

Water 101: Exploring Wastewater Management & Financing Fundamentals for South Carolina Elected Officials

Part 1: July 24, 1 pm ET

Part 2: July 30, 1pm ET



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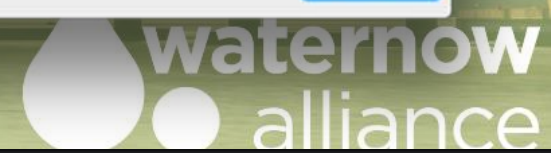
Q&A

You ask: 13:05
How do I use these awesome tools?

Joshua Jones answered: 13:06
You are already using one of the most awesome tools. We'll discuss the rest right away.

Please input your question

Send Anonymously Send



Certificate of Completion

This session has **NOT** been submitted for pre-approval of Continuing Education Credits, but eligible attendees will receive a certificate of attendance for their personal record.

To receive a certificate:

- You must attend the entire session
- You must register and attend using your real name and unique email address - group viewing credit will not be acceptable
- You must participate in polls
- Certificates will be sent via email within 30 days

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact smallsystems@syr.edu.

About EFCN

The **Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN)** is a university- and non-profit-based organization creating innovative solutions to the difficult how-to-pay issues of environmental protection and water infrastructure.

The EFCN works collectively and as individual centers to address these issues across the entire U.S, including the 5 territories and the Navajo Nation. The EFCN aims to assist public and private sectors through training, direct professional assistance, production of durable resources, and innovative policy ideas.





WaterNow works to advance transformation in the urban water sector to accelerate the widespread adoption of resilient and environmentally sustainable strategies.

We do this as a national network for local water leaders and decision makers, empowering them with the technical assistance, resources, and tools they need to implement innovative One Water drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater solutions in their communities.



Agenda

- Meet Today's Speakers
- Part 1 Recap
- Federal Funding Landscape
- Digging into the Clean Water State Revolving Fund
- Rural Infrastructure Authority Grants
- Accessing Technical Assistance



Today's Speakers



Carolyn Berndt
Legislative Director for
Sustainability
National League of Cities



Brad Martin
Manager, Office of Rural Water
Water Pollution Compliance and
Enforcement Division
SCDES - Office of Rural Water



Robin Cooley
Viability Program Manager
South Carolina Rural
Infrastructure Authority



Caroline Koch
Water Policy Director
WaterNow Alliance

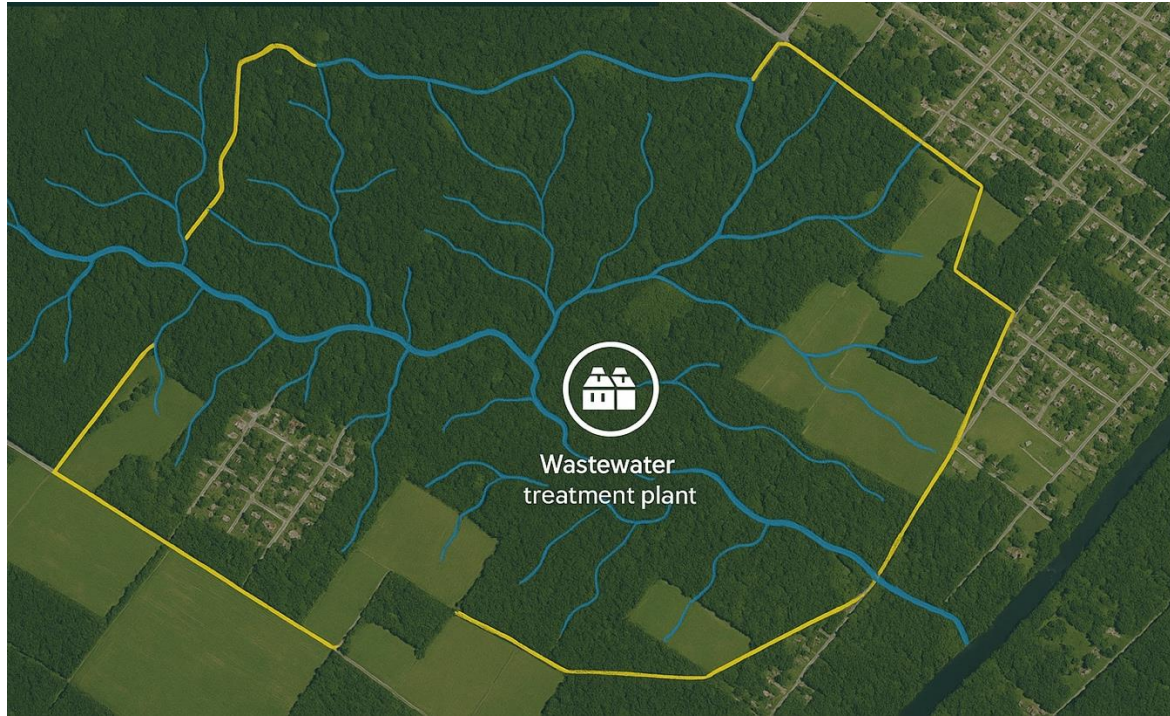


Part 1 Recap: Wastewater System Basics, One Water Solutions, Intro to Funding & Financing

Caroline Koch

Policy Director
WaterNow Alliance

What is Wastewater and a Sewershed?



- Wastewater: water that has been used in homes, industries, or businesses.
- Sewershed: area where all wastewater flows to a single point or system.
- Important for public health, maintenance, and system planning.

Types of Wastewater Systems in SC

- Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs).
- Decentralized systems, including septic tanks.
- Combined vs. separate sewer systems.*
 - Only separate systems in South Carolina
- Considerations differ between rural and urban areas.

Interactions with Stormwater



- Stormwater can infiltrate sewer systems, increasing treatment needs.
- Combined systems handle both wastewater and stormwater.*
*Note: No combined systems in SC
- Green infrastructure helps manage runoff and protect water quality.

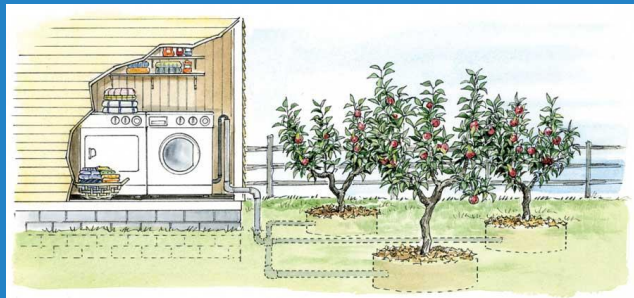
21st century solutions for 21st century problems



- All water has value
- Water is integrated
- Water facilities can be distributed

