

Impact of the Rural Community Development (RCD) Program in North Dakota

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 North Dakota

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.

MAP helped four communities located on the Fort Berthold Reservation of the MHA Nation develop Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) to mitigate the effects of disasters. The Fort Berthold Reservation communities of Four Bears Village, Mandaree, Twin Buttes, and White Shield, ND, share the Fort Berthold Rural Water (FBRW) system. The system consists of four separate water treatment plants that all use a nearby lake for source water.

The FBRW system is in close proximity to oil fields, fracking, and oil transportation activities. Emergency response planning is crucial, as the source water from Lake Sakakawea is at high risk for contamination from oil production activities. Past oil spills have contaminated streams and rivers that feed into the lake. An ERP needed to be created to help the water systems mitigate potential disasters.

MAP conducted vulnerability assessments on each treatment plant to identify dangers that should be accounted for in the ERP. MAP then coordinated an effort between multiple stakeholders to collect information, which was used to write ERPs for each treatment plant. The plans are now on file in electronic and physical form at each treatment plant, which allows the operators to access the documents in case of an emergency.

¹ Based on data pulled February 2023