ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The Environmental Policy Innovation Center (EPIC) is focused on building policies that deliver spectacular improvement in the speed and scale of environmental progress - at a pace that matches the urgency of the problems we face. We are a nonprofit founded in 2017 with a staff of engineers, policy experts, community advocates, and data scientists. We work in partnership with municipalities, communities, and government stakeholders to ensure our analyses and work products solve problems, cut down on red tape, and lead to successful policy change. Through a combination of data and research, innovation and policy reform, and technical assistance and public engagement, we are working to change the odds for communities across the country who need access to safe, reliable drinking water.

FUNDING NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

The goal of the Funding Navigator Program is to ensure more communities benefit from government investments in safe and climate-resilient drinking water, lead service line replacement, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management. The program connects to overburdened communities and provides funding and technical assistance to local governments and water utilities to help them access public funds for water infrastructure. A diverse team of engineers and water professionals from the Funding Navigator team and led by a Funding Navigator Manager works with the water utility to conduct an analysis of local conditions, create a strategy to access financing and professional services and conduct community outreach, and help implement the strategy.

The Funding Navigator Program is rooted in deep partnerships at the national, regional, and local level, and is funded through grants from philanthropic donors and supported by the US Environmental Protection Agency through its Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs). Our Funding Navigator team works with community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and councils of government to identify water utilities in need of assistance.
The Funding Navigator
Public water infrastructure funding for communities in need

PROJECT PROCESS
A Funding Navigator Manager is the primary point of contact for initiating a project and can only work through eligible borrowers such as a water, wastewater, stormwater utility, or service provider. A public agency such as a utility, municipality, or other nonprofit service provider is the primary recipient of Funding Navigator assistance. Residents and community groups can request that the Funding Navigator Program reach out to their local municipality. A Funding Navigator Manager works through the following process once the referral is made and contact is established with the water utility:

1. **Screening**: Interview with applicant to determine Funding Navigator Program eligibility and approximate scope of work.

2. **Letter of Intent**: Agreement to conduct a Gap Analysis and create a Technical Assistance Work Plan. Outline terms and conditions of service provision.

3. **Gap Analysis**: A technical, managerial, and financial analysis of existing systems and organizational infrastructure. Includes stakeholder and community outreach.

4. **Technical Assistance Work Plan**: Deliverable that will include findings of the Gap Analysis and recommendations on priority actions, funding, and additional technical assistance.

5. **Service Agreement**: Authorization to proceed with activities outlined in the Technical Assistance Work Plan.

6. **Technical Assistance Implementation**: Conducting the necessary studies and research and connecting with technical and community experts to develop a funding-eligible application.

7. **Closeout**: Upon completion of activities in the Service Agreement, EPIC staff will provide notification of closeout, conduct a post-technical assistance survey, and document lessons learned.

The Funding Navigator Program assists water utilities by hiring technical experts, facilitating community engagement, and coordinating with state agencies, regulators, and financing authorities. The program also assists in creating funding applications on behalf of eligible borrowers. The program will not replace an engineering, environmental, or contracting firm for a municipality or utility, but may manage, fund, and complement these professional services.

To apply for assistance or learn more, visit: policyinnovation.org/funding-navigator