Examples of One Water strategies

Reuse



Green Infrastructure



Constructed Wetlands



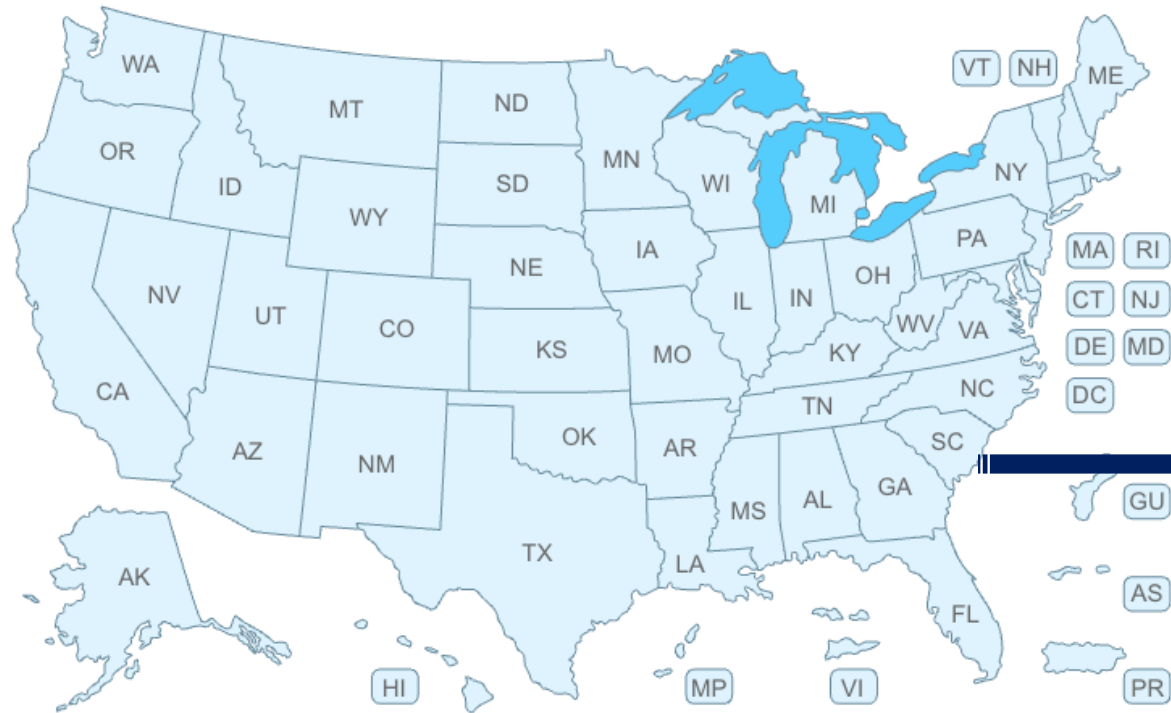
Create a Funding & Financing Portfolio



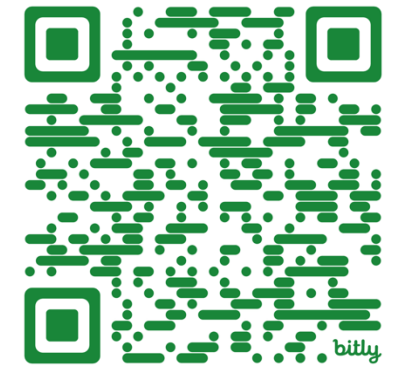
Combining grants and debt financing helps communities make investments in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure while keeping rates down

Funding Sources By State Or Territory

We work with state and federal agencies to make sure that current funding opportunities are consolidated in one place. Click the map below to find water and wastewater funding sources for your state or territory.



*South Carolina
Funding Table*



Tap into Resilience Toolkit

Resource for finding additional federal and state funding and financing options & information about how debt financing can create inter-generational equity

Affordable Water Infrastructure Investments

Water utilities serving frontline communities not only face water management challenges, but also encounter difficulties in accessing funding and financing mechanisms to invest in needed water infrastructure upgrades. Frontline communities' special challenges accessing the funding required to invest in vital water infrastructure range from **severely reduced federal financial support** for local water systems over the years, to **financially distressed rate bases** that cannot afford the cost of needed infrastructure, **declining populations** leading to a smaller number of customers within the utility service area, and/or **lack of internal capacity and expertise** to apply for the grant and support programs that are available. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these already pressing issues as revenue losses hit urban areas hard.

Click through the sub-sections below to learn about available **federal and state grant and loan options for frontline communities** and how to **ensure inter-generational equity** when making water infrastructure investments.

Federal and State Grant and Loan Options for Frontline Communities >

Ensuring Inter-Generational Equity >

<https://tapin.waternow.org/toolkit/?item=frontline-invest>



A CENTURY OF STRENGTHENING CITIES

Wastewater Infrastructure Funding Landscape

Carolyn Berndt, Legislative Director for
Sustainability
Federal Advocacy, National League of Cities



OUR MISSION

To relentlessly advocate for, and protect the interests of, cities, towns and villages by influencing federal policy, strengthening local leadership and driving innovative solutions.

Local Government Challenges on Water Infrastructure

- Aging Infrastructure
- Unfunded Mandates
- Affordability and Equity
- Climate Change Impacts
- Pollution and Contamination
- Aging Workforce and Workforce Diversity
- Cybersecurity Threats



American Rescue Plan Act – Water Infrastructure

- **Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds** – “necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.”
- Projects eligible under the **Clean Water State Revolving Fund**
 - Construct, improve, and repair wastewater treatment plants; control non-point sources of pollution; create green infrastructure; manage and treat stormwater; water reuse; protect waterbodies from pollution.
- Projects eligible under the **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund**
 - Build or upgrade facilities to improve water quality; transmission, distribution, and storage systems; consolidation or establishment of drinking water systems
- Cybersecurity
- Climate Change and Resilience
- Lead Service Line Replacement

Final Treasury Rule provides [additional flexibilities](#) for water and wastewater projects

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – Water Infrastructure

- \$11.713 billion over five years for the **Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund** (traditional)
 - 49% principal forgiveness/grants
- \$11.713 billion over five years for the **Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund** (traditional)
 - 49% principal forgiveness/grants
- \$15 billion over five years for **lead pipe replacement** projects through the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund
 - 49% principal forgiveness/grants
- \$10 billion over five years for grants to address **emerging contaminants and PFAS** drinking water contamination
 - \$1 billion through the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund
 - \$4 billion through the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund
 - \$5 billion for underserved communities

FY 25 and FY26 Annual Appropriations – Water Infrastructure

Program Name	FY25 Final	FY26 President	FY26 House	FY26 Senate
Clean Water SRF	\$1.693B	\$155M	\$1.208B	\$1.693B
Drinking Water SRF	\$1.126B	\$150M	\$894M	\$1.126B
WIFIA	\$60M	\$0	\$64.6M	\$56.9M
Sewer Overflow Control Grants	\$41M	\$41M	\$44M	\$39M
Water Workforce Grants	\$5.4M	\$5M	\$5M	\$5.4M

Program Name	House Earmarks	Senate Earmarks
Clean Water SRF	\$559.2M	\$349.7M
Drinking Water SRF	\$489.7M	\$247.6M

Earmarks = Congressionally Directed Spending

Inflation Reduction Act – Direct Pay

- Until the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), most tax-exempt entities (such as municipalities) were not eligible for many energy tax incentives.
- IRA Direct Pay provision makes tax-exempt entities eligible for cash back from Treasury for Clean Energy Production and Clean Energy Investment
- **New requirements and deadlines for local governments from the One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act:**
 - Investment Tax Credit (48E) and Production Tax Credit (45Y) retained for **solar** and wind projects that begin construction before July 4, 2026
 - For **solar** and wind projects that begin construction after July 4, 2026 – must be placed in service by Dec. 31, 2027 in order to receive the tax credit
 - New supply chain requirements related to Foreign Entities of Concern applies to projects that begin construction after Dec. 31, 2025
- Learn more from [NYU Tax Law Center](#) and [Lawyers for Good Government](#).

Project Examples – SRFs, ARPA

Clean Water SRF

- **City of Bennettville, SC** - \$500K from CWSRF for planning and assessments regarding the city's gravity sewer system condition.
- **City of Aiken, SC** - \$5.7M from CWSRF for the installation of three underground stormwater infiltration and detention vaults to capture runoff from the upstream urban watershed.
- **Town of Great Falls, SC** - \$1M from CWSRF to upgrade wastewater treatment plant collection system and installation of new clarifiers

Local Government ARPA Investment Tracker

- **Riverside, CA (\$500K)** – Create community gardens that also serve as stormwater filtration rain gardens to treat runoff from impervious surfaces.
- **Mesa, AZ (\$1M)** – Improve cybersecurity of water and sewer infrastructure management systems
- **Laredo, TX (\$5.3M)** – Replace aging infrastructure, improve water quality and improve service reliability.

Project Examples – Water/Clean Energy

- **City of St. Cloud, MN** - \$16.7M in CWSRF funding for nutrient and energy recovery project.
- **City of Rome, NY** - \$10.4M in interest-free CWSRF financing to construct combined heat and power system that generates electricity with biogas.
- **City of Mariana, FL** - \$5M CWSRF loan for the installation of two solar facilities and solar arrays at wastewater treatment plant.
- **City of Taos, NM** - \$2M CWSRF funding (\$1.2M as principal forgiveness) for two solar projects at the wastewater treatment plant.
- **City of Eloy, AZ** – installed solar array at wastewater treatment plant. (Direct pay)

[Utilizing Clean Energy Finance Programs in Your Community](#)

[Local Government Direct Pay Tracker](#)

Water Infrastructure – Next Steps for Local Leaders

- Let your Members of Congress know the water infrastructure projects that are important to your community.
- Urge your Members of Congress to fully fund water infrastructure programs in the FY26 Appropriations process.
 - [Send a letter here.](#)
- Lay the groundwork for the reauthorization of water infrastructure programs in 2026 and your community earmarks in FY2027
- Local Infrastructure Hub Bootcamps/Workshops – [Registration open now](#)
 - Grant Implementation, Compliance, Management
 - Direct Pay
 - Brownfields, Railroads, Safe Streets
 - Water SRFs – 2026

Questions? Get in touch.



