Getting your Project to Flow Smoothly – Project Planning & Implementation

Presented by Becky Sims

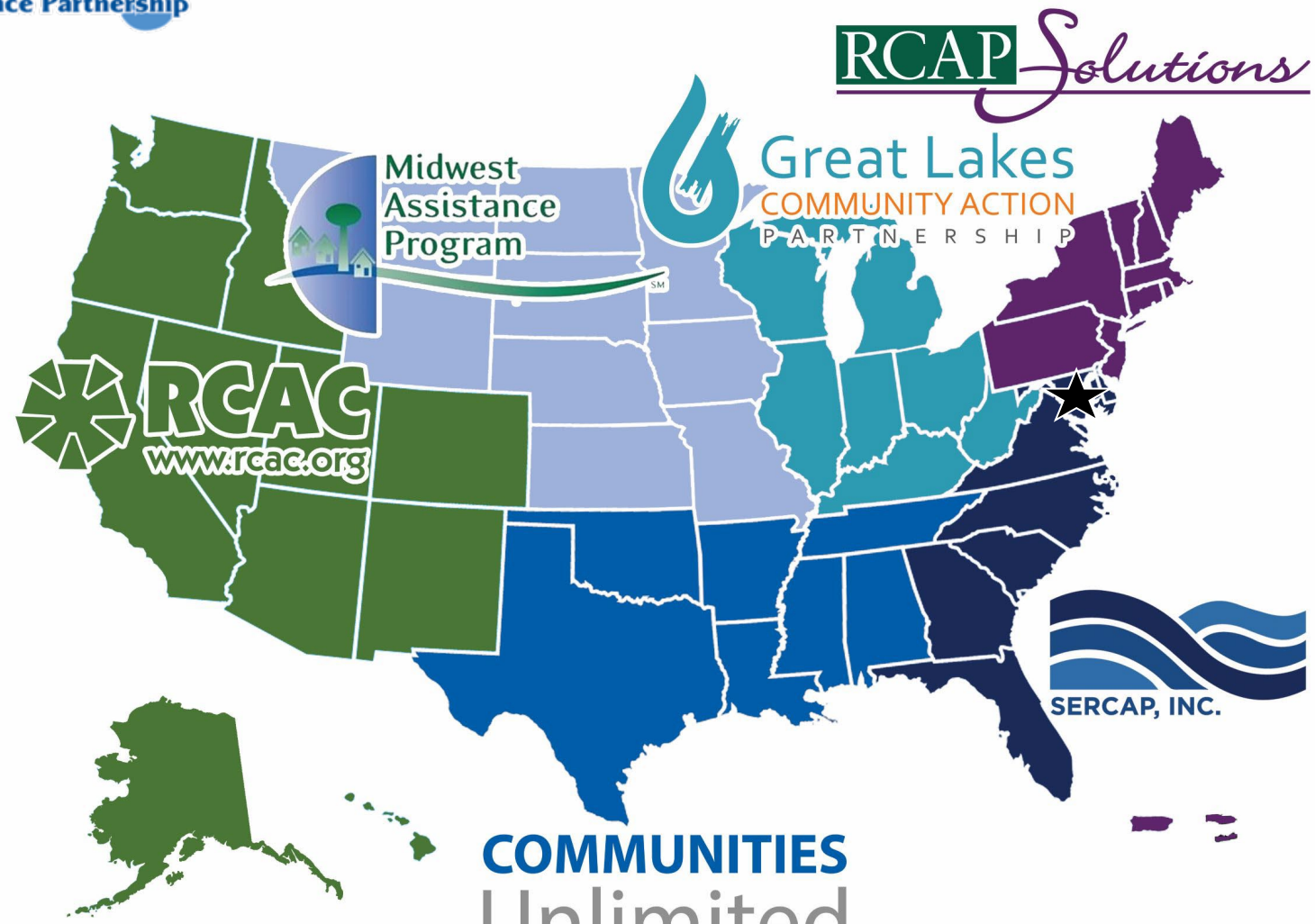
to the

Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Watershed Organization

September 27, 2023

RCAP Solutions

RCAP
Rural Community Assistance Partnership



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1701 K St. NW, Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20006
www.rcap.org

Western RCAP
Rural Community Assistance Corporation
www.rcac.org

Midwestern RCAP
Midwest Assistance Program
www.map-inc.org

Southern RCAP
Communities Unlimited
www.communitiesu.org

Great Lakes RCAP
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Poll Question

- Does your municipality operate water and/or wastewater systems?
  - A) Water only
  - B) Wastewater only
  - C) Water and wastewater
  - D) No system

Outline

- Project Planning –
  - Challenges
  - Process Steps
  - Strategies for success
- Design and Construction
- Partnership opportunities
- Infrastructure funding programs

