

# Impact of the Rural Community Development (RCD) Program in Tennessee

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:<sup>1</sup>

- 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 Tennessee

RCD grant recipient Communities Unlimited, Inc. (CU) 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 Southern United States. These services include infrastructure planning, water operator training, and financial application assistance.

For households not served by community drinking water and wastewater facilities, CU 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.

CU helped the Indian Creek Youth Camp comply with state regulations. The Indian Creek Youth Camp in Liberty, TN, provides drinking water to a community of up to 350 people, depending on the time of year. The camp is a surface water system that requires complete treatment of the water it pulls from the Caney River. Soon after a new operator began managing the water system in 2020, he received a state order from the Tennessee Department of Environment Commission (TDEC) noting that the system needed to be sampled more regularly.

CU helped the new operator obtain his water operator certification and worked with the operator to develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for TDEC. In addition to the CAP, CU helped the operator develop a Sampling Plan and schedule, a Watershed Plan, a Monthly Operational Report, and Standard Operating Procedures. Developing these plans and procedures helped set the operator up for success in supervising the water system, and the Indian Creek Youth Camp is now fully compliant with state and federal regulations.

<sup>1</sup> Based on data pulled February 2023