

The Rural Community Development (RCD) Program

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



Nebraska State Facts



- 595** community water systems
- 553** water systems serve communities with fewer than 3,300 people
- \$1.36 billion** estimated water infrastructure need for small systems
- 27%** 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 [Midwest Assistance Program, Inc. \(MAP\)](#) and [Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. \(ITCA\)](#) serve communities in the state of Nebraska.

Examples of RCD's Support in Nebraska

Elwood, Nebraska

The town of Elwood, Nebraska's water system was unmetered, and residents were charged a flat rate for their water instead of being charged based on usage. This led to excessive water use, which resulted in high amounts of water loss and, in turn, a loss of revenue for the water system. With RCD funding, MAP helped the town collect the revenue it needed to maintain the water system by training officials on the importance of regulating water and by adding water meters to the system. The town also enacted a usage-based water rate that will be phased in over a two-year period. Town leadership expects all system users to have meters by 2025, which will ensure fair water charges and provide income that will contribute to funding reserves for future infrastructure projects.

Omaha Tribal Utilities Department (OTUD)

In 2018, OTUD staff members participated in a Tribal Utility Tune-Up Workshop conducted by ITCA. At this workshop, participants identified three areas of improvement to focus on, which included: sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and leadership development. Since the workshop, ITCA has worked with OTUD to improve utility operations. With RCD funding, ITCA completed three technical assistance projects to make the identified improvements. First, it chose a director for OTU to oversee operations. Second, it developed a Water Rates Awareness Brochure with the goal of improving public understanding and openness of the OTU use of water utility rates. Finally, it contracted a subject-matter expert to perform a water loss control study, which is a prelude to developing a water loss control program. The purpose of these projects is to improve public health, community sustainability, and the capacity of tribal water utilities and water utility personnel.

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](#).