

Technical Assistance and Training (TAT) Grants FY 2023 Project Narratives

FY 2023 TAT PROJECTS RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING

Alaska Forum on the Environment (AK)

The Alaska Forum on the Environment proposes to assist rural Alaska communities with implementing sustainable practices that maintain safe drinking water and sanitary, environmentally sound waste disposal facilities. This project will fulfill that purpose by achieving the following goals: (1) enable underserved rural Alaska communities with a population of less than 2,500 to assess and prioritize needed water, energy, and waste management process improvements; (2) enable underserved rural Alaska communities with a population of less than 2,500 to improve processes and implement best management practices including energy usage in water and waste disposal facilities; (3) recognize Green Star® Communities annually; and (4) Encourage Green Star Communities to have all water/wastewater treatment operators certified, passing the State of Alaska Exam.

Alaska Municipal League (AK)

The Alaska Municipal League (AML) proposes to establish the Alaska Water Infrastructure Financial Navigation Center (AWIFNC), an effort that will improve financial and governance systems of disadvantaged, rural, and small municipal governments in their management of water and wastewater systems in Alaska and contribute to affordability and sustainability of those systems that result from funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and other types of federal investment. A significant emphasis will be on delivering training and technical assistance that helps communities access and manage funding and ensuring knowledge of and access to USDA Rural Development programs.

Alaskan Native Tribal Health Consortium, Inc. (AK)

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Inc. (ANTHC) proposes to provide hands-on technical assistance and training to the water/sewer operators of existing ARUC member communities; provide on-site evaluations of the 26 existing ARUC member community water/sewer systems; and work with the Program Administrator to identify at least 5 communities that are either unserved or within 3-5 years of having water and sewer services available in the community and setting up community and leadership meetings in a minimum of three of these communities. Each Utility Management Specialists (UMS) will perform annual rate studies for their assigned communities and recommend a rate structure that: (1) ensures water/sewer revenues meet expenses to maintain sustainability; (2) provides on-site training and technical support to the water/sewer operators, and; (3) schedules off-site training for the operators as needed, both to build skills and maintain necessary certification levels. UMS will review, evaluate and recommend process control methods to improve the operation and maintenance of drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste facilities, coordinate and facilitate hands-on and on-site technical assistance with local water plant operators in current ARUC communities, and coordinate tasks associated with improved energy and operational efficiencies.

Tanana Chiefs Conference (AK)

The Tanana Chiefs Conference, Office of Environmental Health, proposes to provide five free training classes (in Fairbanks or in a surrounding road service community) to approximately 60-75 water operators, utility managers and/or council members (based on 12-15 participants per class) in low-income rural interior villages and other Alaskan communities by utilizing partnerships within the State of Alaska.

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Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council (AK)

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council proposes to: (1) provide 6 scholarships to environmental and water/wastewater workers in the YRB to attend RUBA and related training; (2) provide 3 community workshops focused on Climate Change, Drinking Water Contamination, and Applying for State and Federal Aid; (3) provide technical support to YRB communities to assist in finding and applying for financial resources aimed at establishing, improving and/or maintaining water/wastewater systems; (4) provide 2 community Water and Wastewater training workshops on safety; and, (5) provide aerial photos to YRB communities to map potential infrastructure improvements to water and wastewater disposal systems.

Zender Environmental Health and Research Group (AK)

Zender Environmental Health and Research Group proposes to: (1) provide direct, hands-on technical assistance to Utility and Source Water managers and operators in rural Alaska that address the needs identified this year; (2) deliver three State of Alaska Qualified Sampler (with PFAS sampling) trainings (Anchorage, 3 days) to water operators, and one leveraged Sampler training with job placement; (3) provide direct, on-site assistance to Savoogna, a Distressed Community (with 0.98 CDC Social Vulnerability Index score) to address climate impacts and pollution mitigation through water quality sampling work (4) Provide direct, on-site assistance to Chitina, a rural community in the top 10% of counties for Economic Risk Assessment (91.2 percentile), for drinking water infrastructure support through a well sampling project; (5) Develop and distribute educational materials on the topic of honeybucket (wastewater) supplies/infrastructure; (6) provide one-on-one support to trainees using follow-up phone, email, and live video via a Satellite hot spot; (7) assist 2-4 communities on-site including sampling program implementation to help meet the 3-month Professional supervisory requirement for final Qualified Sampler certification, Quality Assurance Program Plan (QAPP) assistance allowing villages to leverage EPA grant funds for personnel and sampling and analysis costs, and PFAS sampling; and (8) assist requesting communities in preparing applications for water and waste grants

Alabama Association of Conservation District (AL)

Alabama Association of Conservation District proposes to provide construction stormwater technical services to The Black Belt region of Alabama. They have partnered with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians to assist in their technical needs. This project will be carried out by providing hands-on technical training and public outreach to our Black Belt service area. This one-year grant will allow for approximately 75 participants to complete hands-on training events to gain the knowledge required to develop and deploy effective SWPPPs during construction activities. In addition, technical outreach in the form of short demonstrational videos will be developed and delivered to our service area to provide public education to residents.

