



Fact Sheet

Using DWSRF Set-Aside Funds to Assist Small Water Systems

WHAT IS THE DWSRF?

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program was established by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Amendments of 1996. The program authorizes grants to States to capitalize revolving loan funds. States use funds to provide loan assistance to eligible public water systems for infrastructure improvements needed to continue to ensure safe drinking water. The program also emphasizes the prevention of drinking water contamination by allowing States to reserve a portion of their grants to fund activities that encourage enhanced water system management and source water protection.

HOW CAN DWSRF FUNDS BE USED TO HELP SMALL SYSTEMS?

Small public water systems historically have had difficulties in meeting the requirements of the SDWA. Therefore, numerous sections of the 1996 Amendments stipulate the provision of special assistance to systems which serve 10,000 or fewer customers. For example, States are required to provide a minimum of 15 percent of the funds available for loan assistance to small systems to help address infrastructure needs. Many of the set-asides also focus on the needs of small systems. By enhancing the capabilities of small systems, States can promote greater long-term compliance with national primary drinking water regulations and thereby ensure greater protection of public health.

SDWA §1452(g)(2) provides States with the following three ways by which they may target DWSRF set-aside funds toward the provision of technical assistance to small systems:

- (1) Two percent of a State's DWSRF allotment may be used to provide technical assistance to small systems.
- (2) Up to 10 percent of a State's allotment may be used for State program management activities including administering or providing technical assistance, which may include small systems.
- (3) Up to 4 percent of a State's allotment may be used to cover the costs of DWSRF program administration and to provide technical assistance to public water systems within the State, which may include small systems.

Under §1452(k), States may use up to 10 percent (of an available 15 percent) of their DWSRF capitalization grants to provide technical and financial assistance to public water systems as part of a capacity development strategy prepared in accordance with SDWA §1420, to conduct source water assessment activities, and implement wellhead protection programs. States have the option of targeting assistance for these activities toward small systems.

HOW ARE STATES DIRECTING FUNDS TOWARD TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS?

Section §1452(g)(2) Small System Technical Assistance Set-Aside (2%)

- C In coordination with the State Rural Water Association, the **New Jersey** Bureau of Safe Drinking Water will provide technical assistance to small systems. This assistance will include an outreach program to explain the DWSRF and provide guidance in completing applications for funding. Assistance will also include support for systems in noncompliance and determination of well locations using GPS technology for water systems that use ground water as a source.
- C The State of **New York** plans to use funds to enhance the State's existing Small Water Systems/Self-Help and Comprehensive Performance Evaluation Programs and to provide direct technical assistance to small systems.
 - C New York's Self-Help Program provides guidance to communities considering project alternatives, calculating alternative project costs, preparing budgets for selected projects, and reviewing existing operation and maintenance practices. Under this program, the Department of Health also helps communities develop criteria for consultant selection, determine project priorities, improve purchasing power, and conduct technical assessments.
 - C Reviews and assessments of water filtration plants are completed under the State's Comprehensive Performance Evaluation Program. After evaluation, systems are provided with assistance designed to optimize their operation and ensure compliance with current and future standards and regulations.
- C Helping small systems prepare Consumer Confidence Reports, which water systems are required to distribute to customers beginning in October 1999, is one of several activities being planned by **New Mexico**. The State will assist water systems with the development of language needed to explain any area of the report with which the systems have difficulty. The State will also help systems develop operation and maintenance manuals to train operators with new treatment or operation processes.

Section §1452(g)(2) State Program Management Set-Aside (10%)

- Small water systems frequently have limited resources and no prior experience with training operators. The SDWA Amendments expanded the universe of water systems that are required to have a certified operator to include small systems. **Maine** will use funds to contract with organizations such as the New England Water Works Association and Maine Rural Water Association to provide training to operators of these small systems. Funds will pay for training courses and materials or for correspondence or alternative training, where applicable.

Section §1452(k) Local Assistance Set-Aside (15%)

- C **Oklahoma** will contract with the State Rural Water Association to provide services to small systems in the area of source water protection. Contractors will assist water systems in locating potential sources of pollution, developing contingency plans, and implementing management practices and controls to protect drinking water sources.

HOW CAN I OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION?

Information about the DWSRF Program is available on the EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) homepage [www.epa.gov/safewater/dwsrf.html]. For questions concerning a specific State, a list of State and EPA Regional DWSRF coordinators can be found on OGWDW's webpage. You can also call the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

