North Carolina’s Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan

The Road to Viability
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Executive Summary

Infrastructure is a cornerstone of the economy and there is no more basic infrastructure need than that for water. Clean, safe water – whether for drinking and cooking or for industrial and manufacturing purposes – is needed by every citizen and business in North Carolina. The development of water infrastructure over the last 100+ years by local, state, and federal governments is a great accomplishment – yet that success is placed at risk when our water infrastructure is not maintained or modernized.

Over the next 20 years, capital cost estimates for water system needs range from $10 to $15 billion, while costs for wastewater needs range from $7 to $11 billion – more likely at the higher end of these ranges. While the state has a competitive advantage over many other states with respect to water resources, these resources are made accessible to North Carolinians by infrastructure that cleans and transports the water. North Carolina’s water and wastewater infrastructure must be ready for the needs and challenges of the future.

Infrastructure investments that have been deferred year after year result in an infrastructure gap or deficit. The owners of utilities and other water professionals must be prepared to take the steps needed to address North Carolina’s infrastructure challenges and keep us ahead of other states.

The State Water Infrastructure Authority (Authority) was created by the General Assembly in 2013 to assess the state’s water and wastewater infrastructure needs, the role of the state in funding needed infrastructure, and the funding programs currently available to local governments and utilities. While subsidized loans are the primary vehicle to help make infrastructure more affordable, the Authority recognizes that only a fraction of today's infrastructure capital needs can be met with currently available state or federal subsidized funding levels. The Authority has initiated a different approach to assistance with water infrastructure funding to help close the gap.

Vision for the Future

The state will best be able to meet its water infrastructure needs by ensuring individual utilities are, or are on a path to be, viable systems

A viable system is one that functions as a long-term, self-sufficient business enterprise, establishes organizational excellence, and provides appropriate levels of infrastructure maintenance, operation, and reinvestment – including reserves for unexpected events – that allow the utility to provide reliable water services now and in the future.
Vision for the Future

The Authority’s goal is for all utilities to:

- Recognize that users of water infrastructure must pay, to the greatest extent possible, for the cost of operating, maintaining, and renewing that infrastructure

- Be proactive in the management of water infrastructure by understanding the condition of infrastructure, identifying the most critical components, and establishing prioritized long-term renewal and modernization plans; this process promotes transparent decision-making with customers and stakeholders

- Establish financial plans that enable the utility to fund both operation and maintenance as well as long-term infrastructure renewal without long-term reliance on grant funds

The Authority’s vision is for viable water utilities across North Carolina. The state’s role is to foster the long-term viability of individual water and wastewater utilities by providing access not only to capital funds but also to resources that help utilities address organizational and financial management challenges that may be contributing to physical infrastructure limitations.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide the North Carolina General Assembly, utility governing boards, and the public with a roadmap for water and wastewater utility viability.

Best practices in utility management are essential for viable utility systems that are robust in three key integrated focus areas:

- **Infrastructure Management** – By taking proactive approaches to enable the right investments to be made in the right projects at the right time, taking into consideration life-cycle costs and risk management

- **Organizational Management** – Through governing boards (elected officials, appointed officials and owners) understanding the long-term nature of water/wastewater systems and prioritizing the financing and completion of the most critical infrastructure projects

- **Financial Management** – Through sufficient revenue generation to fund infrastructure construction, maintenance, operations and renewal/replacement without long-term reliance on grant funds
Achieving the Vision

Achieving viable water utilities across North Carolina requires actions by the state, local governments and water utility providers to:

- **Ensure that, to the greatest extent practicable, water utilities operate as enterprise systems that generate sufficient revenue to cover all operating, maintenance, and capital expenditures, as well as funding reserves for unexpected events.** This can happen when:
  - Governing boards and utility staff understand the long-term nature of infrastructure planning and management and the long-term needs of their systems
  - Governing boards and utility staff engage with the state’s Local Government Commission to set up appropriate utility financial management policies and procedures
  - Governing boards and utility staff take advantage of the extensive utility finance resources offered by the University of North Carolina School of Government and its Environmental Finance Center
  - Agencies and organizations improve upon educational tools and information about water infrastructure management that is oriented to governing boards and the public, and strengthen networks with utilities to facilitate the actual application of the tools and use of the information
  - Agencies explore opportunities with the state university and community college systems offering coursework in utility finances and public administration including instruction about water infrastructure
  - Utilities implement infrastructure asset management plans and best practices to increase the efficiency of their systems

By supporting utilities as they implement the three management focus areas, the state can help assure that its limited capital resources are used most effectively and, in many cases, the improvements achieved will ultimately allow many utilities to access non-subsidized forms of capital.

The State’s Local Government Commission has been recognized as a “local government lifeline”

The University of North Carolina School of Government is the largest university-based local government training, advisory, and research organization in the United States
Utilities seek to expand sources of capital through opportunities for public-private partnerships or similar collaborations

- **Promote viable water utilities through the state water infrastructure funding programs by:**
  - Assisting utilities that operate in some of the state’s most rural, economically distressed areas, and that have some of the highest utility rates in the state, in creating permanent management and infrastructure solutions
  - Making project funding decisions that recognize that many entities can afford to incur some amount of debt or obligate some amount of funding toward a project
  - Prioritizing applications for funding that represent best practices for utility management
  - Continuing to fund and offer Asset Inventory and Assessment Grants (now available based on 2015 changes to the Water Infrastructure Fund statutes)

  Continuing to fund and offer Merger/Regionalization Feasibility Grants (now available based on 2015 changes to the Water Infrastructure Fund statutes) to support utilities as they study the advantages of regional economies of scale in management, access to capital, and capacity of water and wastewater treatment facilities

- **Acknowledge that when water utilities are not viable or are not on a path to become viable, solutions are needed that go beyond simply constructing or repairing infrastructure. Permanent solutions can be created when:**
  - The governing boards of local government utility systems work with the Local Government Commission to craft possible courses of action
  - Utility governing boards explore potential advantages of contract operations, public-private partnerships and/or shared management opportunities
  - Utilities transition to local funding solutions and end long-term reliance on grant funding
  - Coordinate possible paths forward with partners such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, North Carolina Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division, and the Golden LEAF Foundation

Providing grant funds simply to construct or repair infrastructure – without requiring that long-term management plans are in place for infrastructure, organization and finances – does not move a utility toward viability

**Instead, grant funds will be targeted to projects to help utilities transition to permanent local funding solutions and eventually the ability to access non-subsidized forms of capital**
- Provide training for the governing boards and staff of utilities through the Local Government Commission, UNC School of Government, the UNC School of Government Environmental Finance Center, the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, and the North Carolina Rural Water Association, among others.