Carolyn Berndt

Legislative Director for Sustainability
Federal Advocacy, National League of
Cities

Berndt@nlc.org

NLC

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Q&A

Digging In: Clean Water State Revolving Fund

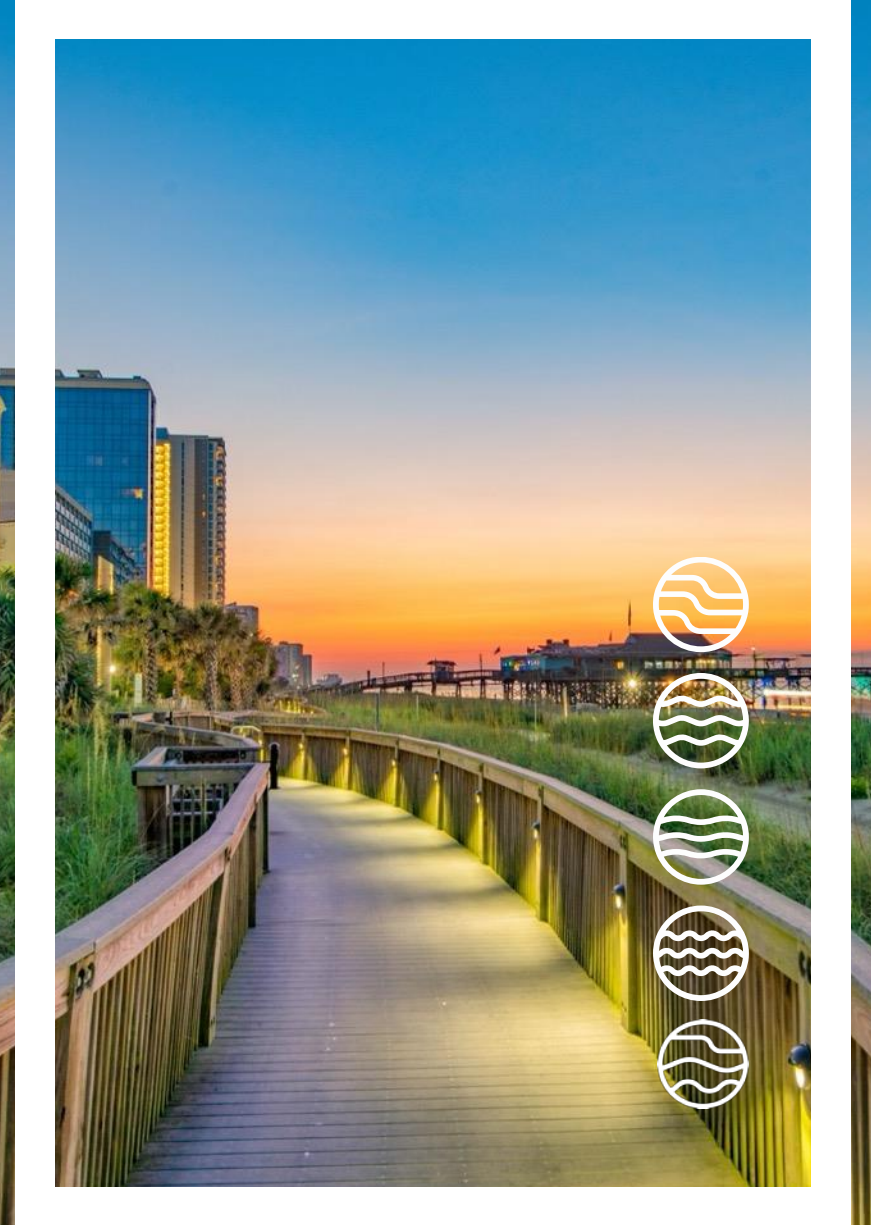
Brad Martin

Manager, Office of Rural Water
Water Pollution Compliance and Enforcement Division
SCDES - Office of Rural Water



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**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**

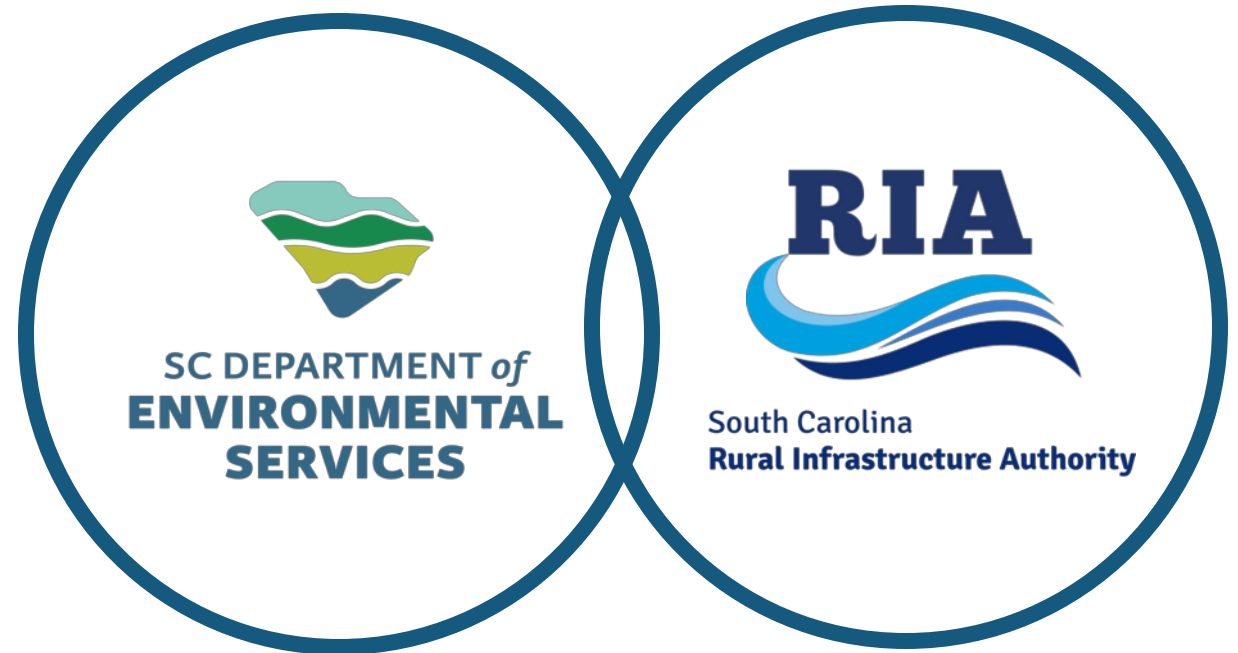
State Revolving Fund (SRF)



Partnership in Program Management

DES is the EPA grantee and manages the technical aspects of the program.

RIA's Office of Local Government (OLG) handles the financial responsibilities of the Fund.



RIA & DES • STATE REVOLVING FUND



State Revolving Fund

- Clean Water (CWSRF)
- Drinking Water (DWSRF)
- Low-Cost Loans
- Principal Forgiveness Funding
- Apply through the PQ process