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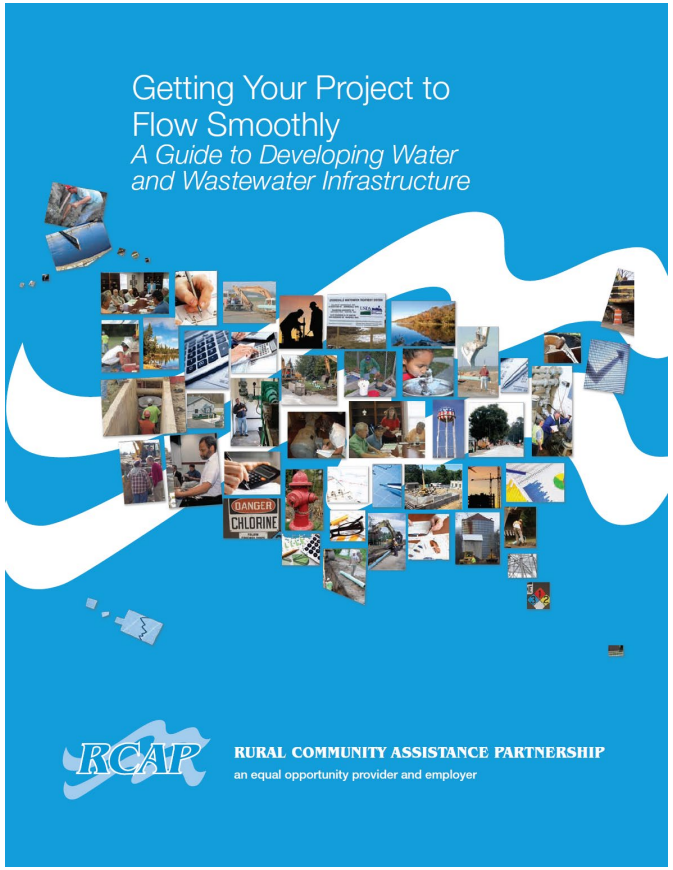
Getting Your Project to Flow Smoothly – RCAP Guide



- https://www.rcap.org/managerial-financial/getting-your-project-to-flow-smoothly-a-guide-to-developing-water-and-wastewater-infrastructure/

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Water Quality Concerns

ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT NEAR WATERBODIES

STORMWATER INCREASING INFILTRATION/INFLOW TO WASTEWATER PLANTS

NEW CONTAMINANTS (HABS, PFAS) INCREASE DRINKING WATER TREATMENT NEEDS

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Project Planning and Implementation is Challenging for Small Communities

- Planning and management require commitment and follow-through, for years
- Elected officials are part-time administrators
- Project costs and requirements increase
- Political resistance to spending, even for regular maintenance
- Creation of new systems must have voter support

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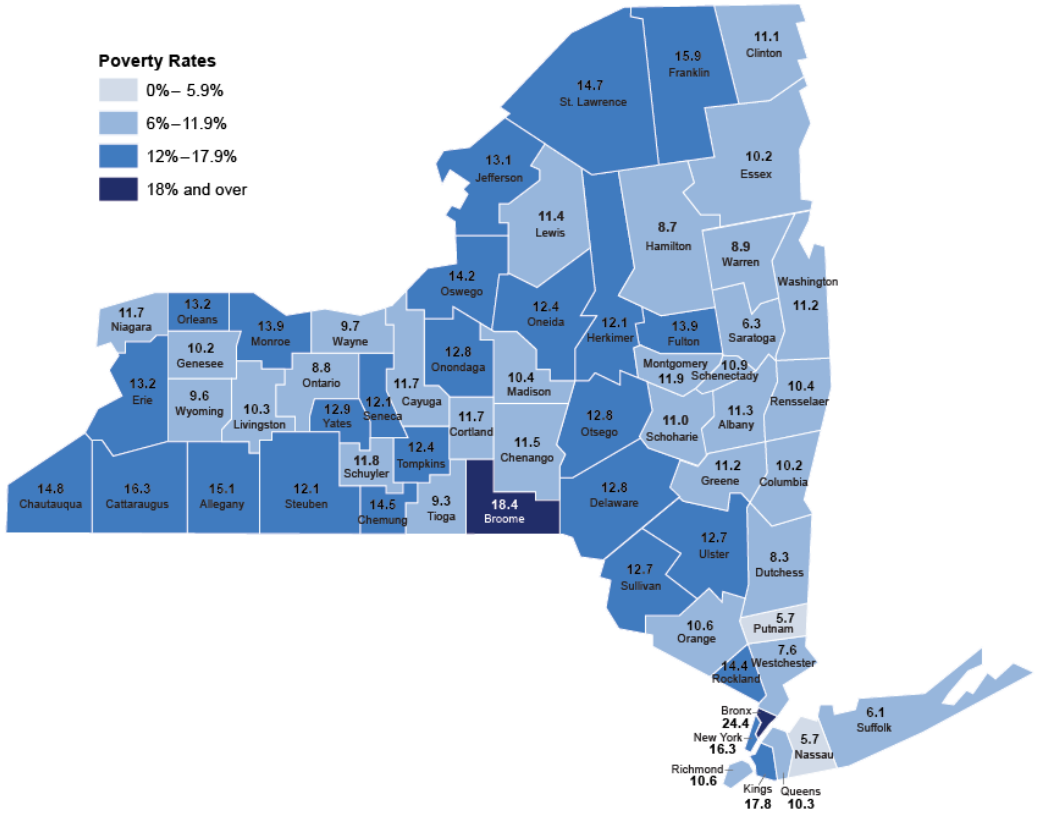
Project Planning and Implementation is Challenging for Small Communities