- **Move forward in achieving viability in the three focus areas through:**
  - **Partnerships** among state agencies, key organizations and utility providers for more cohesive support as they work to reach and maintain viability by leveraging existing resources and programs.
  - **Resources and tools** that support proactive utility management.
  - **Prioritized funding** that is linked to utility viability.

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**The Funding Road Ahead**

Water and wastewater infrastructure needs for North Carolina over the next 20 years are estimated to range from $17 billion to $26 billion. Annually, approximately $400 million is available through the two largest funding programs in the state, administered by the Division of Water Infrastructure and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development through its Water and Wastewater Disposal Loan and Grant program. During the next two fiscal years, even with these public subsidies, 77% of drinking water infrastructure funding needs and 50% of wastewater infrastructure funding needs cannot be met. Clearly, the amount of public subsidies for infrastructure funding is much lower than the identified total needs of all water and wastewater systems.
Estimated Water and Sewer Infrastructure Needs and Publicly Subsidized Funding Availability (FY2016 and FY2017)

**DRINKING WATER**

- Drinking water remaining needs after applying available funding (77%)
- Drinking Water Connect NC bond loans (7%)
- Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (6%)
- USDA - Rural Development (4%)
- Drinking Water Connect NC bond grants (3%)
- Community Development Block Grant - Infrastructure (2%)
- State Drinking Water Reserve Grants (1%)

**WASTEWATER**

- Wastewater remaining needs after applying available funding (50%)
- Clean Water State Revolving Funds (27%)
- Wastewater Connect NC bond loans (10%)
- USDA - Rural Development (6%)
- Wastewater Connect NC bond grants (4%)
- Community Development Block Grant - Infrastructure (2%)
- State Wastewater Reserve grants (1%)
The federal loan programs provide substantial savings to almost every system in the state and must continue to be the primary means of infrastructure funding for the vast majority of utilities in the state. Many utilities may have limited access to these sources of loan capital because they lack the infrastructure management, organizational management, and/or financial management practices to support debt. For many of these utilities, strengthening management will increase their access to these programs.

The American Water Works Association suggests that additional revenue funds need to come from local utility customers, most likely through higher rates. Utilities must ask their customers to invest more and in turn must be able to explain how the investment will provide actual benefits to the community. (1)

However, for communities under extreme economic stress, facing water and sewer bills that are higher than most other water customers across the state, grants will be needed for the foreseeable future to ensure those systems can be competitive for growth opportunities. The Authority is directing grant funds to those critical situations and is providing the resources and tools for utilities to prevent such situations from developing or continuing.

The state’s role is to provide strategic project funding to support utilities as they:

- Transition to permanent local funding solutions
- Begin to access non-subsidized forms of capital
- End long-term reliance on grant funding

“...a lot of people are looking for these top-level, silver bullet solutions from the top down – thinking the federal government is going to lead, and they’re going to prescribe these huge stimulus-style packages to solve the challenge” (2)

In the world of infrastructure, water stands out for the startlingly small role the federal government plays in building and maintaining our crucial systems. In 2014, federal dollars accounted for 22% of mass-transit money, 28% of highway spending and 44% of aviation projects. For water utilities, that number was just 4%. (3)
Moving Forward
In the near term, the Authority’s next steps include:

- **Monitoring and evaluating recent changes to the funding programs and levels**
  A great deal of change has taken place in the state’s approach to funding assistance. A key activity will be managing these changes and evaluating their impacts to ensure that funding is linked to supporting a utility’s viability. Future recommendations for modifications to the funding programs may be a result.

- **Strengthening partnerships in planning, training and communications**
  Multiple opportunities exist for strengthening partnerships among state agencies, the university and community college systems, water and wastewater organizations, local governments and utility governing boards. Such partnerships will lead to creative solutions for utility viability and will enhance the long-term success of the state’s funding programs.

- **Developing a troubled system protocol**
  In partnership with the Local Government Commission and other agencies and organizations, the Authority will work to develop a troubled system protocol with the goal of seeking permanent solutions to water infrastructure issues. While an overarching protocol that could be applied to any system would be ideal, the Authority recognizes that approaches may need to be tailored to an individual community’s needs.

There are a number of longer-term subjects that the Authority will continue to research and monitor for inclusion in future master planning efforts. These may include communications resources, regional coordination, managing reclaimed water and stormwater, contract operations/public-private partnerships/shared management opportunities, and improved procurement policies.

Keeping North Carolina’s Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan Relevant

Infrastructure master plans are kept fresh and relevant by continuing to address current key issues, envisioning the future and its possible challenges, and exploring options for meeting those challenges. **Just as any type of master plan is updated as conditions, information and priorities change over time, the Authority is committed to updating and refreshing this Statewide Infrastructure Master Plan.**

However, this first version of the Master Plan focuses on addressing critical water and sewer needs across the state. The plan identifies the range of needs in infrastructure, organizational and financial management, and the types of processes, knowledge and information needed to fill the gaps. The Authority is taking the first steps to address these issues in this Master Plan by providing resources and tools to help North Carolina become a state in which viable utilities are the model.
Section 1 – Introduction to the State Water Infrastructure Authority and the Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan

In 2013, the North Carolina General Assembly created the State Water Infrastructure Authority (Authority) to assess and make recommendations about the state’s water and wastewater infrastructure needs, and the infrastructure funding programs available to the state’s local governments and utilities. With the creation of the Authority and consolidation of funding programs, the legislature recognizes the critical nature of water infrastructure. North Carolina’s water resources – and the infrastructure that protects and provides citizens with access to it – are key competitive advantages over many other growing states that have limited water resources such as Florida, Texas, and California.

1.1 The State Water Infrastructure Authority and Its Work

The Authority’s nine members have extensive experience in town and county management, private sector consulting, the operation and management of public water and wastewater utilities, local government finance, economic development work and academic experience involving water infrastructure, federal and state funding, and regulatory compliance and permitting.