**Clean Water
All-Eligible
Funds Available
for SFY 2025**

Loans & PF

\$176,508,819

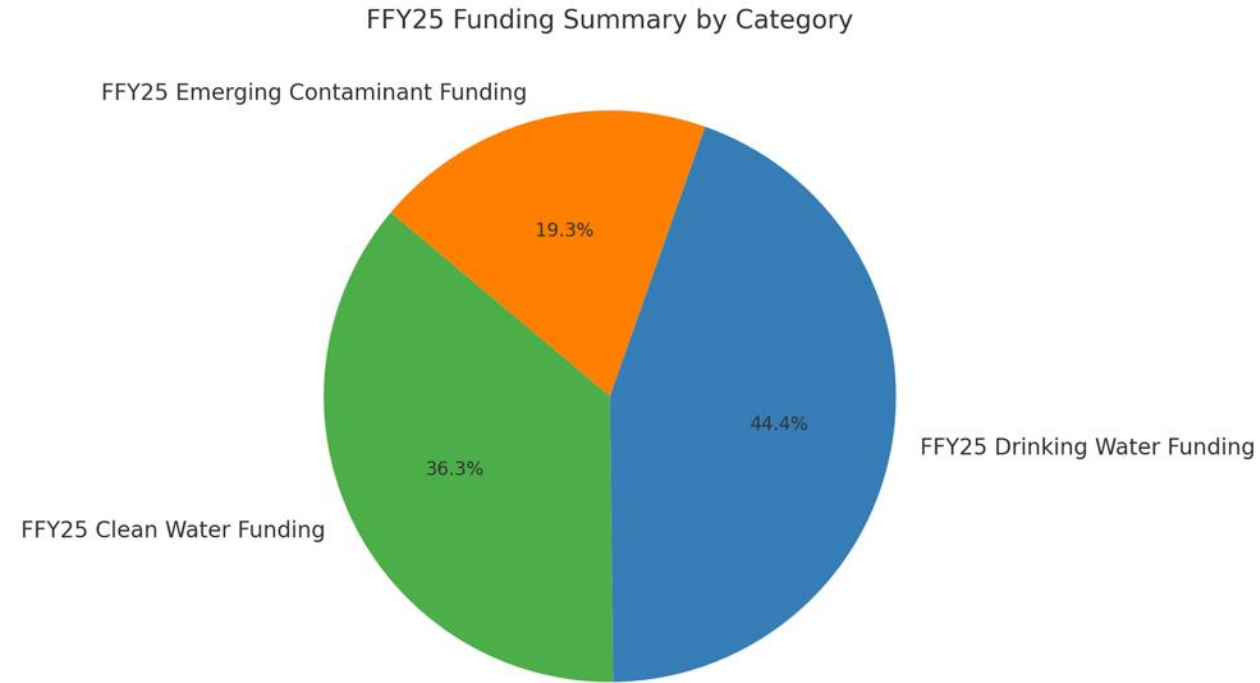
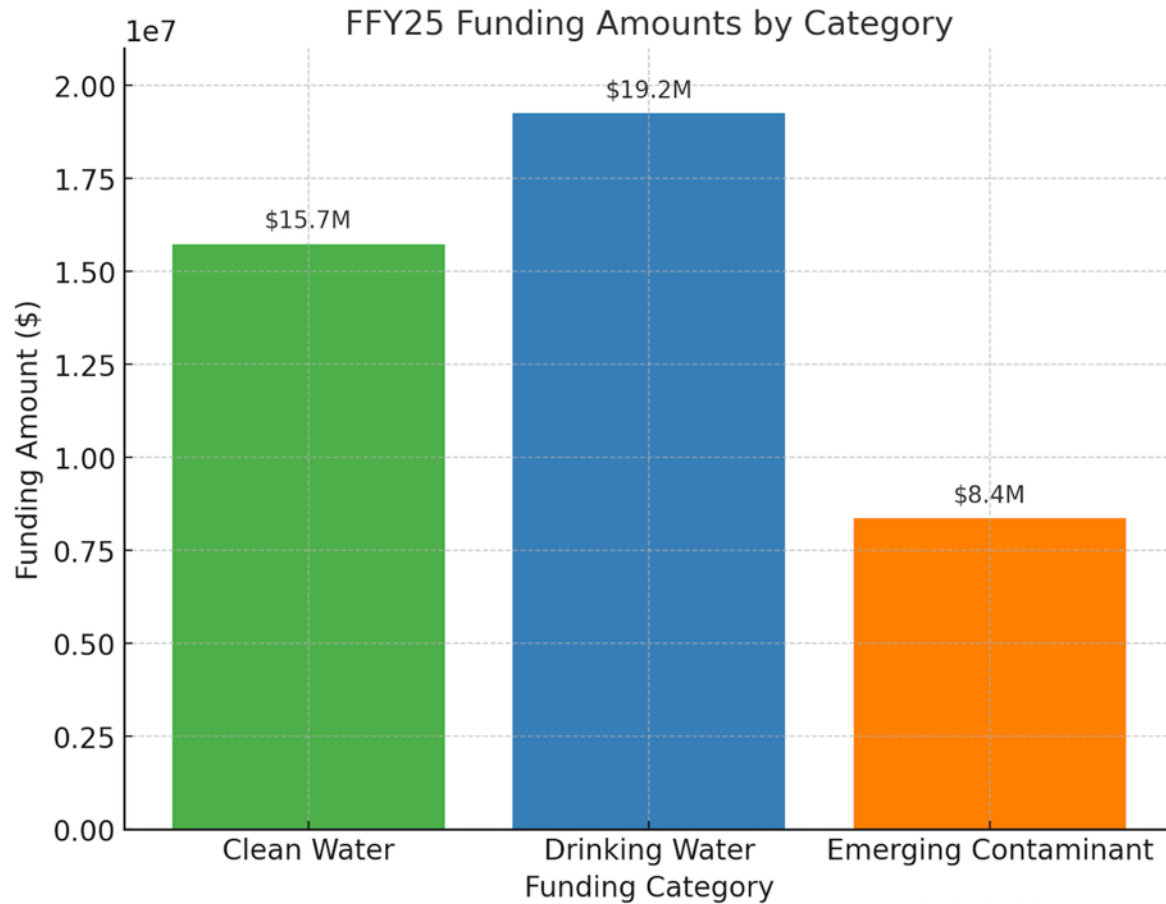
**Drinking Water
All-Eligible
Funds Available
for SFY 2025**

Loans & PF

\$99,289,934



Principal Forgiveness in FY25





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des.sc.gov/SRF

SRF-Info@des.sc.gov

ria.sc.gov/loans

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Q&A



Rural Infrastructure Authority Grant Programs

Robin Cooley

Viability Program Manager
Rural Infrastructure Authority

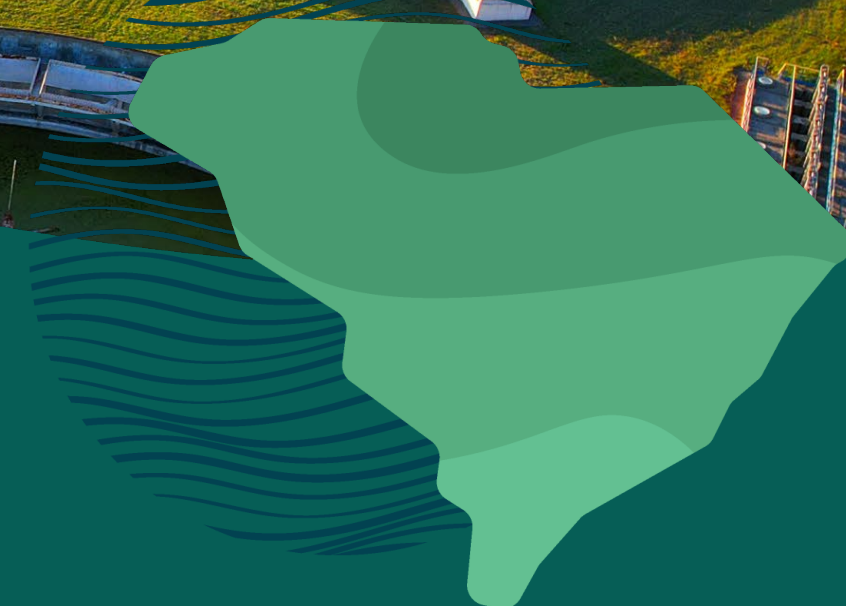
WATERNOW ALLIANCE



South Carolina
Rural Infrastructure Authority

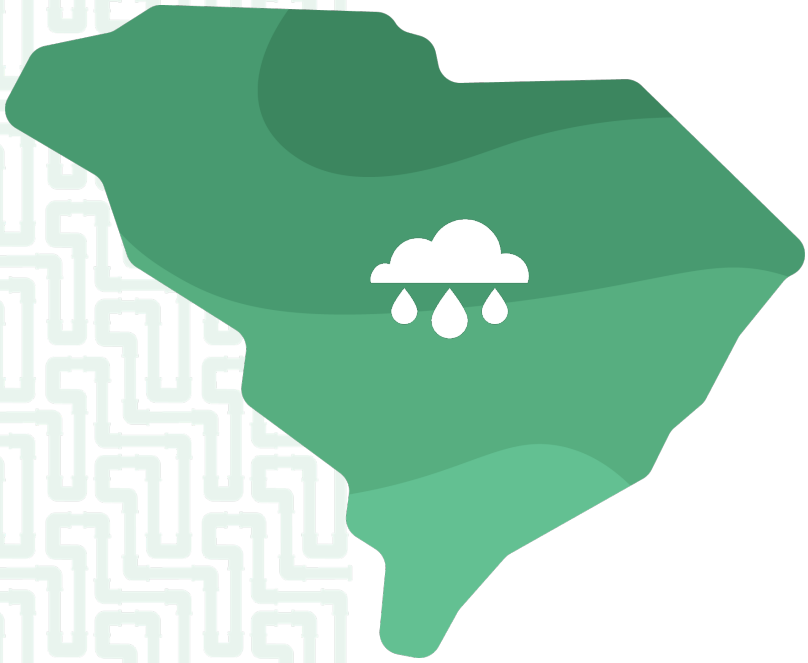
State Grant Program **FY26 Updates**

July 30, 2025



PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE





RIA PROGRAMS

To provide resources for strategic investments that will strengthen and modernize critical community infrastructure.