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

The Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. (ITCA) proposes to provide its technical assistance, training, and tribal operator certification services to small, rural tribal communities located in USEPA Regions 5 through 10—a project service area spanning 28 states and 96% of all tribal public water systems in the U.S. The following four project activities will be implemented: (1) strengthen managerial and financial capacity of tribal water utilities by providing technical assistance and specialized training, including tribal utility manager leadership workgroup forums; (2) strengthen tribal water utility resiliency by providing technical assistance (TA) and conducting resiliency training, including workshops on drought contingency and emergency response planning; (3) improve the workforce pipeline and

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strengthen technical competency by conducting comprehensive operator training and certification services, offering travel expense reimbursement stipends, and providing technical assistance; and, (4) improve tribal water utility capacity for complying with federal regulations by conducting federal regulations training events.

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, and its affiliates, propose to provide technical assistance and training (TAT) to underserved communities in the United States Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (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: (1) two workshops on nonprofit management and/or fundraising for non-PRASA systems; (2) direct, one-on-one technical assistance to five (5) non-PRASA water systems, to address their specific needs/concerns; (3) a demonstration project to develop a collaborative, supportive organizational structure for water systems in central, western Puerto Rico; and (4) distribution of educational materials and outreach to build awareness of chemicals of concern.

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA) – Multi-platform Telecommunications

The OCT Water Quality Academy proposes to establish and operate both a regional and a nationwide Telecommunications Education & Support Center to provide water utility classes for the benefit of up to 350,000 potential municipal drinking water and wastewater operators nationwide at small, medium and large municipal water and wastewater districts across the country. The proposed Grade 1 – 4 telecommunications programs will reach across four (4) time zones in the U.S.

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA) – Remote Learning

The OCT Water Quality Academy (OCTWQA) is proposing to provide much needed training assistance by updating and converting 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. It is OCTWQA's goal to help as many of the of the approximately 350,000 to 400,000 small water system operators as possible across the country find a wide variety of water distribution, water treatment, wastewater, and collections classes to choose from for the purpose of preparing for certification examinations or to gain ongoing continuing education classes (CEUs).

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA) – Lab Tech & Water Sampling

The OCT Water Quality Academy (OCTWQA) proposes to provide financial support for the development of a rural community's laboratory training program for water operations personnel. This program will improve operations of small and very small drinking water systems and assist with achieving and maintaining compliance with legislation by providing recognized and

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accredited training for drinking water system samplers and Grade 1 and 2 laboratory personnel. OCTWQA proposes to provide both laboratory bench training and then certify water distribution system samplers and Grade 1 and 2 laboratory personnel.

OCT Water Quality Academy (CA) – Multi-platform Telecommunications

The OCT Water Quality Academy (OCTWQA) proposes to provide in-depth instruction, certification examination preparation, technical assistance, and a broad host of municipal water and wastewater education programs by promoting and providing innovative, virtual, multi-platform communication from an instructional outreach studio. This will be conducted through regional and nationwide virtual learning assistance programs 24/7/365 for small, medium and large community drinking water and wastewater cities/districts.

Walking Shield, Inc. (CA)

Walking Shield, Inc. proposes to build the capacity of Tribal leadership and staff to identify, implement, and sustain improved water infrastructure on the Reservation, establish five year work plans as Tribal Council Guide to complete and manage comprehensive water infrastructure projects on the Reservations, and provide comprehensive technical assistance and training to complete water projects, to secure required financing of projects, and to oversee/assist management of new water systems.

Engineers without Borders (CO)

The Community Engineering Corps (CECorps) program proposes to serve up to 25 communities that want to make necessary improvements but are lacking the technical expertise and engineering services to move their water and wastewater infrastructure projects forward. CECorps will process a community application for a CECorps project by evaluating and prioritizing water and wastewater needs, identify and equip a qualified volunteer team to conduct the engineering project, build a partnership and enter into a formal agreement between the project team and client detailing the background, scope, and schedule for engineering services to be provided, create an engineering report (deliverable) that satisfies the agreement and meets a professional standard of care, provide ad-hoc additional training, education, workshops, and resources, and conduct a closeout to gather data, lessons learned, and write a story on the impact of the work that the volunteers and training staff conducted.