The General Assembly tasked the Authority with twelve activities, one of which is to develop a master plan to meet the state’s water infrastructure needs. In addition to the master plan, the Authority is also responsible for:

- Distributing loan and grant funds from five federal and state funding programs, and establishing criteria and priorities for funding
- Making recommendations on the role of the state in the development and funding of water infrastructure
- Assessing emerging practices in utility planning and management
- Assessing the need for a “troubled system” protocol
The Authority identified several key infrastructure issues in its annual reports to the legislature (4,5):

- A significant gap exists between infrastructure needs and available funding via either grants or loans
- Incentives should be provided to encourage utilities to become more proactive in the management and financing of their systems
- State grant and loan funds may not be reaching the most economically distressed communities

To address these issues, the Authority initiated fundamental changes to the state’s approach to assistance with water infrastructure funding through:

**EXPANDING ACCESS TO CAPITAL**

- Simplified the application process across all five funding programs administered by the Division of Water Infrastructure
- Developed a strategic, comprehensive priority rating system to evaluate the best use of limited state funds
- Refined the criteria for project affordability to increase access to low-cost or no-cost capital by economically distressed utilities that already have high water or sewer rates

**INCENTIVIZING UTILITY MANAGEMENT**

- Created a new grant program to allow a utility to develop an inventory of its water and wastewater infrastructure, assess the condition of the assets and prioritize capital needs to address the most critical issues (Asset Inventory and Assessment grant)
- Created a new grant program to allow utilities to study the feasibility of merging or regionalizing with other systems (Merger/Regionalization Feasibility grant)

**FOCUSBING ON ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED UTILITIES**

- Identified the factors that struggling utilities may face such as small customer bases and potential organizational and/or financial management issues that may limit access to capital
- Initiated work with the Local Government Commission of the Department of State Treasurer to develop a “troubled system” protocol to seek permanent solutions to water infrastructure issues
1.2 Master Plan

The Authority recognizes that this Master Plan must address more than only the cost of water infrastructure needs across the state. While the state must define the needs and provide access to capital funds to the extent possible, it must also address utilities’ organizational and financial management challenges that may contribute to their physical infrastructure limitations.

Addressing these challenges is key to assuring the effective use of the state’s capital funds for water infrastructure. Best practices in utility management are essential for viable utility systems that are robust in three key integrated focus areas:

- **Infrastructure Management** – Utilities take proactive approaches to enable the right investments to be made in the right projects at the right time, taking into consideration life-cycle costs and risk management.

- **Organizational Management** – Utility governing boards (elected officials, appointed officials and owners) understand the long-term nature of water/wastewater systems and prioritize the financing and completion of the most critical infrastructure projects.

- **Financial Management** – Utilities generate sufficient revenue to fund infrastructure construction, maintenance, operations and renewal/replacement without long-term reliance on grant funds.

The Master Plan identifies the needs in each focus area and provides a path forward in achieving viability through:

- **Partnerships** to help leverage existing resources and programs.

- **Resources and tools** that support proactive utility management.

- **Prioritized funding** that is linked to utility viability.

The Authority’s work has resulted in initiatives that have greatly changed the state’s approach to funding water infrastructure through:

- **Expanding access to capital**

- **Incentivizing utility management**

- **Focusing on economically distressed utilities**

Addressing utilities’ organizational and financial management challenges are essential to assuring the effective use of the state’s capital funds for water infrastructure.
1.3 Plan Organization

The Master Plan contains ten sections and six appendices, organized as follows:

**Section 1**
Introduction to the State Water Infrastructure Authority and the Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan
Introduces the State Water Infrastructure Authority, its responsibilities and initiatives, and the Master Plan

**Section 2**
Master Plan Vision and Purpose
Presents the state's vision for water and wastewater utilities and the purpose of the Master Plan

**Section 3**
Selected Federal and State Water Infrastructure Funding Programs
Provides a history and overview of selected federal and state funding programs

**Section 4**
Statewide Needs
Identifies some of the many management challenges encountered by public water and wastewater utilities, grouped into three integrated focus areas: infrastructure, organizational and financial management; also presents information about the capital costs of the state's needed infrastructure and the funding available to meet those needs

**Section 5**
Achieving the Vision: Infrastructure Management
Presents the path toward viability through infrastructure management, addressing the need for best practices in utility planning and management; describes the new grants available for asset inventory and assessment, and resources related to infrastructure management

**Section 6**
Achieving the Vision: Organizational Management
Presents the path toward viability through organizational management, addressing the roles of utility governing boards, operations staff, and customers and stakeholders; describes new grants for merger/regionalization feasibility analyses and resources related to organizational management

**Section 7**
Achieving the Vision: Financial Management
Presents the path toward viability through financial management, addressing revenue generation, local government finance requirements; describes resources related to financial management

**Section 8**
Assessing a Utility’s Financial Capacity
Describes the Authority's new funding approach to increase access to low-cost or no-cost capital by the most economically distressed utilities in the state that already have high water and/or sewer rates; the approach stretches limited state loan and grant funding to benefit more utilities by combining loans and grants based on affordability

**Section 9**
Troubled System Protocol
Describes the Authority’s work with the Local Government Commission of the Department of State Treasurer toward development of strategies and practices to assist “troubled” systems
Section 10
Moving Forward
Describes the Authority’s work plan for the near term as well as to address longer-term issues, both of which will be the focus of the first update of this Master Plan.

Appendix A
State Water Infrastructure Authority Legislation and Member Information
Provides information about the Authority members and the North Carolina General Statute that created the Authority in 2013.

Appendix B
Resource Toolbox
Contains dozens of resources, tools, and guidance available from many agencies and organizations that are engaged in the support of water and wastewater utilities; also includes information about opportunities for partnership, new design, construction and financing mechanisms such as public-private partnerships, and funding resources available in North Carolina.

Appendix C
Local Government Finance and Accounting Requirements
Presents information about North Carolina General Statute Chapter 159 – Local Government Finance, and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).

Appendix D
Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities
Presents information from “Effective Utility Management: A Primer for Water and Wastewater Utilities – The EUM Primer”

Appendix E
References
Contains references cited throughout the Master Plan.

Appendix F
Acronyms
Acronyms used throughout the Master Plan.
The state will best be able to meet its water infrastructure needs by ensuring individual utilities are, or are on a path to be, viable systems.

A viable system is one that functions as a long-term, self-sufficient business enterprise, establishes organizational excellence, and provides appropriate levels of infrastructure maintenance, operation, and reinvestment – including reserves for unexpected events – that allow the utility to provide reliable water services now and in the future.
2.1 Vision for North Carolina’s Water and Wastewater Systems

The State must foster the long-term viability of individual water and wastewater utilities in order to maintain and improve public health, public safety, environmental protection and economic growth. The Authority acknowledges that the state must provide access to capital funds and resources to help address organizational and financial management challenges that may be contributing to physical infrastructure limitations. Addressing these challenges is essential to assuring the effective use of capital funds.