Grants



Loans



Technical Assistance

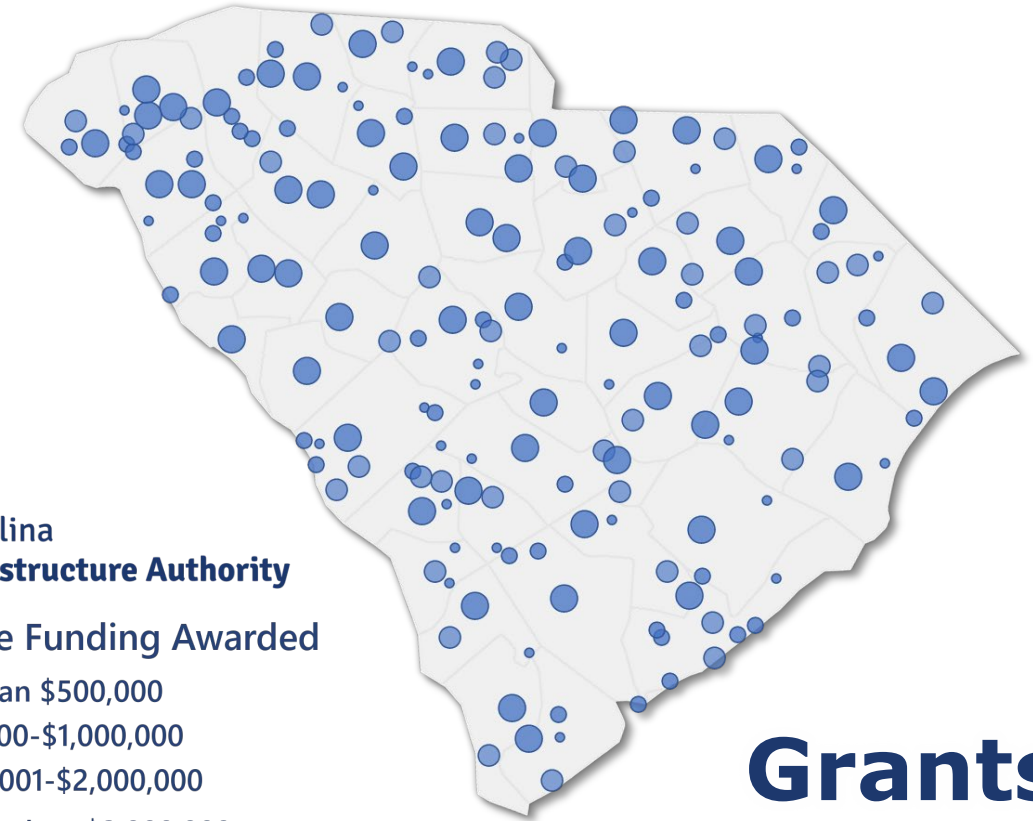
STATE GRANT PROGRAM 2013-2025

651

projects

\$328

million



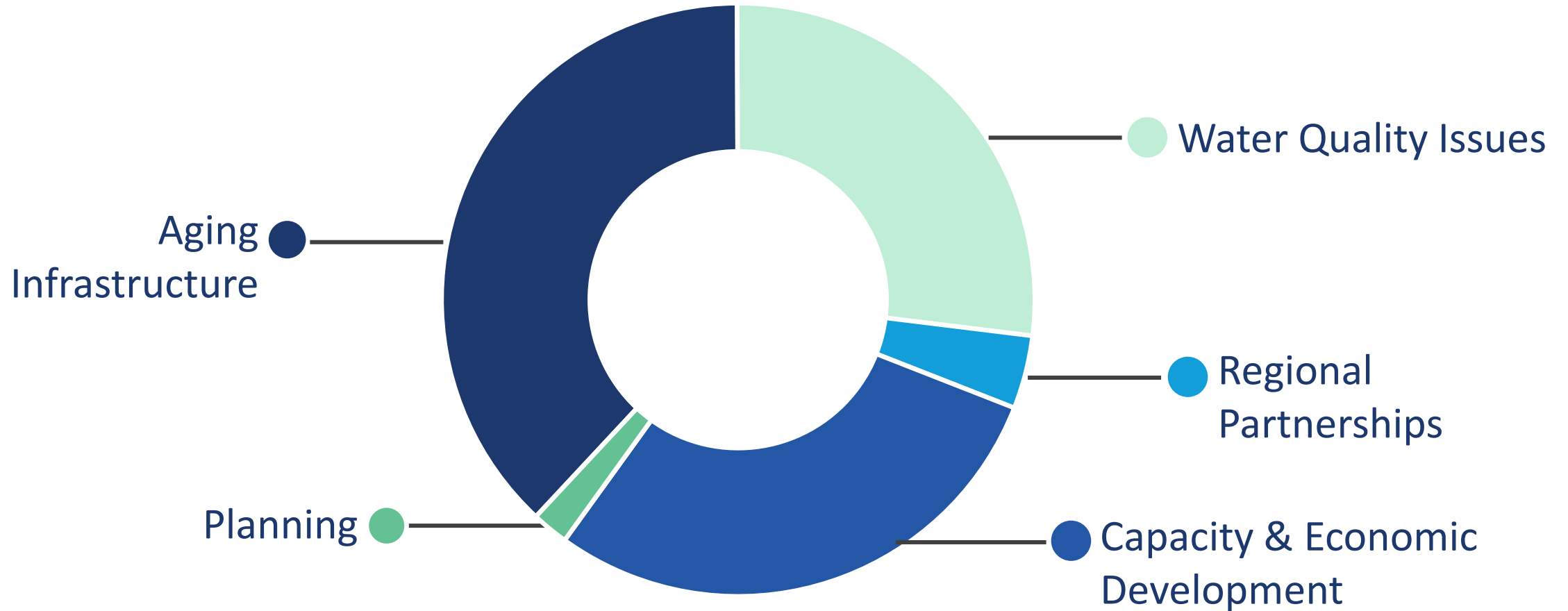
South Carolina
Rural Infrastructure Authority

Total State Funding Awarded

- Less than \$500,000
- \$500,000-\$1,000,000
- \$1,000,001-\$2,000,000
- Greater than \$2,000,000

Grants in
every county

STATE GRANT PROGRAM OUTCOMES 2013-2025



WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Local Governments*
- Special Purpose & Public Service Districts
- Public Works Commissions



* A local government may also apply on behalf of a not-for-profit water/sewer company operating within their jurisdiction.



ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Elevated tanks
- Wells
- Water & sewer lines
- Pump stations
- Water treatment plants
- Waste water treatment plants
- Storm water drainage
- Regional planning

BASIC & ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

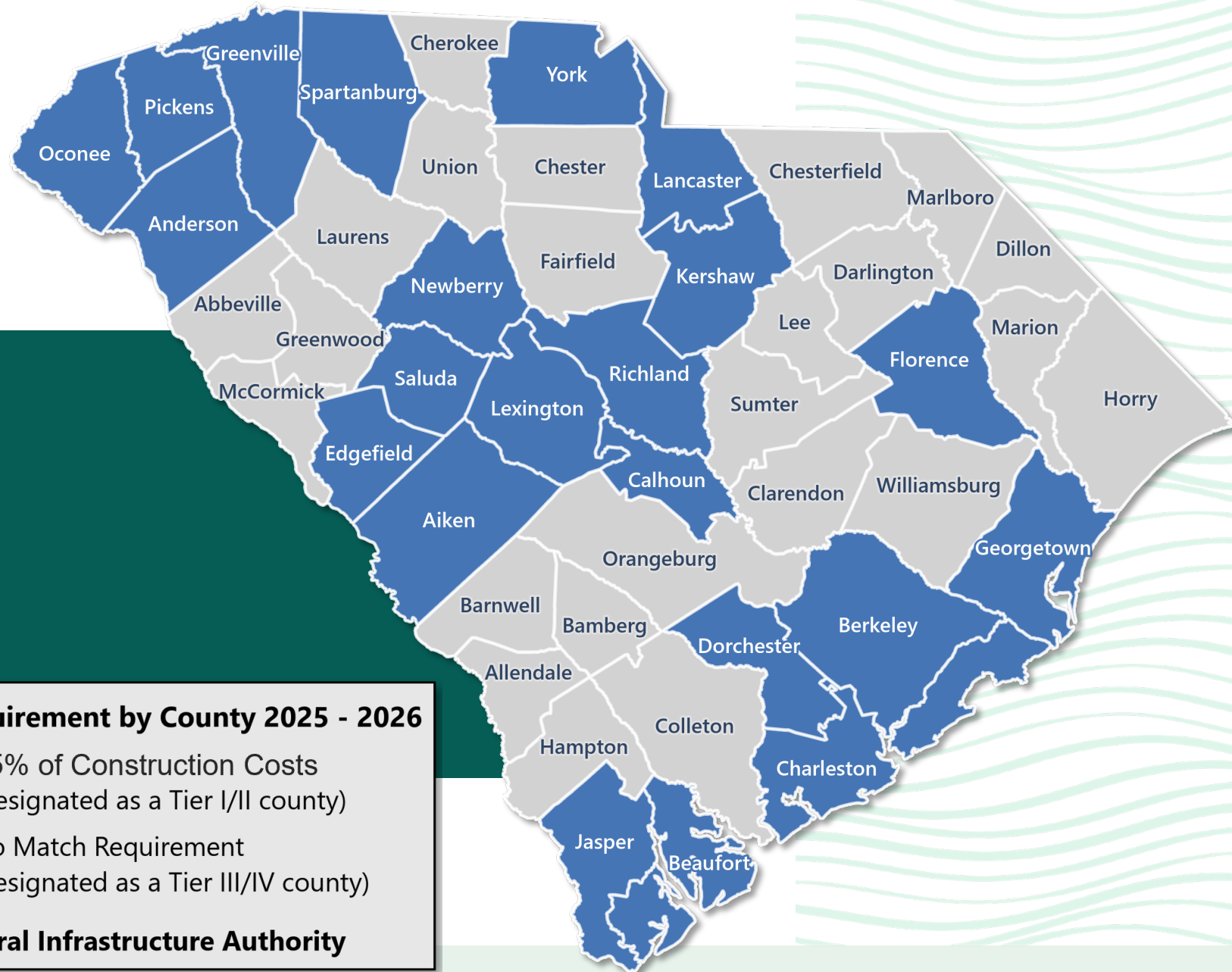


Grant Requests:
Up to **\$1,500,000**



MATCH REQUIREMENT

IMPORTANT:

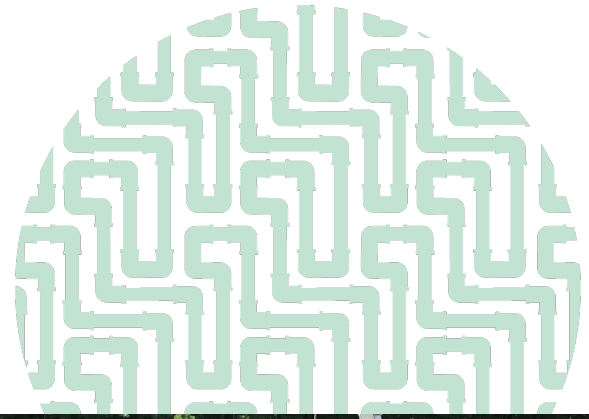
All applicants pay for non-construction costs on capital improvement projects



Match Requirement by County 2025 - 2026

-  25% of Construction Costs (designated as a Tier I/II county)
-  No Match Requirement (designated as a Tier III/IV county)

SC Rural Infrastructure Authority



THRESHOLDS

- One application/grant per program category
- Applicant must own/maintain facilities being improved – unless another eligible entity operates on behalf of applicant

SCIIP awards and state matching grants will not be considered in the state program threshold requirements.



BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

Water and Sewer Priorities

1. Regional solutions
2. Water quality concerns as identified by consent orders, unsatisfactory ratings and violations
3. Other documented health and environmental concerns
4. Aging infrastructure and other capacity improvements



CASE IN POINT:

Pelham Sewer Rehab (Phase I)

Grantee

Metro Connects

Grant Award

\$500,000

Total Project Cost

\$2,453,282



CASE IN POINT:

Water Interconnection

Grantee

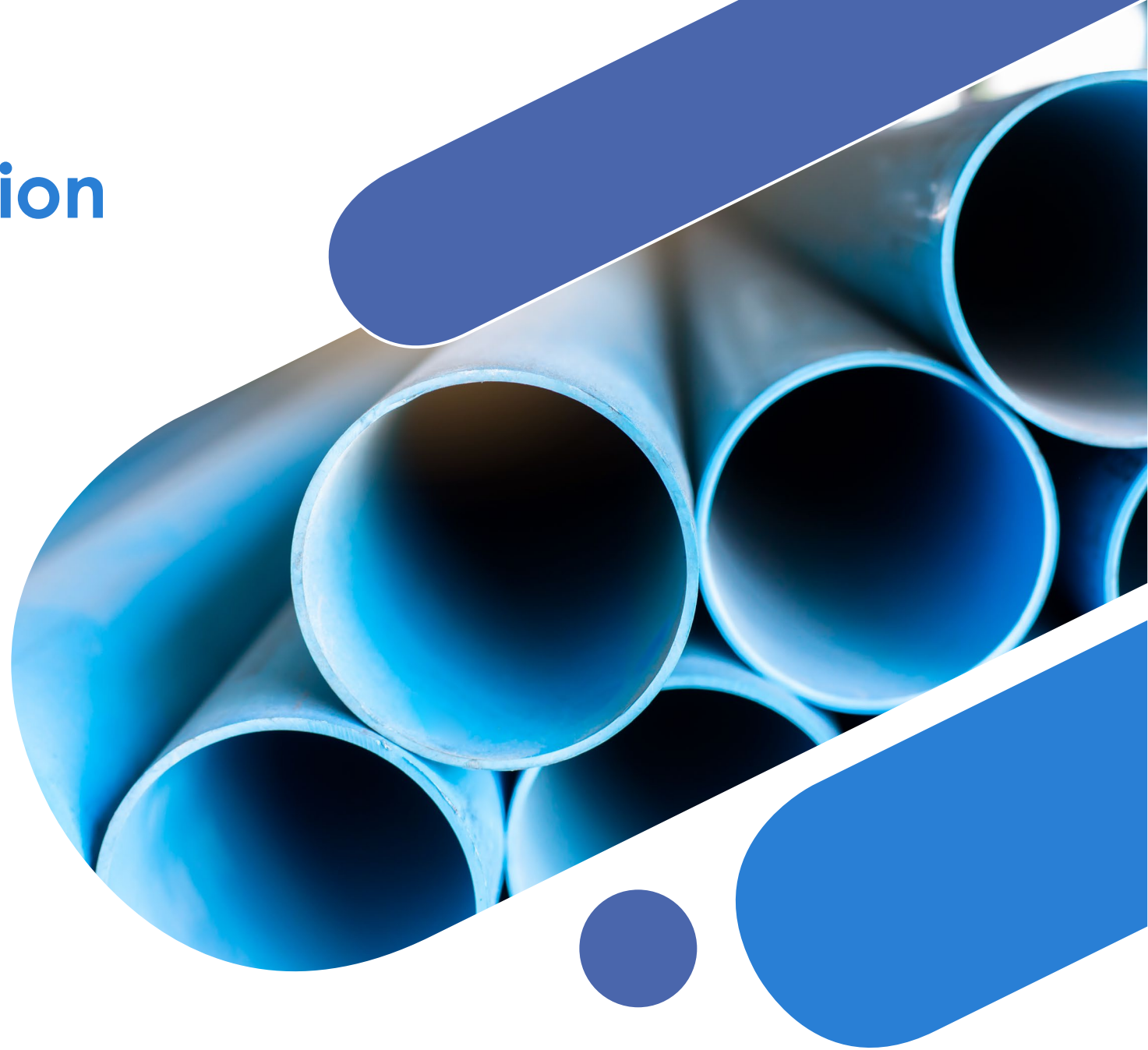
Aiken County – Breezy Hill
Water & Sewer Company

Grant Award

\$500,000

Total Project Cost

\$741,699



REGIONAL PLANNING GRANTS



REGIONAL PLANNING GRANTS

Purpose

Provide planning assistance for eligible public utilities seeking greater long-term viability through regional partnerships.

