

WORKSHOP-IN-A-BOX

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If you were in attendance at our recent Annual Technical Conference, chances are you received a brief glimpse of what we, here at New York Rural Water, have in store for you this coming year. Beginning with the Opening Ceremony, Jacqueline Ponti-Lazaruk the USDA Water and Environment Program Assistant Administrator, announced the plans for our upcoming August Workshop-in-a-Box: Sustainable Management of Rural and Small Systems. The goal of these workshops will focus on utility management improvement and will be a vital “resource for communicating and educating utility board members on the importance of effective management.”

In the afternoon session entitled Small System Sustainable Management Practices, Arlene Anderson, USEPA Region 2, briefly discussed the challenges facing small rural systems and by working to improve performance in each of the ten key management areas, small water and wastewater system managers can help their communities to become more successful, resilient, and sustainable for the long-term.



The ten key management areas have been identified as a desirable outcome for a small system to emulate. These management areas were consistently found to be among the attributes most associated with successfully managed rural and small systems across the United States. Highlighted below is each of the ten areas taken directly from the Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management. This guidebook is the culmination of a joint effort by the USDA and the EPA.

PRODUCT QUALITY

The system is in compliance with permit requirements and other regulatory or reliability requirements.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The system is informed about what its customers expect in terms of service, water quality, and rates.

EMPLOYEE & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The system recruits and retains a workforce that is competent, motivated, and safe-working.

OPERATIONAL OPTIMIZATION

The system ensures ongoing, timely, cost-effective, reliable, and sustainable performance in all aspects of its operations.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

The system establishes and maintains an effective balance between long-term debt, asset values, operations and maintenance expenditures, and operating revenues.

INFRASTRUCTURE STABILITY

The system understands the condition and costs associated with its critical infrastructure assets.

OPERATIONAL RESILIENCY

The system ensures that its leadership and staff members work together to anticipate and avoid problems. >>>

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The system is active in its community and is aware of the impacts that its decisions have on current and long-term future community health and welfare.

WATER RESOURCE ADEQUACY

The systems ensure that water availability is consistent with current and future customer needs.

STAKEHOLDER UNDERSTANDING & SUPPORT

The system actively seeks understanding and support from decision making bodies, community members, and regulatory bodies related to service levels, operating budgets, capital improvement programs, and risk management decisions.

The management areas, as presented in the guide, do not have a specific order, they are however presented together to make up a complete and well-rounded management approach. Participants in the workshop will be given the opportunity to assess their individual system by rating their current level of achievement for each management area. A review of the assessments will help identify management areas on which to focus improvement efforts.

These workshops will limit the number of attendees, to ensure every participant has a productive atmosphere to delve into the challenges facing their system and the opportunity to develop a utility management improvement plan. Keep an eye out for a date and location near you. 💧💧