Viable water and wastewater systems will be characterized by:

- Utilities with access to a range of different capital sources appropriate to their situation and capacity.
- Governing boards – that are fully engaged in making the critical decisions about their water and wastewater systems to ensure long-term viability and compliance with regulations to protect public health and the environment.
- Utilities actively and continuously reinvesting in critical infrastructure based on the system’s physical condition, reliability of vital components and the risk of deferring renewal projects.
- Governing boards and utility staff that work together to prioritize the infrastructure work that is needed and address the most critical needs.
- Utilities with financial plans in place to generate enough revenue to pay for what is needed in the foreseeable future and without repeated reliance on grant funds. Utilities proactively managing system assets, minimizing the need for reactive projects to solve infrastructure problems.
- A high degree of partnership with other utilities, sharing technical, financial management and organizational resources.
- Units of local government that thrive by ensuring their citizens and businesses have access to clean drinking water and sanitary sewer systems, whether or not they own or operate a utility.
The Authority recognizes that best practices in utility management are essential for viable utility systems. These practices are grouped into three integrated focus areas:

- **Infrastructure Management** – Utilities take proactive approaches to enable the right investments to be made in the right projects at the right time, taking into consideration life-cycle costs and risk management;
- **Organizational Management** – Utility governing boards understand the long-term nature of water/wastewater systems and prioritize the financing and completion of the most critical infrastructure projects; and
- **Financial Management** – Utilities generate sufficient revenue to fund infrastructure construction, maintenance, operations and renewal/replacement without long-term reliance on grant funds.

### 2.2 Purpose of the Master Plan

The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide the North Carolina General Assembly, utility governing boards, and the public with a roadmap for water and wastewater utility viability while maximizing the impact of the state’s investments.

The plan integrates the three focus areas to support the operation of a utility as a public health service provider, community service provider, and sustainable business.

Together, the state, local governments and utility providers will move forward in achieving viability in the three focus areas through:

- **Partnerships to help leverage existing resources and programs**
- **Resources and tools that support proactive utility management**
- **Prioritized funding that is linked to viability**
The resources and tools provided in this plan are not exhaustive but they present a foundation for achieving utility viability. Appendix B, “Resource Toolbox,” provides extensive information about the many organizations and agencies that are engaged in the support of water and wastewater utilities as they carry out their primary mission to protect public health and the environment, and to comply with local, state and federal regulations. These organizations and agencies have produced a wealth of information that utilities can use as they address the wide range of challenges in carrying out this mission.

2.3 Keeping North Carolina’s Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan Relevant

Infrastructure master plans are kept fresh and relevant by continuing to address current key issues, envisioning the future and its possible challenges, and exploring options for meeting those challenges. Just as any type of master plan is updated as conditions, information and priorities change over time, the Authority is committed to updating and refreshing this Statewide Infrastructure Master Plan.

However, this first version of the Master Plan focuses on addressing critical water and sewer needs across the state.
Section 3 – Selected Federal and State Water Infrastructure Funding Programs

In the United States, state and federal government funding support for water infrastructure – and infrastructure in general – has traditionally been a significant component of overall infrastructure policy. Many of these efforts reflect the importance of water infrastructure as a core government service as well as the need to upgrade facilities to modernize and to meet public health or environmental requirements. This section of the Master Plan presents a broad overview of major water infrastructure funding programs, their history, the intent of the funding, and the road ahead.

3.1 Federal Assistance for Water Infrastructure

Tax Exempt Municipal Bonds

Municipal bonds have been tax-exempt since the inception of income tax (i.e., 1913). Whether or not the original intent was an infrastructure subsidy, this exemption provides substantial savings to municipalities for infrastructure costs, including water infrastructure.¹ Tax-exempt bonds reduce the issuer’s borrowing costs because purchasers of such debt are willing to accept a lower rate of interest than that of taxable debt of comparable risk and maturity. (7)

While Congress has considered eliminating this exemption, it remains a substantial savings to municipalities on their investments in water infrastructure. For State Fiscal Year 2014-2015, about $600 million in tax exempt debt was issued in North Carolina for water and sewer activities. During the last year, it is estimated that the tax-exempt status of this debt led to bonds with an interest rate that is approximately 0.70% lower than bonds that are subject to federal tax. (8) To put this in perspective, this exempt status has the same impact as a $600,000 one-time grant on a 20-year, $10 million bond issue at a taxable rate.

¹ On April 20, 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the federal government may tax the interest paid on state and local bonds. The 7-to-1 decision in South Carolina v. Baker overturned an 1895 precedent in the Pollock v. Farmer’s Loan & Trust Co. case, which had been the foundation for the doctrine of intergovernmental tax immunity (6)
In 1972, the Clean Water Act established the first national standards for sewage treatment and significantly increased Federal funding to help communities transition their treatment works to meet the new requirements. “Essentially all communities had to construct or upgrade sewage treatment facilities to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act” (9)

**Federal Grant Program for Wastewater Infrastructure**

The federal government has long provided grants for water infrastructure with a particular emphasis on wastewater infrastructure. For example, the Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 provided grants to assist preliminary work such as design for treatment facilities.

“In the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 (P.L. 92-500, known as the Clean Water Act [CWA]), Congress established the first national standards for sewage treatment and significantly increased federal funding to help communities meet the law’s standards.” (10) It is clear that the Federal grant funding was intended to transition treatment works to the new standards. With the establishment of minimum national discharge standards for publicly-owned treatment works, federal funding was significantly increased to local government units, reflecting the significant costs of treatment plant upgrades.

North Carolina began receiving federal grants in 1972. That year, the state received $36 million (now worth over $200 million when adjusted for construction cost increases), and assistance continued through 1989, with a peak grant of $147 million in 1976 (now worth over $600 million).

**Conversion to Wastewater Loan Program**

While the Federal grant funding was intended to transition treatment works to the new standards, a shift in perspective began in the mid-1980’s.

Prior to 1987, wastewater treatment assistance was provided in the form of grants made to municipalities. “The federal share of project costs was generally 55%; state and local governments were responsible for the remaining 45%. The 1987 amendments altered this arrangement by replacing the traditional grant program with one that provides federal grants to capitalize state clean water loan programs, or state revolving funds (SRFs).” (11) The new loan program was intended to provide a long-term, self-supporting state funding program and meant that local governments were now responsible for 100% of projects costs.

In North Carolina, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) has received approximately $840 million in investment from both the federal grants to the state and the required state match. Due to the revolving nature of the investments, the CWSRF program has provided over $1.7 billion in assistance (i.e., low-interest loans) from its inception through state fiscal year 2014-15.

**Federal Program for Drinking Water Infrastructure**

In 1996, Congress established a program under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) to help communities with the financing of drinking water infrastructure, similar to the CWSRF. From the beginning of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program, Congress provided additional principal forgiveness specifically for disadvantaged communities, with up to 30% of the grant to be used for additional

Policymakers have debated the tension between assisting municipal funding needs, which remain large, and the impact of aid programs such as the Clean Water Act’s on federal spending and budget deficits. (12)
## Federal and State Funding Programs for Wastewater and Drinking Water

### 1972

**Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments (the Clean Water Act)**

Federal grants provided directly to utilities for infrastructure to meet new Clean Water Act requirements which set minimum wastewater treatment levels at secondary treatment.

