

Message

From: Jones, Enesta [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=65B8E6C6E5CA4A7A9AE85D98A4C8EEDB-EJONES02]
Sent: 8/14/2017 3:47:59 PM
To: Peter Chawaga [pchawaga@vertmarkets.com]
CC: Press [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=b293283291dc44e0b5d1c36be9281d8a-Press]
Subject: RE: New EPA Tool Helps Communities Access More Than \$10 Billion in Water Infrastructure Financing

Peter, our responses below are attributable to an EPA spokesperson:

What inspired the creation of this database? How would you describe the national need for infrastructure funding?

Response: The creation of the Water Finance Clearinghouse was inspired by the demand from the water sector. EPA's Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center (the Center) often meets with local communities and utilities who are struggling to identify sources of funding and financing for water infrastructure. In the past EPA has directed communities to a variety of disparate websites and databases that contained pieces of what funding was available.

The Clearinghouse was also a recommendation from EPA's Environmental Financial Advisory Board (EFAB). In a Financial Capacity Development for Small Drinking/Wastewater Systems report EFAB recommended the Center "be a clearinghouse for projects that are having trouble finding funding for a variety of reasons," and should "maintain a list of resources and tools, both national and by state, for financial capacity."

Infrastructure is built to last a long time. Most of our underground water and wastewater infrastructure was built 50 or more years ago, in the post-World War II era. In some older urban areas, many water mains are a lot older than that. Along with aging infrastructure, emerging challenges of stronger and more frequent storms, droughts, and floods heighten the urgency to reinvest in water sector infrastructure.

The implications of aging and deteriorating infrastructure can be felt nationwide. Approximately \$2.6 billion each year in water system expense are lost as water mains leak trillions of gallons of treated drinking water. Additionally, every year, billions of gallons of raw sewage are discharged into local surface waters from aging wastewater conveyance systems. According to EPA's estimate of drinking water and wastewater needs, over \$600 billion is needed for water infrastructure improvements over the next 20 years. Communities increasingly need efficient access to up-to-date water finance information to rehabilitate or replace their water infrastructure. The Water Finance Clearinghouse meets this need.

Do you feel that there are sources of funding within this database that are currently underutilized by those that might need them?

Response: The Water Finance Clearinghouse showcases the range of funding available from federal, state, local, NGO, and private sources. While EPA does not collect information on how these sources of funding are used or the level of demand, the Clearinghouse provides a one-stop-shop for these different sources.

What was the process of creating the Water Finance Clearinghouse? What was the timeline and how were responsibilities divided among participating creators?

Response: The Water Finance Clearinghouse was developed in nine months and in two phases. The first phase was pre-development. From November 2016 through January 2017 the Center developed the initial design and functionality of the site and conducted a series of internal and external briefings with key stakeholders to solicit feedback and recommendations on the (1) content (2) functionality (2) filter options and (4) design. The Center incorporated feedback into the site as construction began in late January. Site construction took approximately 3 months. By April 2017, the site was ready for the second development phase, beta testing.

The Center had four primary goals for beta testing (1) identify functionality issues; (2) solicit feedback on content, functionality, and design; (3) recruit Clearinghouse Contributors – teach funding agencies how to use the site; and (4) verify content before public launch. Beta testing was from April through June 2017 and more than 1500 stakeholders were engaged to participate from federal funders to state agencies and local communities. Feedback was overwhelming and exclusively positive. Feedback requests included filter additions, expanded features for general users and Clearinghouse Contributors.

Throughout the two development phases, the Center was working internally and partnering with other federal partners, such as USDA, to assemble the databases for the Clearinghouse. The requested additions were added to the site and the Clearinghouse was launched July 26th.

How do you imagine a community in need utilizing this tool, from identifying a funding need to completing an infrastructure project?

Response: The goal of the Water Finance Clearinghouse is to provide information to help communities meet their water-finance related needs. This starts with providing Resources: case studies, tools, and guides that can help a community with pre-development activities such as financial planning, rate-setting, and asset management. The Resources database also contains resources to help communities determine what type of financing mechanisms would work best for them, such as issuing bond, public-private-partnerships, loan programs.

These resources can help a community reach the point where they can then begin to access funding and finance opportunities. This is where the Funds database can be utilized by communities to identify available funding opportunities they are eligible for. The site provides contact information for many of the funding sources listed so communities can reach out to learn more. The information collected and displayed in the Clearinghouse for funding sources was designed to help community quickly and effectively determine their best options.

How can a community best utilize the "resources" section of the clearinghouse?

Response: The Water Finance Clearinghouse Resources database was developed to assist communities in learning more about water finance topics – everything from how to develop affordability programs to successful case studies of establishing stormwater utilities. The resources are meant to serve as a library or catalogue of best practices, guides, and tools that can help a community meet its water needs.

What is the benefit of including the interactive map?

Response: The Map Search feature allows users to quickly narrow down the scope of their search to a particular state or region. Most funding sources are local or state-based. We wanted to provide a number of different ways for users to be able to search the Clearinghouse and the map-search feature was a logical option.

Do you have any other tips for how a community can best use the Water Finance Clearinghouse?

Response: Become a General User – a General User can favorite resources and funding sources for quick look-up later. This means users don't have to apply search filters to locate information every time they visit the Clearinghouse. User just have to "star" or "favorite" a resource to save it in their "My Items" tab which is visible when they log-in.

General Users can also subscribe to receive email notifications when new resources or funding sources are added to the Clearinghouse. General Users decide which filters they want to receive notifications for. For example, a community in Oklahoma may want to subscribe to receive an email notification when a new funding source for Oklahoma communities is added to the Clearinghouse.

Additional Information

WIRFC has developed a two-pronged approach to maintaining the Water Finance Clearinghouse:

Funding organizations (federal agencies, states, local governments, foundations, etc.) can become Clearinghouse Contributors. Contributors are able to log-into the Water Finance Clearinghouse Contributor Portal to suggest edits to existing Clearinghouse content, additions of new resources and/or funding sources and removal of outdated material or information. The Contributor function allows the Clearinghouse to be updated in real-time, following a crowdsourcing model. It also provides the opportunity for funding organizations to take ownership of how their programs and initiatives are displayed in the Clearinghouse. *All suggestions made by Clearinghouse Contributors will be reviewed by EPA staff once they are submitted. Contributors will be notified once the status of their suggestion has changed. If the suggestion is accepted, the Clearinghouse will be updated.*

At least once a year, EPA will conduct an analysis of the Water Finance Clearinghouse for broken links/redirects and update funding program information for those entries that have not been updated by a Contributor in the past year. The amount of EPA effort required to maintain the Clearinghouse should be less than what it would be without the Contributor Portal.

Desired Clearinghouse Contributors: Individuals who represent entities that routinely publish or produce water finance-specific resources and/or those that manage water funding sources.

From: Peter Chawaga [mailto:pchawaga@vertmarkets.com]
Sent: Monday, August 14, 2017 9:47 AM
To: Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov>
Cc: Press <Press@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: New EPA Tool Helps Communities Access More Than \$10 Billion in Water Infrastructure Financing

Hi Enesta,

Thanks for your help with my questions this month. Can you provide an update on responses for this story?

Thanks,
Peter

From: Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 4, 2017 11:36:13 AM
To: Peter Chawaga
Cc: Press
Subject: RE: New EPA Tool Helps Communities Access More Than \$10 Billion in Water Infrastructure Financing

Thanks for biting on the pitch, Peter.

I am looking after your questions for Tricia.

Enesta Jones
U.S. EPA
Office of Media Relations
Office: 202.564.7873
Cell: Ex. 6

“The root of all joy is gratefulness.”

From: Peter Chawaga [mailto:pchawaga@vertmarkets.com]
Sent: Friday, August 04, 2017 11:34 AM
To: Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov>
Subject: Re: New EPA Tool Helps Communities Access More Than \$10 Billion in Water Infrastructure Financing

Hi Enesta,

I am hoping that you or a party you recommend can provide written responses to the questions below regarding this release.

I'd like responses by next Friday, 8/11. How does that sound?

Thanks,
Peter

1. What inspired the creation of this database? How would you describe the national need for infrastructure funding?
2. Do you feel that there are sources of funding within this database that are currently under utilized by those that might need them?
3. What was the process of creating the Water Finance Clearinghouse? What was the timeline and how were responsibilities divided among participating creators?
4. How do you imagine a community in need utilizing this tool, from identifying a funding need to completing an infrastructure project?
5. How can a community best utilize the "resources" section of the clearinghouse?
6. What is the benefit of including the interactive map?
7. Do you have any other tips for how a community can best use the Water Finance Clearinghouse?

From: Jones, Enesta <Jones.Enesta@epa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, July 27, 2017 12:23:44 PM
To: Peter Chawaga
Cc: Jones, Enesta
Subject: Fwd: New EPA Tool Helps Communities Access More Than \$10 Billion in Water Infrastructure Financing

FYI, Peter, in case you want to pursue a story.

Enesta Jones
U.S. EPA
Office of Media Relations
Office: 202.564.7873
Cell: **Ex. 6**

"The root of all joy is gratefulness."

Begin forwarded message:

From: EPA Press Office <noreply-subscriptions@epa.gov>
Date: July 26, 2017 at 9:59:49 AM EDT
To: <jones.enesta@epa.gov>

Subject: New EPA Tool Helps Communities Access More Than \$10 Billion in Water Infrastructure Financing



CONTACT: press@epa.gov

New EPA Tool Helps Communities Access More Than \$10 Billion in Water Infrastructure Financing

New EPA tool gives communities access to information and financing opportunities that will help improve water quality and protect public health

WASHINGTON (July 26, 2017) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is launching the Water Finance Clearinghouse, a web-based portal to help communities make informed financing decisions for their drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure needs. The Clearinghouse provides communities with a searchable database with more than \$10 billion in water funding sources and over 550 resources to support local water infrastructure projects. It consolidates and expands upon existing EPA-supported databases to create a one-stop-shop for all community water finance needs. The Water Finance Clearinghouse was developed by EPA’s Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center, an information and assistance center that provides financing information to help local decision makers make informed decisions for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure to reach their public health and environmental goals.

“Every day, Americans depend on water infrastructure to ensure that their drinking water is safe and that local waterways stay clean,” said EPA’s **Office of Water’s Deputy Assistant Administrator D. Lee Forsgren**. “Investing in water infrastructure sustains local economies by creating jobs, protecting public health, and increasing quality of life. EPA’s Clearinghouse is a vital portal that helps connect communities with the information and tools they need to finance much needed water infrastructure improvement projects.”

Many communities around the country have aging or inadequate water infrastructure: each year approximately 240,000 main breaks occur while elsewhere billions of gallons of raw sewage are discharged into local surface waters from aging conveyance systems. Communities increasingly need efficient access to up-to-date water finance information to rehabilitate or replace their water infrastructure. EPA’s new Water Finance Clearinghouse meets this need.

The Water Finance Clearinghouse gives local decision makers an opportunity to search for available funding sources for water infrastructure as well as resources (such as reports, webpages, and webinars) on financing mechanisms and approaches that can help communities access capital to meet their water infrastructure needs. State, federal, local, and foundation funding sources and resources on public-private partnerships, asset management practices, revenue models, and affordability approaches are included in the Clearinghouse.

The Water Finance Clearinghouse is updated in real-time, following a crowdsourcing model. States, federal agencies, and other water sector stakeholders have the ability to suggest edits and new resources or funding options at any time through the Contributor Portal. Stakeholders can use this interactive feature to manage how their programs and initiatives are displayed in the Clearinghouse.

EPA webinars on how to use the Clearinghouse are scheduled for:

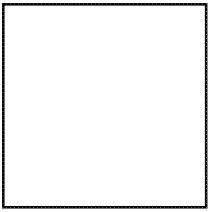
- July 27
- July 31
- August 3
- August 14
- August 18
- August 24
- August 31

All webinars will be held 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Eastern. You can register for a webinar at:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/rt/4533646364837520386>

More information on the Clearinghouse: <https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/water-finance-clearinghouse>





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Environmental Protection Agency, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20460 United States