Financial hardship is widespread

- 2020 Poverty rate statewide of 12.7%

Rural areas hit hardest:

- Economies of scale and density of service area
- Rural residents generally pay a larger portion of their income for water and sewer service than residents of metropolitan areas



Infrastructure funding programs – only part of the solution

- Funding programs don't have unlimited resources
- Project could require co-funding (multiple sources)
- Not all projects are eligible or competitive

- Priority is given to projects that address:
  - Public health and/or environmental quality
  - Affordability and community need
  - Potential for success including through **partnering** and/or co-funding

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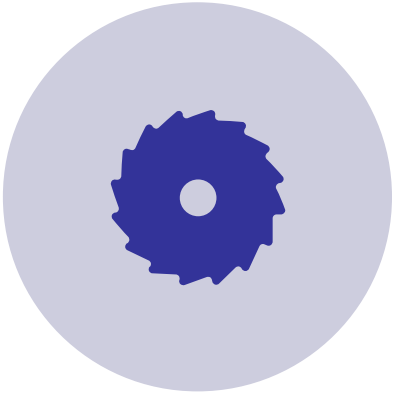
Where to Begin?

PLANNING

DESIGN



CONSTRUCTION

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Planning: Define the Problem

- Name and prioritize problems
- Involve relevant stakeholders
  - Planning Boards/Departments
  - Water/wastewater operators
  - Regulatory partners (DOH, DEC)
- Conduct Needs Assessment

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Needs Assessment

Why?	How?
• Baseline data • Citizen involvement • Update program or policy • End speculation • Justify funding requests	• **Resident survey** • Local knowledge • Agency data • Local studies, reports • Lab/field tests • GIS

Take Note

Time frame over **many** years from planning to implementation

Demands can be significant, overstretch capacity

A core planning or advisory committee will help

Value of community “sparkplugs” to help move the project along

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Technical Assistance (TA)

- Assist with project development and more
- No-cost technical assistance:
  - Funding agencies
  - County agencies
  - Non-profit organizations such as RCAP Solutions and the Rural Water Association
- Not a substitute for professional engineering services!
- TA, planning, and grant-writing services can also be contracted for fees

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Professional Engineering Services

Request for Proposals (RFP) vs. Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

- Gives municipal officials an opportunity for an exchange of ideas
- May be required if federal funds will be used to pay for professional services
- Experience with similar projects in similar communities

Preliminary Engineering Report (PER)

- Required for all funding applications
- Basis for project construction options, cost
- Projects operation & maintenance (O&M) costs

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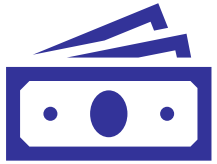
Planning, continued

Review/Approvals

Permitting or funding agency review

Environmental review – NEPA, SEQRA



Financing

Secure financing for planning

Project expense tracking system

Develop project financing plan

Community Planning

Develop project schedule

Public participation

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Evaluate funding eligibility

- Project may require financing from multiple sources
- Involve potential funding agencies *early*
  - Valuable input on design and funding strategies
  - How to maximize the project score
- Supporting documentation
  - Financial Hardship – Income Survey
  - Compliance Issues – Enforcement order, violations