### 1971 & 1977

- **North Carolina Clean Water Bond Acts**
  - Provided state grant funds for additional wastewater treatment facilities to meet new Clean Water Act requirements.

### 1987

- **Amendments to the Clean Water Act**
  - Replaced direct federal grants with a new state revolving loan program capitalized by federal grants; allowed states to establish their Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) program.

### 1987

- **North Carolina Clean Water Revolving Loan and Grant Act**
  - Created a state revolving loan program for wastewater that mirrored the CWSRF program and creating a similar revolving loan program for drinking water – this pre-dated the federal DWSRF program by nearly nine years.

### 1996

- **Safe Drinking Water Act**
  - Created revolving loan funding program for Drinking Water (DWSRF) similar to the CWSRF program.

### 1998

- **Clean Water and Natural Gas Critical Needs Bond Act**
  - $500 million for state grant funds
  - $300 million for state clean water and drinking water revolving loan programs

### 2015

- **Connect North Carolina Bond Act**
  - $100 million for state grant funds
  - $209.5 million for state clean water and drinking water revolving loan programs
subsidization for these communities. The DWSRF has received less capitalization for projects than the CWSRF. The result is less investment into the revolving portion of the DWSRF.

Federal Programs for Low-to-Moderate Income Areas and Rural Communities

Two Federal funding programs are designed to assist designated populations. More information about these programs is provided in Appendix B, “Resource Toolbox.”

Federal Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant Program

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is responsible for the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses.

The North Carolina General Assembly determines the allocation of these CDBG funds to various programs within the state. A portion of the CDBG funds are allocated exclusively to construct public water and sewer infrastructure to mitigate public and environmental health problems in low-to-moderate income areas. These funds are administered by the Division of Water Infrastructure under the Community Development Block Grant-Infrastructure (CDBG-I) program.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD) offers a Water and Wastewater Disposal Loan and Grant program which provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems and sanitary sewage disposal in rural communities and areas with populations of 10,000 or less. USDA-RD offers long-term, low-interest loans, and if funds are available, may offer grants to be combined with a loan, if necessary, to help keep user costs reasonable. Funds can be used for drinking water sourcing, treatment, storage and distribution; and sewer collection, transmission, treatment and disposal.

3.2 North Carolina Programs

In addition to the federal programs described above, North Carolina has also provided assistance to local government units in the state. The amount of state funding has varied due to budget constraints and major initiatives through various bond bills. Select aspects of state funding initiatives are presented below.

Early State Programs

The first major grant funding provided in the modern era was through the North Carolina Clean Water Bond Act of 1971, which recognized, as Congress did in the CWA, the need for additional wastewater treatment facilities. “The problem of polluted and befouled lakes, in the 1987 amendments to the Act, Congress attempted to deal with that apparent conflict by extending federal aid for wastewater treatment construction through Fiscal Year 1994, yet providing a transition towards full state and local government responsibility for financing after that date.” (12)
Major funding for state grant programs has usually occurred through intermittently issuing general obligation bonds. Grants were intended to be for temporary assistance – not to be relied upon for long-term operation of water utilities.

“Although the funds...shall be used primarily to encourage and assist local government units to meet their responsibilities, it is not intended nor is it possible for the state to assume those responsibilities.” (13, 14)

streams and estuaries in the state of North Carolina, already serious and destined to grow worse unless immediate action is taken, is a matter of vital concern to the General Assembly. A major factor in the pollution problem is the discharge of waste to the waters of this state by municipalities and other population concentrations from wastewater systems that are inadequate, antiquated and, in some instances, nonexistent.” (13) In contrast to the federal grants which only provided funds for wastewater facilities, the bond bill provided grant funds for both drinking water and wastewater needs.

With the passage of the North Carolina Clean Water Revolving Loan and Grant Act of 1987, the state created NCGS Chapter 159G for state funding programs. It included the first state revolving loan program that mirrored the federal CWSRF program created in the same year. In passing this legislation, the General Assembly found “that a critical need exists in this State to provide for a low-interest funding source for municipal water and wastewater capital facilities.” The state was foresighted in that it created a revolving fund for drinking water infrastructure that predated the federal DWSRF. Similar to the bond bills passed in the previous decade, the Loan and Grant Act of 1987 gave clear indication that the responsibility for water infrastructure lay with the local governments and the purpose of the funding was “to encourage and assist local government units to meet their responsibilities to their citizens to maintain a clean and healthful environment and an abundant supply of pure water and further to provide an adequate base for economic growth.” (15)

1998 State Grants Program
The Clean Water and Natural Gas Critical Needs Bond Act of 1998 included the largest package of funds provided by the state, even when adjusted for construction cost increases. However, not all of the funds were allocated...
for infrastructure construction; some of the funds were designated for use by the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center for planning purposes such as developing capital improvement plans.

Even though the General Assembly has indicated that the state will not assume the local government’s responsibility, its actions to provide grants may support a mindset that grants will always be available. Without any other measures in place, this may lead to entities depending on grant funds instead of generating the revenue needed to cover the full costs of providing water or wastewater services. In addition, utilities that defer rehabilitation projects while waiting for grant funding are essentially accumulating debt. As these needs become critical, it may become a more difficult problem to resolve. It is this ballooning of costs without capital planning that makes the work more difficult to address through financing alone.

3.3 Consolidation of State Water Infrastructure Programs in 2013

In 2013, the Clean Water and Drinking Water SRFs, the HUD CDBG funds for infrastructure (CDBG-I), and the state water infrastructure funding programs were consolidated and administration was placed in a newly created Division of Water Infrastructure in the Department of Environmental Quality (then known as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources).

At the same time, the General Assembly created the State Water Infrastructure Authority. With this comprehensive framework for water infrastructure funding in place, local government units in North Carolina can work with one agency, the Division of Water Infrastructure, to obtain the most suitable funding package available. The state can then utilize these collective program funds in a more strategic manner.

3.4 The Funding Road Ahead

The federal loan programs and tax exemption described above provide substantial savings to almost every system in the state and ultimately must continue to be the primary means of infrastructure funding for the vast majority of utilities in the state. Many utilities have limited access to these sources of loan capital because they lack the infrastructure management, organizational management, and/or financial management practices to support debt. For many of these utilities, strengthening management will increase their access to these programs. However, for communities under extreme economic stress, facing water and sewer bills that are higher than most other water customers across the state, grants will be needed for the foreseeable future to ensure those systems can be competitive for growth opportunities.

The Authority is strategically directing grant funds to those critical situations and is providing the resources and tools for utilities to prevent such situations from developing or continuing.

