

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The nearly \$50 billion for water infrastructure in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) - in addition to other public funding - has the potential to deliver substantial environmental, economic, and public health benefits. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance equity and resilience by ensuring these funds reach utilities that serve overburdened communities and finance climate resilient and community centered projects.

## THE NEED

Too many communities have not been able to access public funds for water infrastructure. While federal funds are distributed through State Revolving Funds (SRFs) - the largest federal programs that finance water infrastructure - these funds have historically not been distributed equitably.

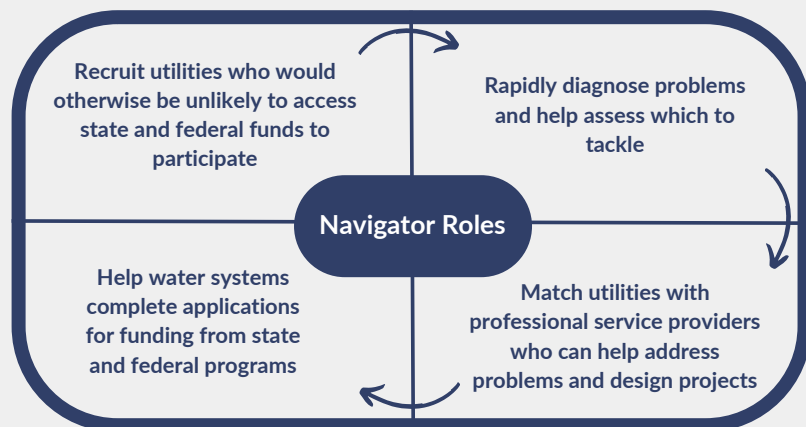
Utilities must overcome numerous barriers to access public funds to finance water infrastructure. Utilities must assess needs, develop capital plans, find programs to finance projects, and apply for funds. Applications to the SRFs require engineering designs and environmental assessments that are complicated and costly to complete.

EPIC's research has shown that **less than 25 percent** of SRF funds for drinking water projects have reached disadvantaged communities over the last decade.

Utilities that serve overburdened communities often lack the technical and financial capacity to apply. Due to these and other barriers, most never take these critical first steps to access the available funding.

## OUR GOAL (SOLUTION)

To eliminate the disparities that exist in water infrastructure investments, EPIC and our partners are launching a Funding Navigator in three regions: the Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and South. The Navigator is a team of experts that helps utilities serving overburdened communities seek and secure SRFs and other public funds for water infrastructure.



EPIC's national partners generated the idea to create a Funding Navigator, and partnerships are key to the Funding Navigator's success. In addition to our national partners, EPIC identifies and works with place-based partners who have strong relationships with communities and utilities as well as a proven track record of advancing equity and resilience.



Our goal is to ensure more communities benefit from critical investments in safe and climate-resilient drinking water, lead service line replacement, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management.

## OUR STRATEGY

### Technical Assistance



EPIC will **reach more overburdened communities** and provide technical assistance to local governments, utilities, and non-governmental organizations to help them access public funds for water infrastructure. Our goal is to reach at least 1,000 communities. The Navigator aims to **finance better projects** that serve overburdened communities, including projects which are financially sustainable, climate-resilient and build community trust. The Navigator team will work with eligible applicants to plan, develop projects, and apply to programs to access funds. The team aims to facilitate efficient hand-offs between applicants and technical assistance providers. EPIC is raising funds from philanthropic and other sources to support the Navigator team in addition to funds to support service providers and community-based organizations.

### Research



♦ EPIC will collaborate with other nonprofit and community-based organizations, technical assistance providers, and state and federal fund administrators to coordinate efficient and effective technical assistance, share lessons learned, and identify best practices on how communities access and states allocate public funds for water infrastructure. Through case studies and webinars, the Navigator team will **share innovative approaches** and highlight policies, approaches, and technologies that are community-centered, efficient, and climate-resilient.

### Policy Change



Federal statute allows state SRF programs to use six percent of their federal grant – a national total of \$2.7 billion over five years – for technical assistance, which most do not fully use. EPIC **encourages states to provide more technical assistance** and work with state policymakers and SRF administrators to set aside more funds for technical assistance. The lessons learned working with municipalities and utilities through the Navigator will help inform EPIC's SRF Policy Reform activities.