

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What does the SDWA, section 1459A, authorize?

Section 1459A of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), as amended by the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act and the 2018 America's Water Infrastructure Act, authorizes the EPA to award grants to states to assist underserved, small and disadvantaged communities that are unable to finance activities needed to comply with the SDWA, as well as respond to a drinking water contaminant.

## 2. What is the objective of the Grant Program?

The principal objective of the Grant Program is to support drinking water projects and activities in underserved, small and disadvantaged communities that are unable to finance projects to comply with drinking water regulations under the SDWA. Additionally, the grant funding provides assistance to communities to manage drinking water concerns through household water quality testing, including testing for unregulated water contaminants. Projects and activities eligible for assistance can include infrastructure projects; technical, managerial, and financial capacity building activities; and activities necessary for a state to respond to a contaminant.

## 3. Who is eligible to apply for the grant?

The Grant Program is a noncompetitive program. Eligibility to apply for and receive funds is limited to the geographical 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and tribes within the U.S.

## 4. Will funding be made available to support drinking water systems that serve tribes?

Yes, approximately 10 percent of FY2021 funding will be announced in the near future to support activities in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities. Federally recognized tribes are eligible to receive tribal grant funds to support activities in communities that meet the requirements of the grant program.

## 5. How much money will states receive?

For FY2021 EPA will award approximately \$25.8 million in grant funds to eligible entities.

## 6. What is considered an eligible project?

Grants can be used to support projects and activities in underserved, small and disadvantaged communities that include:

- Investments necessary for a public water system to comply with the SDWA
- Assistance that directly and primarily benefits a disadvantaged community
- Programs to provide household water quality testing, including testing for unregulated contaminants

- Activities necessary and appropriate for a State to respond to a contaminant

Example project and activity categories are:

- Treatment
- Transmission and Distribution
- Source
- Storage
- Creation of new systems
- Consolidation
- Household water quality testing, including for unregulated contaminants
- Providing households access to drinking water services
- Assistance to increase technical, managerial, and financial capacity
- Drinking water contamination response efforts

### **7. What is considered a small or disadvantaged community?**

For the purposes of this Grant Program, a disadvantaged community is one determined by the state to be disadvantaged under the affordability criteria established by the State under section 1452(d)(3) of the Safe Drinking Water Act, or may become a disadvantaged community as a result of carrying out a project or activity. A project in a small community is eligible for assistance if the community served has a population of less than 10,000 individuals and lacks the capacity to incur debt sufficient to finance a project to comply with the SDWA.

### **8. What is considered an underserved community?**

The Grant Program requires that States provide funding to underserved communities that must also meet the criteria as either a disadvantaged community or a small community that lacks the capacity to incur the debt necessary to carry out the project or activity. An “underserved community” is statutorily defined as a political subdivision of a State that either:

- Does not have household drinking water or wastewater services; or
- Is served by a public water system that violates, or exceeds, as applicable, a requirement of a national primary drinking water regulation, including
  1. a maximum contaminant level;
  2. a treatment technique; and
  3. an action level.

### **9. How is the allocation for each state determined?**

Funding will be awarded to states as an allotment based on an algorithmic formula that includes factors for population below poverty, small water systems, and underserved communities, including a 10% tribal allotment.

### **10. What is the funding schedule?**

The steps below outline the procedure and schedule for states to participate in the FY2021 Small, Underserved, and Disadvantaged Communities Grant Program.

Date	Details
<b>August, 2021</b>	EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) informs states and territories of their FY2021 allotments for the grant program.
<b>September, 2021</b>	Applications open on <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> . (Prior to applying states will submit draft workplans to their respective EPA Region. EPA Regions must be able to determine from the draft workplans that activities conform to all applicable requirements of the grant.)
<b>June 30, 2022</b>	Deadline for participating states to submit their final application package to <a href="http://www.Grants.gov">www.Grants.gov</a> . Although states will have an extended application window to apply for funds, states are encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible. Funding will be awarded on a rolling basis, as applications are submitted. EPA Regional offices are the primary points of contact to approve grant applications and award funding.

**Please note: This schedule is subject to change and updated information will be provided directly to states as needed.**

#### 11. What is the project length of time?

It is anticipated that project/ budget periods will be no more than three years.

#### 12. Are there cost share requirements?

For FY 2021 funding the 45 percent non-federal cost share or match is not required. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is applying a waiver to all grant applicants of the statutory 45 percent cost share in FY 2021 only, due to the financial constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic across the country. Waiver of the 45 percent cost share is at the discretion of EPA.

#### 13. How will projects be prioritized for funding?

The Grant Program requires prioritizing the use of program funds to projects and activities that benefit underserved communities. An underserved community is one that has an inadequate system for obtaining drinking water, including a community that does not have household drinking water or wastewater services or that is served by a public water system that violates or exceeds a requirement of a national primary drinking water regulation. To receive a Grant Program award, states will maintain a list that identifies eligible projects or activities for potential funding. States will consult with EPA regional offices on their project and activity lists prior to final selection and award of funding.

#### 14. Who can I contact if I have further questions?

You may send additional questions to [WIINDrinkingWaterGrants@epa.gov](mailto:WIINDrinkingWaterGrants@epa.gov).

#### 15. If I'm a local community within a state, how do I access this funding?

Communities will apply to their respective state program for assistance. State and territory agency contacts are available at <https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/state-and-territory-agency-contacts>. The list of agency contacts will continue to be updated as additional agencies are identified.

**For additional information, please contact [WIINDrinkingWaterGrants@epa.gov](mailto:WIINDrinkingWaterGrants@epa.gov)**