Many utilities may have limited access to loan sources because they lack the infrastructure management, organizational management, and/or financial management practices to support debt. For many of these utilities, strengthening management will increase their access to these programs.
Section 4 – Statewide Needs

Statewide, a combination of poor water infrastructure condition, the need for modernization and the lack of sufficient revenues threaten the viability of some water utilities. The North Carolina Department of State Treasurer recognizes that financially troubled water and sewer systems are a significant contributing factor for a majority of North Carolina’s troubled municipalities. (17)

Even if enough funds were available to address all of today’s capital needs, funding by itself does not safeguard long-term viability. Comprehensive management of a water utility’s infrastructure, organization, and finances is needed.

4.1 North Carolina’s Water Infrastructure

North Carolina has hundreds of water and wastewater systems owned and operated by incorporated municipalities. Compared to most states, North Carolina has a large number of independent local government systems, including municipalities, counties, sanitary districts, water and sewer authorities and others. Hundreds of separate water systems are owned by not-for-profit associations and for-profit water companies and by property managers such as homeowners’ associations and mobile home park owners. The large number of small water systems and wastewater treatment plants in North Carolina have unique challenges such as small customer bases and limited revenue.

About one-third of the community water systems operating in the state have customer bases of 100 people or less.
Of the 2,000 community water systems operating in the state, one-third of these systems have customer bases of 100 people or less. The smallest 1,800 of these systems serve about 10% of the state’s population. In contrast, the ten largest water systems serve 30% of the state’s population. Statewide, approximately 8 million North Carolinians are served by public water systems, which is about 80% of the state’s population. The remainder use individual household wells as their water supply. (18)

More than 1.4 billion gallons per day of wastewater from communities in the state are treated and then discharged into streams and rivers by nearly 300 publicly owned treatment works. About half of these plants treat less than 1 million gallons per day, and account for only 4% of the total wastewater treated. Wastewater is collected by more than 300 permitted public sewer systems and many more systems that are too small to require a permit. In addition, many homes and businesses use septic tanks to treat their wastewater.

Many of the water and wastewater treatment plants in the state were constructed either with the help of federal grant funds or with revenue from a large manufacturing customer base – both of which have diminished considerably. In growing communities, new users can help pay for new and upgraded infrastructure but in places where growth has slowed, paying for aging infrastructure is more difficult and must fall on the existing customer base.
4.2 Recognizing the Management Challenges of Public Water and Wastewater Utilities

Utilities encounter a wide range of challenges while carrying out their primary mission of protecting public health and the environment, and complying with regulations. For local governments that operate utility systems, the challenges can be increasingly complex when combined with all of the other responsibilities of local governance such as police and fire protection. The challenges can encompass some or all of the following:

- Competing needs that are often more visible in the community
- Handling unexpected critical infrastructure repairs
- Changing regulations
- Prioritizing competing projects
- Knowing infrastructure condition
- Setting appropriate rates
- Increasing customer rates and fees
- Governing boards with relatively short terms
- Communicating complex utility management issues
- Building customer support
- Evaluating partnerships and regionalization
- Losing large industrial customers
- Declining population in rural areas

The state can help utilities address these challenges through targeted support in three integrated focus areas:

- Infrastructure Management
- Organizational Management
- Financial Management
4.3 Focus Area 1 – Infrastructure Management

North Carolina’s communities and utilities have made enormous investments in water and wastewater infrastructure. Yet, in its most recent “North Carolina Report Card for Infrastructure”, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the state’s drinking water systems a grade of C+ and wastewater systems a grade of C. While these grades are not satisfactory they are higher than many competing states; however, it is critical that North Carolina maintain and enhance this advantage. The Report Card finds that:

- Water systems statewide lose about 100 million gallons per day of treated water through leaks and other means; this equals about 1,200 gallons every second
- During large rain events, wastewater flows exceed capacity at nearly half of the state’s wastewater treatment plants, resulting in systems that are under moratoria or Special Orders by Consent
- Many utilities establish rates that provide enough revenue to balance an annual budget but not enough to cover long term capital and maintenance needs. Many do not cover operating expenses. Such practices make it difficult to rehabilitate infrastructure, save for operating emergencies, finance system improvements and expansion, and engage in proactive asset management.

Most utility needs surveys and planning documents focus on physical infrastructure – the size of treatment plants, miles of pipeline, and other components needed to operate water and wastewater systems. Some include the possibility that changing regulations may require upgrades in treatment, collection system and/or distribution system infrastructure. Most loan and grant applications are made to address these physical needs. However, managing infrastructure goes beyond knowing what is needed to solve today’s problems only.

Infrastructure management involves long-term master planning which includes:

- Knowing the risk of failure of key water infrastructure components

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2 Moratoria are temporary suspensions of activity required by an authority
3 A Special Order by Consent is an agreement that a permit holder enters into with the NC Environmental Management Commission in order to achieve some stipulated actions designed to reduce, eliminate, or prevent water quality degradation
4 Risk is the potential for an unwanted outcome resulting from an event; it is expressed as its likelihood and associated consequences
• Taking proactive approaches and making informed decisions to construct, operate, maintain and renew/replace infrastructure that will minimize long-term costs

• Having funding in place so that the right investments are made at the right time

A wide variety of water and wastewater treatment technology is available, but operating expenses and staff skill levels – which are linked to the utility’s organization and financial resources – need to be taken into account when selecting the best solution. Similarly, there could be alternatives to expensive capital projects that involve partnering with a neighboring utility – which might require much more work on organizational issues than on engineering design and construction.

4.4 Focus Area 2 – Organizational Management

A utility's organization is comprised of its governing boards, owners, operations staff, customers and stakeholders. Each plays an important role in achieving the critical mission of a utility – protecting public health and the environment, and complying with local, state and federal regulations.

Organizational management involves all levels of the utility’s organization in understanding the long-term nature of water and wastewater infrastructure needs, supporting the plan to address and finance needs in a prioritized manner, and building customer and stakeholder support.

Utility Governing Boards

Governing boards make the critical decisions about operation of the water and wastewater systems that are needed to protect public health and the environment, support economic growth and development, and keep their utility system viable.

The long-term nature of infrastructure planning and management can be difficult to realize in the short 2- to 4-year terms of elected officials. Competing short-term needs can present a challenge to implementing long-term plans for infrastructure projects which are usually based on a 30- to 50-year timeframe. Often, funding is delayed for long-term needs without a long-term plan to meet those needs.

“One of the most important things I have found is for our elected officials to actually see the drinking water and wastewater treatment plants. This gives them an instant grasp of the size and complexity of the equipment that we talk about – finished drinking water pumps standing more than 16 feet tall, and emergency generators the size of a Greyhound bus. Once they saw the equipment and its condition, they understood the need to keep it in good condition and that the costs I presented were not unreasonable.”