Grant Amount

Up to \$500,000

Match

None required, but local contributions encouraged

Deadline

Applications may be submitted at any time



REGIONAL PLANNING GRANTS

Eligible Applicants

- Public water/wastewater utilities
- Larger public utilities or local governments may apply on behalf of or in partnership with another eligible applicant
- Stormwater utilities and nonprofits are NOT eligible





REGIONAL PLANNING GRANTS

Eligible Activities

- Assessments must be directly related to the regional partnership under consideration
- Consider technical/operational, financial and managerial issues for each participant
 - Includes completion of Utility Viability Tool for each participant
- Address short-term and long-term actions required to implement potential solutions

REGIONAL PLANNING GRANTS

Priorities

- 1** Address utilities with significant, long-term viability concerns
- 2** Address utilities with significant compliance or financial issues
- 3** Address other regional partnerships that will promote greater sustainability

FUNDING AVAILABLE

Basic Infrastructure

\$36,000,000

Economic Infrastructure

\$8,870,056

Regional Planning

\$1,000,000

Total Available
\$45,870,056

APPLICATION NARRATIVE: Make Your Case

- Carefully review application instructions
- Explain how this project fits into the whole system
 - Does it solve the entire problem?
 - If not, why is this project the current priority?
 - Are there other phases planned?



APPLICATION ATTACHMENT: NEW

Viability Tool Summary Submission Required

- **All applicants (Basic, Economic and Planning)**
Required to complete the Viability Tool and submit the score summary with the RIA grant application

Viability Tool Version 2.1 (July 2025)

- Better user experience with troubleshooting tips
- Financial section more accessible
- Clearer presentation of results
- More nuanced scoring
- Download at ria.sc.gov/utility-viability



SC Water Utility Viability Tool Results		
Print Form	Utility Name	
Return to Assessment	Viability Score	60 / 100
<small>Note: Items that did not receive full potential points are in bold red font, with the points earned shaded in light orange.</small>		
Step 1. Infrastructure		16 / 23 = 70%
Primary system service population	3,300-10,000	2 / 4
Services provided	Water & Sewer	
Date of last rate increase	N/A	0 / 5
Monthly residential water service bill	\$2.10	

GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES

Basic & Economic Infrastructure

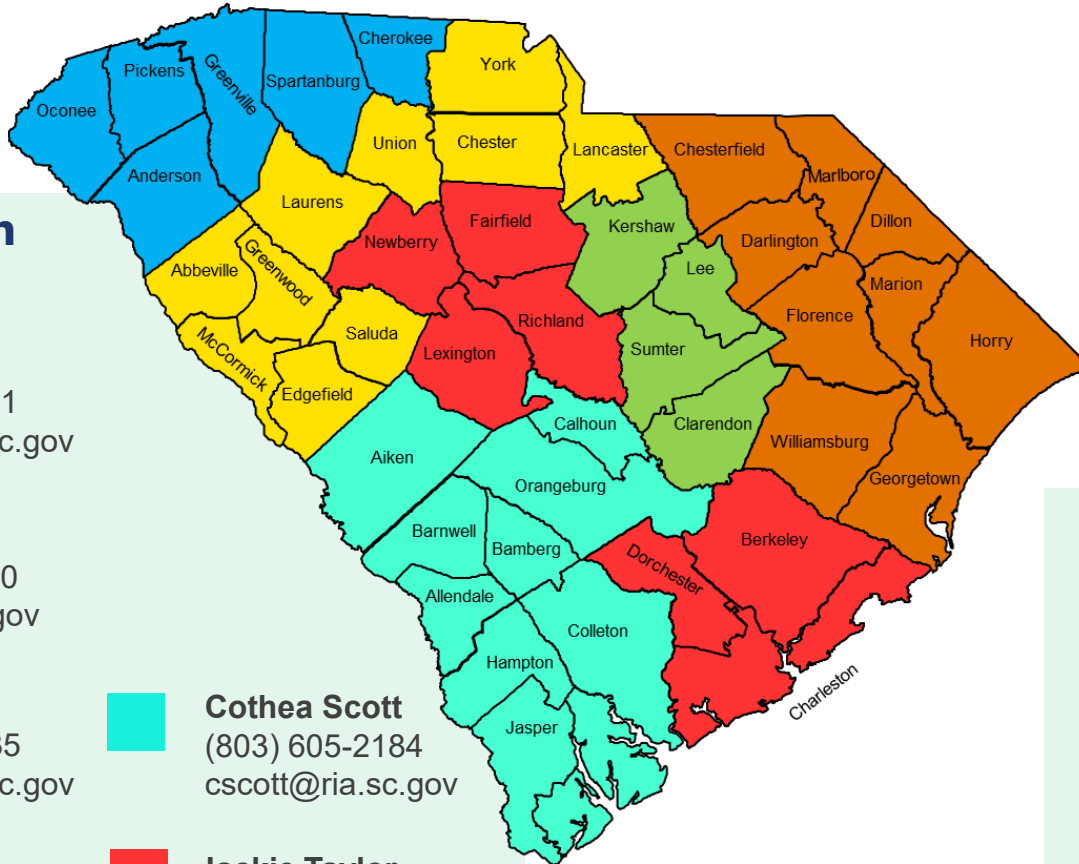
- Submit one hard copy of the originally signed application **form only** and commitment letters - **NEW!**
- Submit one pdf of the unsigned application
- Submit one pdf of all attachments in the requested order



September 15, 2025

March 23, 2026

RIA GRANT PROGRAM STAFF



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GRANT PROGRAMS & APPLICATION VIDEO

ria.sc.gov/how-to-apply

Apply For a State Grant

The application deadlines for RIA Basic and Economic Infrastructure grants in FY26 are:

September 15, 2025 and **March 23, 2026.**

Use the buttons below to download the FY26 State Grant Application or watch a video detailing RIA grant programs and how to apply.



FY26 Grant Application

State Grant Programs & Application Video



ria.sc.gov

WEBSITE RESOURCES

- FY26 Program Strategy
- FY26 Application Form and Instructions
- FY26 Project Management Procedures
- Updated Project Management Forms
- Other Funding Resources
- Viability Resources including **Viability Tool v. 2.1**
- Training Videos, including Grant Programs & Application



