

# The Rural Community Development (RCD) Program

Helping Alabama's rural and tribal communities build and maintain safe water and wastewater systems



## Alabama State Facts



- 503** community water systems
- 204** water systems serve communities with fewer than 3,300 people
- \$894 million** estimated water infrastructure need for small systems
- 42.3%** of the population lives in a rural area

Sources: EPA, Census

## About the RCD Program

The [Rural Community Development \(RCD\)](#) grant program builds 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 sometimes even indoor plumbing. RCD tailors its support based on community need. It helps communities assess water and wastewater infrastructure and accessibility needs, helps identify and secure funding for water facility upgrades, builds capacity through local experts to establish and maintain water facilities, and trains water operators to ensure water systems are functional and compliant. There are currently [eight RCD grant recipients](#) — six regional organizations and two organizations that support tribal communities. RCD grant recipients [Communities Unlimited, Inc. \(CU\)](#) and [United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. \(USET\)](#) serve communities in the state of Alabama.

## Examples of RCD's Support in Alabama

### Lowndes County, Alabama

Many rural homes in Lowndes County, Alabama relied on decentralized systems to handle their wastewater. As these systems aged and began to fail, contamination posed a serious health risk to the community. The county government understood that it was critical to connect these homes to the public sewer system, but limited funding and staff slowed progress. With RCD funding, CU provided additional capacity for Lowndes County to apply for grants and resolve issues like property line negotiations. As a result, 350 rural homes were connected to the public sewer system. [View the story map to learn more!](#)

*"It's because of Communities Unlimited that we're able to get out and be able to do this work, and it's why Communities Unlimited is our boots on the ground.... They're actually here, understanding what the problems are, understanding what the issues are."*

— Dr. Lanique Howard, Director, Office of Community Services

### Bear Creek, Alabama

The town of Bear Creek, Alabama faced business and population loss when the Illinois Central Railroad built a line that bypassed the town. Over time, this resulted in loss of revenue, which made it difficult to maintain the town's water system. With RCD funding, CU conducted a rate analysis for the town to calculate a fair rate to charge its residents for water, as well as rates for extra services, such as meter testing and tap fees. The rate analysis helped the town maintain revenue to conduct ongoing maintenance and upkeep. Additionally, CU helped Bear Creek update its emergency response plan and risk and resilience assessment, which are required by the State of Alabama. CU coordinated information-gathering efforts between stakeholders to prepare for writing the plans and then collaborated with the town's water operator to complete the plans.

## National Outcomes\*

With the help of RCD:



**\$742 million**  
in additional funding  
secured for communities



**83,000 residents**  
have gained access to  
safe drinking water



**49,000 residents**  
have gained access to  
sanitary sewer systems



**2,100 communities**  
served by RCD projects

\*Outcomes for RCD grant recipients' work across the country since FY21



For more information about the Rural Community Development (RCD) Program, [visit the RCD website](#) and the [RCD Information and Data Dashboard](#).

For more information about OCS's other anti-poverty programs, [visit the OCS website](#).