

# **Closing The Wastewater Access Gap: Help for Communities**



**Is your community challenged by updating its aging wastewater infrastructure? Does it have failing septic systems? Is it without existing wastewater capacity?** If so, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a no-cost technical assistance initiative, *Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap*, that you can access for assistance.

## How Does This Program Help?

Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap is a grant of consultant services, not funding. This program might be for your community if:

- existing septic systems back up into homes or cause sewage to pool in yards
- the town struggles to provide adequate wastewater services to residents
- the community is struggling to rebuild wastewater and septic systems damaged by natural disasters

This initiative can help you address a whole-village wastewater system or a system for part of the community, such as a manufactured housing community or group of isolated homes. Solutions vary and might include septic system replacement or upgrade, community cluster systems, a wastewater treatment plant, or extending an existing sewer system.

## What Kind of Assistance is Available?

Services may include:

- Conducting an assessment of the community's wastewater needs
- Evaluating the feasibility of wastewater solutions, including performing a rate study
- Identifying funding options, such as grants and financing
- Helping with completing the preliminary engineering and paperwork requirements for funding applications
- Assisting community/county with establishing an ordinance for wastewater management
- Conducting trainings to identify funding and support structures for the long-term operations and maintenance of a wastewater system
- Assisting interested entities in applying for federal funding to make solutions a reality.

EPA and a community will work together to identify and select practical, real-life solutions that work for the community. Participating communities are matched with an EPA contractor or grantee organization that has expertise specific to the community's needs.

## How Does My Community Apply?

Request no-cost assistance by completing the [WaterTA request form](#). Communities will be selected on a rolling basis; there is no deadline to apply. For questions, email [SepticHelp@epa.gov](mailto:SepticHelp@epa.gov).

## What Will Make Our Application Competitive?

- Communities that can demonstrate water quality or infrastructure concerns are more competitive.
- Communities that qualify as a "[disadvantaged community](#)" within Vermont or meet affordability criteria as defined by Vermont's Drinking Water or Clean Water State Revolving program are most competitive.

## How Can My Community Learn More?

Visit EPA's [Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap](#) webpage. In addition to program information, the webpage describes how this initiative assisted 11 places that participated in a pilot

effort.

## **Where Can My Community Find Welp with Grant Writing or Management?**

VLCT published a resource, [\*Increasing Municipal Capacity for Grants\*](#), that offers ideas for assistance with grants. Many of the capacity builders also provide project management services. Hiring experienced project management assistance can increase the speed of project development and help avoid cost, permitting, and other development surprises.