreach to our Black Belt service area. This will allow for 65 participants to receive hands-on training to gain the knowledge required to develop and deploy effective Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPP) during construction activities. In addition, technical materials (i.e., brochures and posters) will be developed and delivered to our service area to provide public education and outreach to residents.

Eastern Kentucky Pride Foundation, Inc. (KY)

Requested: \$493,940.00

The OCT Water Quality Academy proposed to convert 20 classroom trainings to eLearning classes for water and wastewater operators that provide basic skills needed by operators of water/wastewater systems of all sizes nationwide. Activities will be provided to SUTAs with emphasis on workforce development and water and surface water contaminants

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Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (MD)

Requested: \$493,940.00

The Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center proposed to provide services to twelve municipalities located in Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot County, and Sussex County. They will provide the following: (1) reconfirm the initial needs assessment; (2) liaison with relevant regulatory bodies to understand current mandates; (3) design an engineering solution based on the individual project needs; (4) confirm that the solution indeed does fit the intended application by demonstrating the solution via the mobile technical assistance version of each technology noted above; (5) train the workforce in use of the technologies; (6) develop the final engineering design and costing; and, (7) help develop all applications and logistical plans required for loan and grant funding for the actual installation of the solution(s).

Engineers Without Borders USA dba Community Engineering Corp (CO)

Requested: \$546,274.00

The Engineers Without Borders USA, dba Community Engineering Corp, proposed to provide volunteer engineering and infrastructure services to small (pop. <2,500), rural, underserved (MHI < 80% of SNMHI) communities. Services would have included identifying and evaluating solutions to water problems related to source, storage, treatment or distribution; assisting in preparation of loan and/or grant applications; and providing technical assistance and/or training to improve management, operation and maintenance of facilities.

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA) – (Remote Learning)

Requested: \$407,000.00

The OCT Water Quality Academy would have updated and converted highly successful in-the-seat, instructor led, classes into online classes to meet ongoing licensing, re-certification, and qualifying educational needs of operators nationwide who otherwise would not be able to attend classes at a school site.

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

Requested: \$5,000,000.00

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. proposed to conduct outreach to 6,000 individuals on opportunities in the water sector through an aggressive awareness campaign, work with up to 90 USDA borrower communities to deploy work-based learning programs, have 120 candidates participate in the Operator In Training (OIT) Apprenticeship Program, have 120 candidates participate in the Financial and Customer Service (FCS) Apprenticeship Program; and have 60 candidates participate in the Small Systems Utility Management (UM) Certification program. These programs will prioritize a focus on veterans by partnering with veteran-focused organizations to educate them and their members on opportunities in the water sector.