North Central Regional Planning Commission (KS)

The North Central Regional Planning Commission (NCRPC) is applying for TAT grant funds to offer our knowledge and technical assistance with navigating USDA RD water and sewer application, environmental, and Letter of Conditions (LOC) assistance services to our twelve-county service area for free. Being able to offer our expertise and assistance in the application process at no charge to the cities will support more of our cities as they pursue USDA RD funding for their water and waste treatment project needs. In addition, it is hoped that being a “one-stop-shop” for our cities will streamline the project, cut out redundancy with varying agencies, and ensure a greater chance of a successful project outcome.

Ridge to Reefs (MD)

This project proposes to bring together national and local non-governmental organizations Ridge to Reefs, Inc. (RTR) and Wastewater Alternatives & Innovations, Inc. (WAI) to provide direct technical wastewater upgrade assistance to three priority rural Hawaiian communities. The team will host community meetings/planning processes in each of Hawaiian communities,

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Keaukaha (Big Island), Hana (Maui), and Anahola (Kauai), to identify and evaluate the community members' concerns and insights for wastewater improvements. This information will inform the team in working closely with the Department of Hawaiian Homelands, relevant community associations and engineering groups to strategize next steps for cost-effective and locally appropriate widespread upgrades. The team will help the community prepare applications for water and waste disposal loans or grants. In collaboration with WAI's Work-4-Water program, which provides workforce development training and creates new green jobs in partnership with University of Hawaii and Maui College, the team will also host nature-based wastewater treatment trainings for classes at various campuses for students and technical professionals throughout the state of Hawaii.

National Rural Water Association (OK)

The National Rural Water Association proposes to expand the number of 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, such as reducing energy consumption, encouraging conservation, reducing footprints, and improving efficiency; (4) continue to target and prioritize assistance toward the smallest communities with the lowest incomes and poor sanitation, emphasizing designated Opportunity Zones and areas where at least 20 percent of the population is living in poverty; (5) create ten (10) new positions dedicated to providing assistance to projects located in Substantially Underserved Trust Areas; (6) Provide education and implementation support that assists utility systems in addressing emerging contaminants of concern, including Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances 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) – Decentralized Wastewater

NRWA WQAS proposes to develop operating plans that identify prioritized communities in a collaborative process with State RD Offices and other stakeholders. WQAS will identify and evaluate solutions to community water and waste problems in 60 small, rural and disadvantaged communities; assist with improving management, operation, maintenance, and sustainability of decentralized wastewater system; increase the number of communities with improved environmental and public health outcomes; increase the number of communities with knowledge of and access to water and waste disposal loans and grants; promote rural residents' equitable access to Rural Development programs and distribute materials to a broader audience and increase the value of existing programs, resources, and partnerships.

National Rural Water Association (OK) – Energy Efficiency

The National Rural Water Association proposes to develop energy efficiency optimization recommendations for 840 utility systems in 31 states. This will be accomplished by: (1) Identify technological solutions that help to protect utilities from long power outages during blackouts and brownouts and natural disasters such as floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and snowstorms, events that are increasing in frequency due to climate change; (2) conduct 1,000 hands-on, onsite, in-person assessments in 40 states. Assessments will produce written reports that benchmark baseline use, include energy audits, and identify activities and operations that consume the most energy; (3) identify potential green energy solutions; (4) increase awareness of grant and loan funding programs among operators and decision-makers of eligible entities,

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small cities, or towns; (5) prioritize program services for small, rural, and disadvantaged communities facing challenges as identified using the USDA ERS Economic Risk Assessment Dashboard, vulnerable communities identified using the CDC Social Vulnerability Index, and rural communities; and (6) Provide EE educational opportunities for water and wastewater utilities that do not receive direct onsite TAT.

