

"USDA Training and Technical Assistance Grants: Public Management and Finance Program (PMFP)"

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Many know of USDA-Rural Development-Community Programs (formerly known as Rural Utility Services) for water and wastewater loans and grants. However, this Agency funds over \$16 million, per fiscal year, to support technical assistance in rural areas of the country. In addition to funds that

help support your New York Rural Water Association, we are fortunate to be able to support another Technical Assistance provider, which many of you know as the "Public Management and Finance Program", housed at the Environmental Finance Center in the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. The primary needs that the PMFP address are:

- Networking Technical Assistance in Small Communities
- Training the Trainer
- Peer-to-Peer Learning

Relative to identifying and evaluating solutions to water/wastewater related issues, this project facilitates the engagement of all stakeholders in the process of tackling sometimes very costly and/or complicated options, to include exploring consolidation alternatives, public education, and connections to economic activities. Funding Agencies at the State and Federal level are engaged in the process of assessing local governments' financial capacity for prospective water and wastewater improvements.

Kimberly Farrell, Project Director, has developed the foundation of the PMFP concept on the notion that communities would fare better if an organization such as the Syracuse University based Environmental Finance Center facilitated the development of a network of technical assistance providers and supplemented, not duplicated, the delivery of technical assistance and training that was not easily available, or practical to achieve, through the traditional services. This is particularly the case for technical assistance providers who are constrained to only one area of activity due to the requirements of funding sources or institutional missions.

I am pleased to report that the activities of the New York Public Management and Finance Program have emerged as a model which other states can use as the basis for replication, modified to meet regional needs.

Some recent topics of the Program were:

- Project Development (Water/Wastewater)
- Rate Setting

- Public Finance
- Capital Budgeting
- Regulatory Compliance
- Financial Resources and Applications Procedures
- Public Outreach Methods
- Seminars/Workshops

Venues such as "Round Table Meetings", "Minnowbrook Conference Center" Retreats and "Partnership Forums" have proved very successful in delivering the PMFP message.

Partnership Forums were established as a means to promote ongoing dialogue between technical assistance providers for the purpose of sharing expertise and information about infrastructure projects. Forum participants include a range of non-profit, private, government and academic organizations.

The Public Management and Finance Program has greatly improved the quality of our program delivered to rural New York State. I believe that the quality of our water and wastewater projects have benefited from this program. I would venture to state that in addition to leading the nation in project volume, our New York State project quality and effectiveness are also among the nation's best.

If you have not taken advantage of PMFP services, I urge you to do so when you are contemplating a proposed infrastructure improvement. You may contact Kimberly Farrell at (315) 443-9438 or myself at (315) 477-6427 for more information. You may access the PMFP website at www.maxwell.syr.edu/efc/PMFP.htm.

Fiscal Year 2004 continues to be challenging. However, as you know, "Good" projects will get funding necessary to make them feasible. The Fiscal Year 2005, Program beginning October 1, 2004, is now being formulated. I urge you to make your infrastructure concerns and needs known to your elected representatives. 💧