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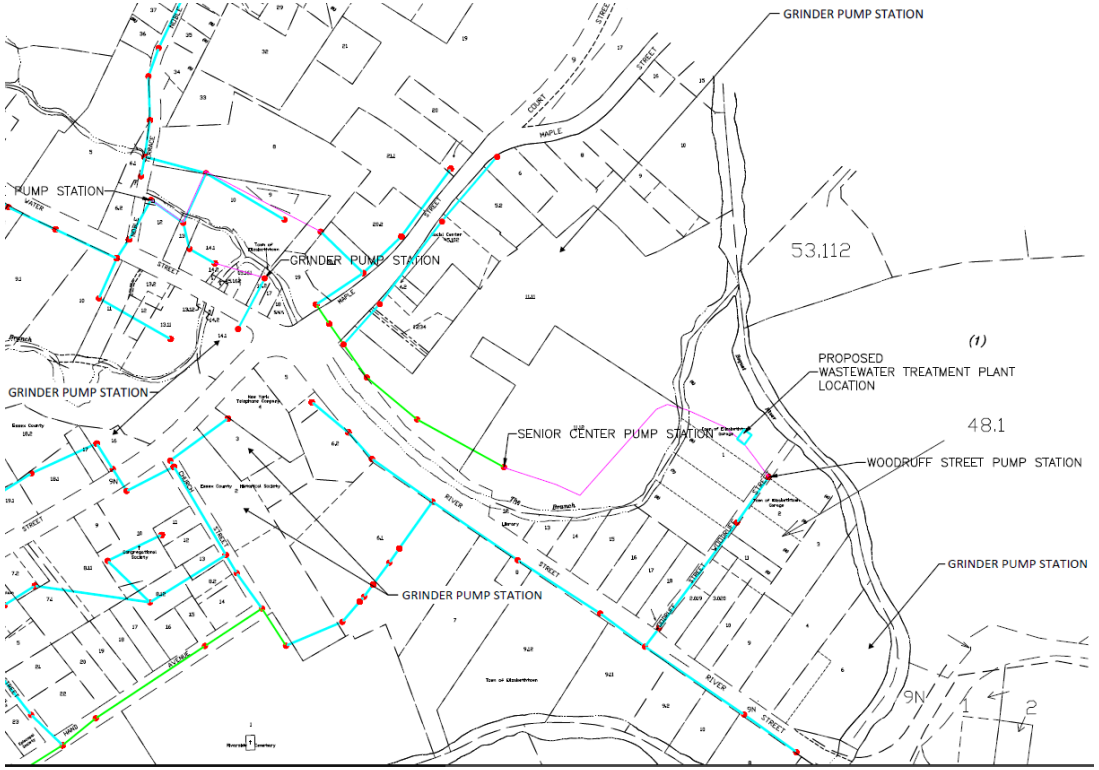
Design

- Secure design financing
- Approval of final design – local, state
- Secure construction financing
- Public participation
- Land acquisition, user agreements, permits
- Bidding
- Pre-construction activities



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Construction

- Public participation
- Construction inspection
- Construction administration
- Progress meetings
- Customer connections
- Project closing

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Partnership Opportunities

Why?

- Systems operating under capacity
- Upcoming capital project
- Funding incentives
  - CDBG – adds $500,000
  - IMG - $30 million; 40%

How?

- Agreements for shared purchasing, equipment
- Emergency planning agreements
- Shared supply, treatment, operators
- Legal units, consolidation

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Jasper, NY

- No public water or **wastewater**
- Public health hazards
  - Sewage in ditches, creeks
  - Small lots
  - Clay soils

- 99 households
- 2001 – Committee formed, needs assessment*
- 2004 – Construction of wastewater system
- 2018 – Compliance issues
- 2020 – Income survey*, RFQ*, CDBG grant award
- *RCAP assistance

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Project Funding Programs - Planning

Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC)	• Wastewater Engineering Planning Grant (EPG) • Up to $100,000; 20% match required; Consolidated Funding Application (CFA)
Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)	• Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning (NPG) • Up to $30,000; 10% match required; CFA
USDA Rural Development (RD)	• Water and Waste Disposal Predevelopment Planning Grants (PPG) • Up to $60,000; 25% match required; RDApply
NYS Office of Community Renewal (OCR)	• Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) • Community Planning Grant – up to $50,000; CFA

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Project Funding - Construction

- USDA Rural Development (RD)
  - Water and Environment grant and loan program (WEP)
- Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC)
  - State Revolving Fund loans/grants (DWSRF, CWSRF; BIL)
  - Water Infrastructure Improvement Act grants (WIIA)
  - Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program

NYS Office of Community Renewal (OCR)

- Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)
  - Grant only; % low-moderate income eligibility

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RCAP Solutions free TA Services

- Needs assessment
- Project planning and development
- Procuring professional services
- Financing strategies
- Income survey
- Rate setting
- Asset management
- Standard Procedure/SOP development
- Education & Training: board members, system operators, community members

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Upcoming Free Trainings

In person

Lead Learning Lab – November 15, 8 AM– 12:30, Odessa NY,
Email bsims@rcapsolutions.org for registration link

Online webinars

RCAP Solutions - https://www.rcapsolutions.org/events/

RCAP National - https://www.rcap.org/training-events/

Environmental Finance Center Network - https://efcnetwork.org/training-events/

Questions?

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