Small Communities Environmental Infrastructure Group

SHARED SERVICES FOR SMALL WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS: MAKING EVERY DOLLAR COUNT

Shared resources definition

Sharing services is a collaborative strategy for optimizing staff, equipment, facilities, and other resources across jurisdictions to improve operational efficiencies and service delivery.

Sharing resources is a simple but effective way to lower costs and make every dollar count. Partnerships can be used to build and maintain capital projects, or to share administrative services.

Small systems face multiple challenges

Small water and sewer systems often find themselves facing many challenges at once, including meeting EPA requirements, replacing aging equipment, and dealing with economic change in their service area.

Starting in October, 2018, a new requirement will affect drinking water systems. They will have to create an Asset Management Plan that ties the condition of system components to a long-term capital investment needs.

Grants for capital projects are harder to find

Grant funding, which is the mainstay of small communities, is becoming harder to find. In the 1990s, grant funding averaged 24 percent of total external funding for all water and sewer projects in Ohio. In 2015, grants comprised just 5.5 percent of external water and sewer project financing in Ohio.

SUCCESS STORY:

The Northwestern Water and Sewer District provides services to 19,000 customers in 20 townships and 13 small municipalities in Wood and Sandusky counties. The district owns its own facilities but also buys water and sewage treatment services from nearby towns. With 75 employees, the district can manage projects that would be out of reach for local governments working on their own.

“\textit{I think it’s a trend. The financing entities seem to like regional players. They usually have a better overall credit situation and a better set up for operations. Just the fact that we have full time employees makes a difference.}”

-- Jerry Greiner, President, NWWSD
**Partnership Success: Jefferson County Water and Sewer District**

Jefferson County Water and Sewer District serves 8,000 sewer customers and 3,000 water customers in small communities. The district purchases drinking water from four municipalities and distributes it to customers. The district has its own wastewater facilities but also contracts with nearby cities depending on customers’ needs and locations. The district has grown by solving problems for local communities, such as installing sewers to correct failing septic systems and by assuming responsibility for village water and sewer services that were no longer financially viable. The district helps to convene the Jefferson County Utility Providers (JCUP) group, representing all of the major water and sewer providers in the county. Members share equipment informally. JCUP is using a state grant to explore establishing a combined customer database.

**Common Types of Shared Services**

- Water Supply (Raw/Treated)
- Wastewater Treatment
- Shared Equipment
- Purchase supplies
- Maintenance / Emergency Repairs
- IT Services
- Training
- Billing / Accounting

**CONSIDERING A CAPITAL PROJECT THAT INVOLVES A PARTNERSHIP?**

Financial incentives are available from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Ohio Water Development Authority.

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**SMALL COMMUNITIES ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE GROUP**

The Small Communities Environmental Infrastructure Group (SCEIG) is an association of federal and state agencies, local governments and groups, service organizations, and educational institutions that helps small communities meet their environmental infrastructure needs. Please visit [www.sceig.org](http://www.sceig.org) for additional information.

- American Council of Engineering Companies of Ohio
- Buckeye Hills Regional Council
- Coalition of Ohio Regional Districts
- County Commissioners Association of Ohio
- County Sanitary Engineers Association of Ohio
- Eastgate Regional Council of Governments
- Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission
- Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization
- Ohio Department of Health
- Ohio Department of Natural Resources
- Ohio Development Services Agency
- Governor’s Office of Appalachia
- Office of Community Development
- Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
- Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association
- Ohio Municipal League
- Ohio Public Works Commission
- Ohio Rural Community Assistance Program
- Ohio Rural Water Association
- Ohio Rural University Program: Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs - Miami University
- Center for Regional Development - Bowling Green State University
- Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs - Ohio University
- The Ohio State University Extension Services
- Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission
- Ohio Water Development Authority
- Ohio Water Environment Association
- Ohio Water Resources Council
- Operator Training Committee of Ohio, Inc.
- Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
- Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments
- U.S. Department of Agriculture/Rural Development
- U.S. Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration