

Impact of the Rural Community Development (RCD) Program in Montana

Training & Technical Assistance to Support Safe, Affordable Water & Wastewater Systems



About RCD

The [Rural Community Development \(RCD\)](#) program within the Office of Community Services (OCS) is dedicated to reducing the causes and consequences of poverty, increasing opportunity and economic security of individuals and families, and revitalizing communities.

RCD provides training and technical assistance grants to build capacity to create, expand, and maintain safe, affordable water and wastewater systems in rural areas. RCD serves very small communities in sparsely populated areas made up predominately of residents with low income who lack safe water and wastewater treatment services and often even indoor plumbing. Many of these communities have populations of less than 2,500 people and face barriers in funding, building, or operating water infrastructure.

There are currently [eight RCD grant recipients](#)—six regional organizations and two organizations that support tribal communities—which collectively serve all regions of the country.

Program Outcomes

Since the beginning of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, RCD grant recipients:¹

- Helped over 14,000 residents in rural, low-income communities gain access to safe drinking water;
- Helped over 12,000 residents in rural, low-income communities gain access to sanitary sewer systems;
- Conducted over 10,000 management, technical operations, and compliance trainings to ensure effective operation of water and sewage systems, resulting in over 3,000 technical certifications; and
- Leveraged over \$448 million in additional public and private resources to invest in safe and affordable water and wastewater services.

Highlights in Montana

RCD grant recipient Midwest Assistance Program, Inc. (MAP) uses RCD funds to implement training and technical assistance services to build technical, managerial, and financial capacity for rural water and wastewater systems in the Midwest United States. These services include emergency response plan development, water management training, and education about water and wastewater infrastructure needs.

For households not served by community drinking water and wastewater facilities, MAP supports communities' planning and development of reliable and compliant systems. Communities with existing infrastructure receive training to increase their operational capacity as well as assistance in planning and development of safety, security, and sustainability upgrades.

MAP helped the town of Lavina, MT, build operational capacity to maintain the wastewater system that serves 187 residents. There were no certified operators for the Lavina wastewater system, resulting in a lack of regular maintenance. The wastewater system began to deteriorate, and lift station pumps failed, vegetation became overgrown, and odor from the lagoons was constantly present throughout the town.

To alleviate these problems, MAP used RCD funds to provide the town with operator training, and Lavina gained two certified operators. The operators learned how to include inflow and infiltration, sampling and monitoring, and manhole maintenance, which made the system more operational.

MAP helped the operators develop an operation and maintenance plan to organize regular maintenance of the wastewater system and prevent future issues from arising. Due to MAP's assistance, Lavina is better prepared to complete operator tasks pertaining to sampling, reporting, monitoring, and other duties for the wastewater system.

¹ Based on data pulled February 2023