National Rural Water Association (OK) - Apprenticeship

The National Rural Water Association proposes to 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. The specific goals and objectives for this proposal are: (1) enhance nationally recognized Registered Apprenticeship Programs nationwide, which provide portable, stackable credentials that certify occupational proficiency and provide a pathway to economic opportunity; (2) provide funding through this project for NRWA SRWAs to identify, hire and certify expert staff (Apprenticeship Coordinators) on workforce issues; (3) build a qualified workforce that will protect USDA's investment in rural America and improve service to rural customers through the proven earn-and-learn apprenticeship training model; (4) enhance workforce participation in rural, small, and disadvantaged communities across America, with a specific focus on women, minorities, youth, veterans, and individuals with disabilities; and (5) provide a high level of accountability and control of apprentice progress through reporting and record keeping.

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

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP) proposes to provide training and hands-on technical assistance to a minimum of 38 projects across four states benefiting at least 69 Colonias areas, which will be selected in consultation with state/area Rural Development (RD) offices. A minimum of seven projects will be "regional" in nature, creating systems or arrangements that serve multiple communities and allow them to achieve economies of scale. Projects will provide TA in organizational development/technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity building, pre-development activities for infrastructure project development, funding applications, and regulatory Compliance and/or Regionalization. In addition, RCAP will maintain and update the RCAP Colonias Geodatabase (updates will be made to at least 38 distinct Colonias).

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

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP) proposes to shall provide in-depth on-site TA to at least 558 projects, which shall be selected in consultation with/approved by state and area USDA Rural Development (RD) offices. RCAP will provide GIS (Geographic Information System) services through 48 projects. RCAP will help systems to inventory assets and develop system maps. RCAP will also present 96 interactive training sessions to at least 960 attendees. RCAP will develop two new training modules for administrative professionals. This blended learning package will include one in person training module and one self-paced eLearning module to add to the existing eLearning library. Each region will also purchase and use mobile learning labs which include 8 laptops each to help systems with these and other technology-based trainings. RCAP and its regions will also attend underground condition assessment training like the Pipeline, Lateral and Manhole Assessment Certification Class, provided by NASSCO. Lastly, RCAP will share case studies, lessons learned, and best practices to a broad national audience through print/digital media, especially in the most underserved areas with environmental justice and equity challenges.

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

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership, Inc. (RCAP) proposes to provide on-site technical assistance and training via 21 technical assistance projects to at least 21 systems serving large numbers of Tribal members/Tribal systems in at least 10 states, selected in consultation with state USDA offices and other federal agencies, as appropriate. RCAP will also convene 22 trainings for Tribal systems or gatherings of Native American Water Masters Associations (NAWMA). NAWMA's goal is to bring Tribal operators together regularly to share their common water/wastewater challenges, receive related training, promote operator advancement, and build capacity to create stronger utilities. In 1995, RCAC, the western RCAP, worked with Tribes in Southern California to form the first NAWMA group. If a NAWMA cannot convene or is not applicable, RCAP will instead provide training on key issues for Tribal water/wastewater operators, managers, leadership, and other staff.

Native American Water Association (NV)

The Native American Water Association proposes a combination of activities including network group coalition building among tribal nations and their communities and lands nationwide. Development and delivery of classroom style and virtual online training opportunities and direct on-site tribal follow-up activities that address specific tribal needs, as requested by those participating tribes.

Syracuse University – Environmental Finance Center (NY)

The Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center proposes to carry out this project for the benefit of rural communities by conducting training conferences and workshops, webinars, and direct technical assistance and information distribution. The project will produce easy-to-access publications and online resources and will offer community needs assessments. Hands-on trainings will help municipalities develop internal and external resources to identify and develop fundable projects, leading to improved infrastructure. This effort incentivizes community initiatives that support regional goals and priorities to attract regional and state funding, increasing economic opportunities across New York State and Puerto Rico. They will provide technical training and individualized assistance to rural municipalities in New York and Puerto Rico for community planning, water resource management, and utility resilience.

Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center (WA)

The Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center proposes to conduct 18 trainings: 12 Virtual and 6 In-Person, provide trainee technical support, enhance, update, and maintain the National Resource Reference Guide, populate the Case Study Library, provide marketing campaign and CEU Coordination, provide a quarterly newsletter, host and provide FOG Forum Travel Scholarship and develop, analyze and evaluate training information in quarterly reports.

West Virginia University Research Corporation (WV)

The West Virginia University Research Corporation has instituted the Appalachian Community Technical Assistance and Training Program to focus on counties in West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee with water systems serving populations less than 2,500. WVU proposes to improve and Expand Water and Wastewater Infrastructure in Rural Areas throughout the Central Appalachian Subregion, ensure Continued Operation of Water Utilities in Rural Areas of the Central Appalachian Subregions, and improve Efficiency of Technical Assistance to Water Utilities.