



THE OPPORTUNITY

The nearly \$50 billion for water infrastructure in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) - in addition to other public funds - 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

Inadequate water infrastructure puts lives, livelihoods, and the environment at risk. Too many communities are ill-equipped to manage stormwater or face contamination from water pollution and emerging pollutants. Too many homes have toxic lead pipes that deliver drinking water. Due to the historical legacies of racism, persons of color are most likely to bear these environmental injustices. Inadequate water infrastructure prevents residents from living the healthy and prosperous lives they deserve.

Addressing these problems requires investment in infrastructure. Federal funding to finance water infrastructure is a crucial source of capital to make these investments. The federal government finances about 10 percent of water infrastructure investment, mainly through the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program. However, overburdened communities often do not access federal funds.

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 must overcome numerous barriers to access public funds to finance water infrastructure, including assessing needs, developing capital plans, finding programs to finance projects, and applying for funds. Applications to the SRFs require engineering designs, environmental assessments, and other analyses that can be complicated and costly to complete.

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

STEPS FOR ACCESSING PUBLIC FUNDS FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE



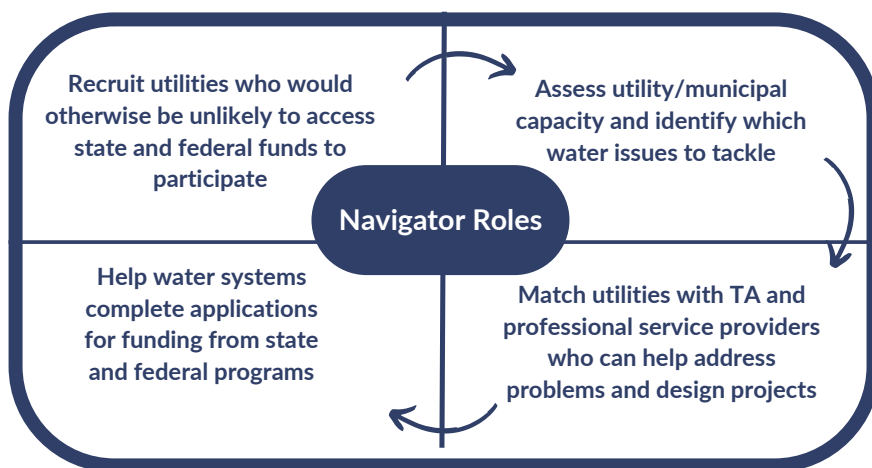


Our goal is to ensure more communities benefit from critical investments in safe and climate-resilient drinking water, lead service line replacement, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management.

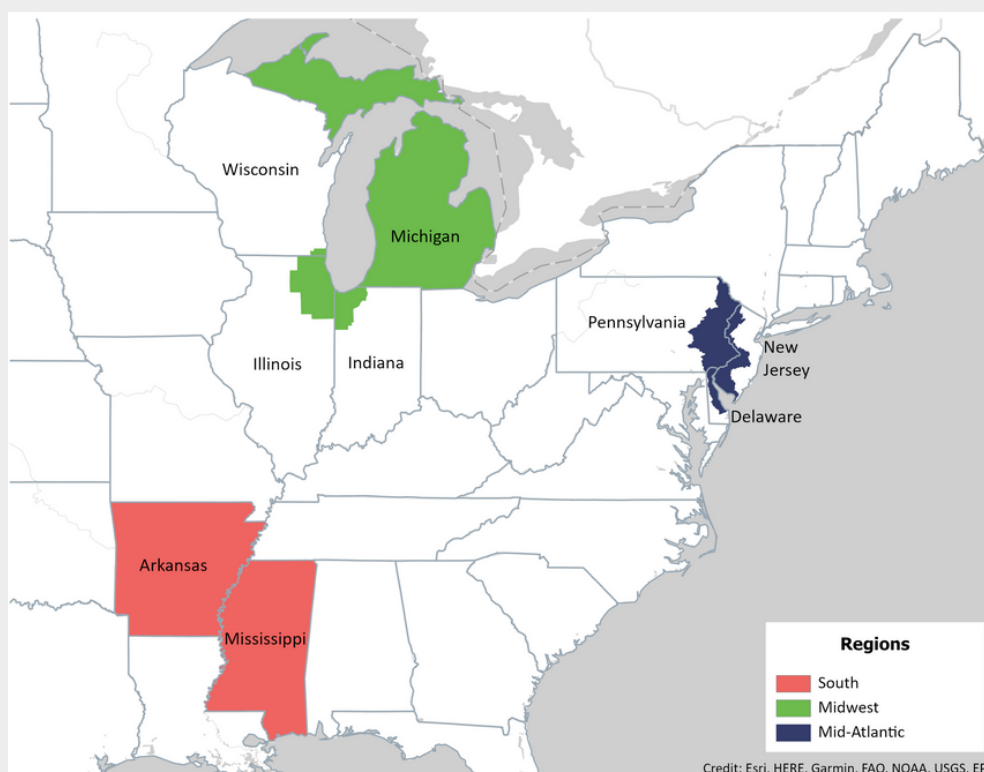
OUR SOLUTION

To eliminate disparities that exist in water infrastructure investments, EPIC and its partners created a Funding Navigator, a team that helps utilities serving overburdened communities seek and secure SRFs and other public funds for water infrastructure.

The Funding Navigator team has expertise in community engagement, funding and finance, and technical assistance. The Navigator's four primary roles complement other efforts at the national, state, and local level to advance environmental justice and resilience.



Funding Navigator work is underway in three regions: the Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and South.





PARTNERS

EPIC works with its partners to co-design and update the Funding Navigator based on lessons learned and local conditions. Partners are key to the Funding Navigator's success. In addition to our national partners - Anthropocene Alliance, Greenprint Partners, Moonshot Missions, and Southwest Environmental Finance Center - EPIC works with place-based partners who have strong relationships with residents, municipalities, and utilities as well as experience in advancing equity and resilience. The following partners are doing critically important work in the three regions: Arkansas Municipal League, Communities Unlimited, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Michigan Municipal League Foundation, Mississippi Communities United for Prosperity, and New Jersey Future.



Anthropocene Alliance





OUR STRATEGY

Technical Assistance



The Funding Navigator will **reach 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 make sure the work results in **better drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater projects** that support equity and resilience in overburdened communities. This means financing projects that are financially sustainable, and 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, facilitating efficient hand-offs between applicants and technical assistance and professional service providers during each step of the process. The Navigator provides seed funds from philanthropic and other sources to support service providers' work and community-based organizations' participation.

Research



EPIC will collaborate with other nonprofit and community-based organizations, technical assistance and professional service 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 result in community-centered, efficient, and climate-resilient water infrastructure.

Policy Change



Federal statute allows state SRF programs to use six percent of their federal grants – a national total of \$2.7 billion over five years – for technical assistance. EPIC's [research](#) has shown that most states do not fully use the federal grants allocated to them. EPIC **encourages states to provide more technical assistance** and works with state policymakers and SRF administrators to set aside more funds for technical assistance. The lessons learned in working with municipalities, utilities, and community-based organizations through the Navigator will help inform [EPIC's SRF Policy Reform](#) work.

If you are interested in working with a Funding Navigator to help access public funds to support water infrastructure needs or partnering with us in this critical work, please reach out to denise@policyinnovation.org or sion@policyinnovation.org to learn more.