**South Carolina
Rural Infrastructure Authority**



ria.sc.gov



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Q&A

Accessing Technical Assistance for Small, Rural & Tribal Systems

Brad Martin

Manager, Office of Rural Water
SCDES - Office of Rural Water

Caroline Koch

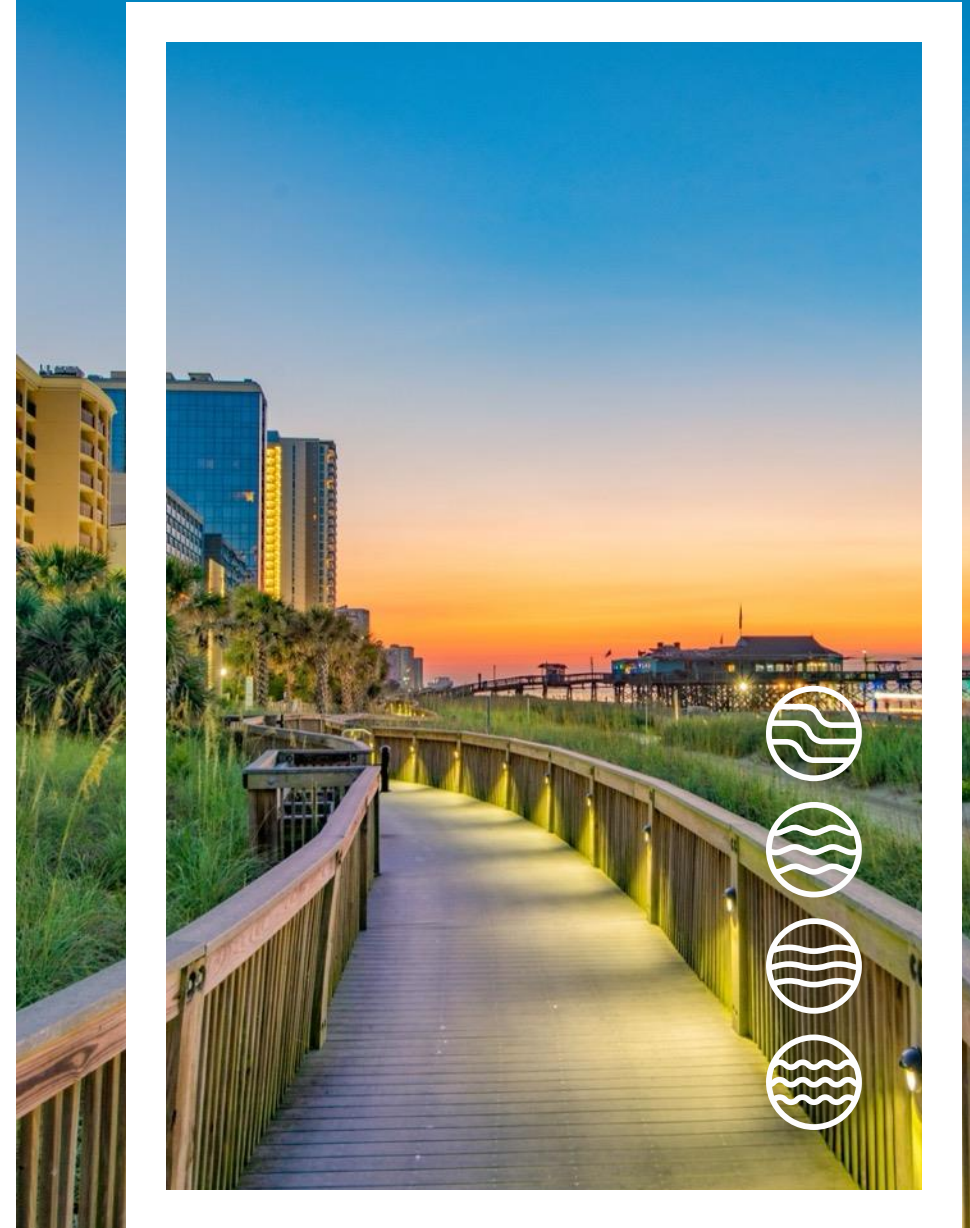
Policy Director
WaterNow Alliance



SC DEPARTMENT *of*
**ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES**

Office of Rural Water

30 July 2025



About the Office

****A refresher****

The Office of Rural Water (ORW) collaborates with local and national partners in adapting to changing infrastructures and providing technical assistance to small rural water systems. ORW works to support new, long-term solutions to aging systems.

- We are non-regulatory
- If we cannot help, we know someone who can
- Key Partners: USDA RD, EPA, SC Rural Water Association, SCADA Integrators, SERCAP, Moonshot Missions, COGs, MASC, RIA
- Work directly with water and wastewater enforcement teams
- Success Stories: Drinking water improvements, system cooperations, fine reduction, AI integration pilots



How We Support Rural Communities

- Serve systems serving populations under 10,000.
- Help communities manage aging infrastructure and limited budgets.
- Strengthen partnerships with local leaders and community organizations.
- Support funding applications to SRF, RIA, or other agencies
- Administer WIIN Program
- Level II Water Quality Assessments



Manning, SC

Core Services

- **Technical Assistance:**
 - Provide on-site support for troubleshooting equipment and process issues.
 - Assist with compliance reviews and prepare for regulatory inspections.
 - Help improve operational efficiency and extend the life of system assets.
- **Training:**
 - Support and speak at operator certification courses, continuing education, and safety trainings
 - Participate workshops on new technologies, regulations, and best practices.
 - Use TA providers to tailor training to the needs of small and rural systems.
- **Planning:**
 - Guide communities in developing asset management plans.
 - Support emergency response planning and resilience strategies.
 - Assess system capacity to prepare for growth and infrastructure needs.
- **Funding Guidance:**
 - Identify available local, state, and federal funding sources.
 - Assist with application support for SRF, RIA, USDA Rural Development, and other programs.
 - Provide guidance throughout the funding process from pre-application to project closeout.



Collaboration with SRF

- Assist communities with project planning and readiness for Clean Water SRF funding.
- Help prepare preliminary engineering reports and funding applications.
- Provide technical guidance to meet SRF requirements and ensure eligible costs.
- Support communities after funding is awarded with compliance, reporting, and project delivery.



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**[https://des.sc.gov/programs/bureau-
water/office-rural-water](https://des.sc.gov/programs/bureau-water/office-rural-water)**

OfficeofRuralWater@des.sc.gov

Brad Martin

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Supporting Rural, Small & Tribal Wastewater Systems' Access to Infrastructure Financing



About Us ▾

Training & Events

Resources ▾

Our Initiatives

Contact

Get Help



Get Help

Tackle Your Technical, Managerial, and Financial Challenges: Services from the EFCN

We offer free, customized support services to water and wastewater systems, decentralized systems, local governments, and others seeking technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) solutions to environmental infrastructure challenges. Our team of experts work hand-in-hand with operators, elected officials, utility directors, and other utility staff to identify barriers and address challenges head-on.

Request Help Now

<https://efcnetwork.org/get-help/>

Eligible Entities

City

Town

Borough

County

Parish

District

Association

Indian tribe

An authorized Indian tribal organization

Other public agencies

<https://efcnetwork.org/get-help/>

Defining “Small, Rural” Systems

Wastewater systems that treat
 ≤ 1 million gallons per day of
wastewater

or

Systems that serve a population
of $< 10,000$ persons

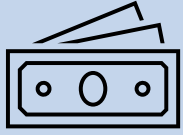
Most systems
meet this
definition

<https://efcnetwork.org/get-help/>

Defining “Tribal” Systems

Systems that serve populations of federally recognized tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and tribes on former reservations in Oklahoma

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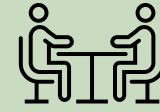
Funding & Financial Management

- Funding application services
- Accessing infrastructure funding
- Assessing your system's financial position
- Affordability and/or customer assistance programs
- Rates and fiscal planning
- Capital improvement planning and financing
- Fund management
- Effective budgeting



Asset & Utility Management

- Creating an asset management plan
- Assessing options to lower energy bills
- Equipment repair and replacement
- Effective utility management
- Assessing vulnerability to hazards and planning for climate-related threats



Public Engagement & Partnerships

- Public engagement communication strategies
- Training for boards and elected officials
- Public-involvement in decision-making
- Group facilitation and visioning
- Collaboration, regionalization strategies, and partnerships

Types of Technical Assistance Available

What to expect?

- Dedicated team of **subject matter experts** to help answer your questions
- **Step-by-step assistance** to help rural, small, and tribal water systems address storm and wastewater challenges
- **Resources & guidance** to ensure compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations
- The **technical assistance process** includes:



Get Help Form



Technical Assistance Request Form

The EFCN offers no cost assistance to drinking water systems serving 10,000 or fewer people and wastewater systems that treat 1 million gallons per day or less. Areas of assistance we can provide include:

- Funding & Financial Management
- Asset & Utility Management
- Regulatory Compliance
- Public Engagement & Communication
- Workforce Development & Leadership
- Resilience Planning & System Collaboration
- Technical Support (math, I/I, chlorine disinfection, etc.)

For a full list of services, [click here](#).

Get Help Form

To request assistance, please fill out the form below. You will be asked a few questions to help us understand your system and what kind of assistance you need.

Name *

Title/Position *

Phone Number *

Email Address *

Name of the system, organization, or community you represent: *

Get Help Form

City *

State/Territory *

Are you requesting assistance on behalf of a drinking water or wastewater system? *

Briefly describe the challenge your system is facing or the type of assistance you are seeking: *

Send me a copy of my responses

Submit

The background of the slide is a dense, overlapping collage of colorful sticky notes. The colors include various shades of blue, teal, green, and purple. Each sticky note features a large, dark blue question mark. The notes are scattered across the frame, creating a textured and busy visual effect.

Q&A

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www.waternow.org/join-the-leaders





Please Complete the Post-Training Survey!

THANK YOU!



For more information email:

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Resources:

waternow.org

tapin.waternow.org/toolkit

efcnetwork.org/get-help/