

The Never Ending Quest For Funding Projects

by Richard Winters,
Circuit Rider 1



As I travel throughout the state providing whatever assistance I can, the one thing I always can depend on hearing is: With all these new regulations coming down the road, where are we going to get the funding needed to keep in compliance? Well, of course, every water system we visit has their unique financial situation and goals they want to achieve. With that being said, I try to keep up with any, and all, new possible venues for funding to find an answer that will help them with meeting these goals. Many sources for funds are available to every system willing to research for them. Of course these days, with the economy being what it is, everyone is looking for the “FREE” money. As we all know, there really is no such thing. But some of the funds available are closer than others. One such fund is the:

Water and Wastewater Predevelopment Planning Grants

This is a new grant available to assist in paying costs associated with development of an application for a proposed water or wastewater project. Documents such as Preliminary Engineering Reports and Environmental Reports are required to be obtained up front prior to having funds committed for a project. Predevelopment Planning Grant funds can be used to help pay for these costs. There is \$993,500 available nationwide. Each grant is limited to \$15,000, or 75% of the project cost, whichever is less. Projects will be selected primarily on funding priorities but will also include the following criteria:

- limited resources
- smallest systems with lowest incomes and
- funding availability

Eligibility and guidelines for the grant include:

- (a) The Median Household Income (MHI) of the service area must be either below the poverty line or below 80% of the state’s MHI.
- (b) The proposed project must be for eligible loan and grant purposes.
- (c) Applicants must show they do not have resources to pay predevelopment expenses on their own.
- (d) Grants are limited to projects the Agency expects to fund soon after the application is submitted.

Eligible predevelopment items funded must be agreed to, and accepted, by Rural Development prior to disbursement of the grant. If you are interested in applying for this program, or would like additional information, please contact your local Rural Development office. Funds are very limited and, as always, time is of the essence in getting applications submitted.

Information about this and other Rural Development programs can be obtained by visiting USDA Rural Development’s web site at: www.rurdev.usda.gov

I thought about this particular grant while working with the Village of Hancock on an application for the Emergency Community Water Assistance Grant (ECWAG). This grant provides up to \$500,000.00 for systems with damages caused by such things as floods, or other natural disasters, that occurred in the past two years. Their well house had sustained damage in the 2006 floods virtually needing to be replaced and brought above the base flood plain elevation. By first applying for the Predevelopment Planning Grant, they will be able to determine the cost of such an undertaking and determine if the \$500,000.00 limit will be enough to cover the project. As I mentioned above, nothing comes completely without a cost. The other thing that usually comes with this sort of affordable funding option is a fairly large amount of forms to be filled out and information to be provided. To insure that the funds are being spent in the proper systems throughout the entire country, I guess we can live with this inconvenience. The (ECWAG) grant is a nationally competitive grant. I would strongly recommend hiring a professional grant writer if you are going to apply for one of these grants.

In closing, I would like to remind you that the New York Rural Water Association has employees in both the water and wastewater fields that are available to you, to help you choose the right path to achieving both your system and financial goals. Personally, I prefer to be involved in the beginning of a project because I have found in the past that I was able to offer insight that may not have been considered or simply overlooked. 💧