Joe Hudson
Director of Water Resources
City of Statesville, NC
When board members change, decisions previously made to implement long-term infrastructure plans can be questioned and sometimes reversed. The demand for other government services – usually more visible and easier to understand, such as police, fire, solid waste, and economic development, continue to grow. Often it is the water and sewer utility that is underfunded, regardless of the enterprise system concept. Water and sewer infrastructure is “out-of-sight-and-out-of-mind” and an approach to “fix it when it breaks” will result in higher public costs and/or less reliable infrastructure.

A gap exists in implementing long-term infrastructure management plans, especially in terms of positioning a utility to reduce reliance on grant funding. Especially for small utilities, the gap may be related to having sufficient technical resources to conduct long-term as well as short-term planning and management. Other gaps may exist, such as the lack of tools needed to gain a better understanding of utility needs and operations, and the challenge of communicating this information to customers and stakeholders.

**Operations Staff and Succession Planning**

Trained and motivated staff anticipate problems and proactively address issues well before they result in the breakdown of infrastructure, service disruption, public health concerns and potential regulatory violations. As staff retire, a utility may lose a body of knowledge that was perhaps developed over decades. Such gaps in knowledge could significantly impact operations because remaining staff may have a limited knowledge of the condition of existing infrastructure components which can hamper planning for repair and maintenance. Utilities need continuity plans to retain decades of system knowledge when staff retire or depart because there is a high cost to starting over to fill such gaps. In addition, lack of funds for salaries to support multiple full-time staff may result in only a few employees covering a wide range of duties, hindering the development of their expertise.

**Customers and Stakeholders**

A utility’s customers and stakeholders can greatly influence infrastructure management by paying (or not paying) their utility bills, and through supporting or opposing rate increases to pay for major projects. Potential disconnects can exist between water customers’ expectations for clean water supplied in desired quantities at adequate pressure with capacity for fire-fighting, and the cost of the infrastructure, operations and maintenance that it takes to meet those expectations.

Utilities need continuity plans to retain decades of system knowledge when staff retire or depart. There is a high cost to starting over to fill such gaps.
4.5 Focus Area 3 – Financial Management

Multiple challenges can lead to financial problems in a water or sewer fund because:

- Frequently, water distribution and wastewater collection pipelines were – and still are – originally installed by developers or businesses at no cost to the community. However, repair and replacement of those pipelines falls on the utility and may not have been planned for when installed years ago.

- Local economic conditions and declining population can contribute to loss of customers and revenue.

- It can be difficult to communicate to elected officials and customers why it costs so much to produce and distribute drinking water, and to collect and process wastewater.

- The cost of providing water and sewer services will almost certainly continue to increase, requiring corresponding increases in customer rates and fees.

- It can be difficult to obtain the expertise necessary to develop sound financial policies, rate models and capital improvement plans, particularly for small systems.

- Rate or fee increases are rarely popular, especially when they are for preventive measures that will provide benefits in the future, or do not visibly improve customer service or expand capacity.

- It can be challenging to develop and enforce sound financial policies such as discontinuing service to customers who have not paid their bills or charging sufficient deposits on new accounts to protect the utility from possible loss.

Financial management involves planning to generate the revenues needed to construct, operate, maintain, and repair/replace utility infrastructure – including reserves for unexpected events – without long-term reliance on grant funds.

Building financial stability for the future requires equal focus on long-term planning (i.e., know what you have and what is needed), financing (i.e., plan for revenues to exceed expenses) and implementation (i.e., enact policy changes, increase rates/fees, and implement projects according to schedule). Overlooking or delaying any of these elements adds to the financial challenge to be faced in the years to come. Delaying infrastructure investments can result in utility service degradation, public health and environmental risks, increased service disruptions, increased expenditures for emergency repairs, and missed opportunities for economic development.

Revenue Generation

It will be necessary for some communities to modify financial structures to “catch up” in order to generate funds for repair or replacement of infrastructure projects that in the past were paid for with grant funds. Utilities may need to generate additional funds from their customers, most likely through higher rates that will cover the full cost of the services provided. (3)
Some communities may need to seek financing through private markets. Those without capital improvement plans (CIPs) may not be able to identify and quantify needs. Some may not know which areas of the system are the most vulnerable to failure because the condition of the system is unknown. This can lead to indecision over which projects should be undertaken first.

It is recognized that some utilities already have rates much higher than many other utilities in the state and face pressure not to increase rates further. Also, many smaller utilities may have difficulty competing with larger systems for staff resources/expertise. These issues can lead to the financial instability of a utility. Some may benefit by developing regional partnerships in order to gain economies of scale. The gap that may exist is in implementing a financial management plan to generate, over time, the revenues needed to operate, maintain, and repair/replace aging utility infrastructure, and to set aside reserves for unexpected events, without long-term reliance on grant funds.

4.6 Infrastructure Capital Needs and Costs

The Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina’s School of Government recently studied water and wastewater infrastructure needs in the state. Over the next 20 years, capital cost estimates for water system needs range from $10 to $15 billion, and wastewater system needs range from $7 to $11 billion – more likely at the higher end of these ranges. (20) It is important to note that these are only the capital costs – they do not include the costs of operations, maintenance and on-going renewal/replacement.

A number of other entities have also assessed and reported on water and wastewater needs in the state; they conclude that the needs are within a similar range when adjusted for construction cost increases. Sources include:

- US EPA 2012 Clean Watersheds Needs Survey (21)
- US EPA 2011 Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment (22)
- 2013 American Society of Civil Engineers Report Card for North Carolina’s Infrastructure (19)
- North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center Water 2030 (23)

In the past two-and-a-half years, the State Water Infrastructure Authority reviewed requests for over $1 billion in loan funds and over $650 million in grant funds. Funding was only available to fund $600 million in loans (60% of requests) and $97 million in grants (15% of requests). The graph below demonstrates the dollar amount of requests and awards through July 2016.
The capital cost of water and wastewater infrastructure needs in the state ranges from $17 to $26 billion over the next 20 years – more likely at the higher end of the range.

**WATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS = $10 TO $15 BILLION**

**WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS = $7 TO $11 BILLION**

These are capital costs only – the costs of operations, maintenance and on-going renewal/replacement are not included.

The amounts requested do not, alone, portray the total infrastructure needs of water and wastewater systems during this time, since applications for funding were received from only a small number of utilities, and do not include estimates for infrastructure needs that were financed from alternative sources (i.e. own revenues, other federal funding programs, bonds, and commercial loans).

**Amount Requested in Applications and Funded**

*January 2014 through July 2016*

Total requested: $1.69 billion; total funded: $697 million
Total long-term water and wastewater debt among local governments in North Carolina was $7.6 billion in 2012, with nearly 60% of this debt ($4.6 billion) held by smaller local governments. (24) In contrast, the smaller units generate approximately $300 million in water and sewer operating revenues each year. (17)

**Funding Available**

Through the federal and state loan and grant funding programs administered by the Division of Water Infrastructure, approximately $330 million is available each year.

Through the USDA-RD’s Water and Wastewater Disposal Loan and Grant program, approximately $63 million is available each year.

During the next two fiscal years, even with these public subsidies, 77% of drinking water infrastructure funding needs and 50% of wastewater infrastructure funding needs cannot be met. It is apparent that these two significant sources of funding – both federal and state – can only meet a fraction of the total capital needs. Nonetheless, revolving loan programs represent a substantial, permanent investment by state and federal governments in water infrastructure.

The North Carolina General Assembly, recognizing infrastructure needs, increased the recurring funds for the state grant programs for fiscal years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 to $10 million per year, and provided $7.4 million in new nonrecurring grant funds, bringing the state grant funding to a total of $27.4 million for fiscal years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. While the citizens of the state approved the Connect North Carolina Bond Act of 2015 to provide $100 million in grant funds plus $209.5 million in low interest loan funds, even these additional funds will not meet all the short-term capital needs.

Decades ago, federal and state grant funding was more readily available to deal with major regulatory changes. While these programs provided funding for the initial investments, they were never intended to also pay for renewal of the infrastructure.

Both policymakers and experienced water and wastewater infrastructure professionals in North Carolina agree that the days of plentiful federal or state grant funds are a thing of the past. A gap between the funding needed and the funding available through federal and state grants and loans obviously exists and local governments are taking on more and more of the share of capital expenses.

Revolving loan programs represent a substantial, permanent investment by state and federal governments in water infrastructure.
### Estimated Water and Sewer Infrastructure Needs and Publicly Subsidized Funding Availability (FY2016 and FY2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Funding</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Unmet Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water Connect NC bond loans</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drinking Water Connect NC bond grants</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grant - Infrastructure</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Drinking Water Reserve Grants</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA - Rural Development</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water State Revolving Funds</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA - Rural Development (6%)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Water State Revolving Funds</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wastewater Connect NC bond loans</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Wastewater Connect NC bond grants</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Development Block Grant - Infrastructure</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Wastewater Reserve grants</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- Wastewater remaining needs after applying available funding (50%)
- Clean Water State Revolving Funds (27%)
- Wastewater Connect NC bond loans (10%)
- USDA - Rural Development (6%)
- Wastewater Connect NC bond grants (4%)
- Community Development Block Grant - Infrastructure (2%)
- State Wastewater Reserve grants (1%)

DRINKING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

- Drinking water remaining needs after applying available funding (77%)
- Drinking Water Connect NC bond loans (7%)
- Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (6%)
- USDA - Rural Development (4%)
- Drinking Water Connect NC bond grants (3%)
- Community Development Block Grant - Infrastructure (2%)
- State Drinking Water Reserve Grants (1%)
Section 5 – Achieving the Vision: Infrastructure Management

Managing infrastructure goes beyond knowing what is needed to solve only today’s problems. Long-term infrastructure master planning is needed to minimize long-term costs and ensure the appropriate investments are made at the right time. Infrastructure management also encompasses best and emerging practices in utility planning and management.

Infrastructure management involves long-term master planning which includes:

- Knowing the risk\(^5\) of failure of key water infrastructure components
- Taking proactive approaches and making informed decisions to construct, operate, maintain and renew/replace infrastructure that will minimize long-term costs
- Having funding in place so that the right investments are made at the right time

Infrastructure management supports viability by enabling the utility to provide reliable water services now and in the future.

\(^5\) Risk is the potential for an unwanted outcome resulting from an event; it is expressed as its likelihood and associated consequences.

Vision for Infrastructure Management

Utilities take proactive approaches to infrastructure master planning and asset management planning, ensuring that the plans are in place and implemented, which enables the right investments to be made in the right projects at the right time.

Infrastructure management supports viability by enabling the utility to provide reliable water services now and in the future.
Infrastructure management is best accomplished when the utilities and local decision-makers know all their assets, and have a plan for when to upgrade, replace or rehabilitate the assets to ensure that service levels are being met now and into the future. This concept is often referred to as “Asset Management Planning” in the water infrastructure sector.

### 5.1 Asset Management

Asset management is an integrated set of processes designed to minimize the life-cycle costs of infrastructure assets, at an acceptable level of risk, while continuously delivering established levels of service. (25)

Typical steps in asset management include:

- Understand the condition of and costs associated with critical infrastructure assets
- Plan infrastructure investments to support system reliability, community priorities, and anticipated growth
- Build in flexibility for improvements in technology and materials
- Maintain and improve the condition of all assets over the long-term considering life-cycle cost and acceptable levels of risk
- Develop capital improvement plans that establish the timing of capital needs
- Implement the capital improvement plans

Current trends in asset management include the consideration of risk and consequences of infrastructure investment decisions. The concepts of reliability, redundancy, and resiliency are emerging topics.

It is recognized that some utilities may not be able to immediately engage staff in inventorying system components, assessing their condition, and then preparing cost estimates and a schedule for the needed work. An entity may want to consider contracting services, either in the short-or long-term, for any of these tasks while internal staff receive needed education and training.

### 5.2 Emerging Best Practices

Infrastructure management also encompasses best practices related to technology that can provide potential gains in system efficiency by capturing “lost” resources, reducing energy usage, and increasing revenue.

**Accounting for Water Loss**

All water distribution systems, regardless of piping material, experience leaks. Typically, older, more brittle materials will experience more leaks due to wearing at fittings, potential damage from years of service tapping and construction-related issues. Some small systems lose as much as 20% of their total treated water. Systems in North Carolina lose an average of 11% of treated water annually. (19)

Utilities that apply asset management principles report that the greatest benefits are:

- Better ability to explain and defend infrastructure investment needs to governing bodies
- Better focus on priorities
- Better understanding of risk and consequences of investment decisions
- Increased ability to balance between capital and operating expenditures (26)
Many utilities are surprised at the amount of money they do not collect and the significant impact it has on their finances. “The more money/water we find, the less we may need to borrow for capital projects.” (27)

In addition to leaks, utilities sometimes treat and deliver water to customers but do not charge for the water for various reasons. The combination of these real and apparent water losses are termed “non-revenue water”, indicating the amount of water that is treated and delivered but generates no revenue and results in wasted time, money and resource water.

The American Water Works Association’s Water Loss Control Committee has been helping utilities manage non-revenue water for many years. Water loss control programs can be helpful to utilities, regardless of whether they are water-rich or water-challenged. (28)

**Smart Technology**
Depending on the number of customers, some utilities may benefit from the use of smart water meter technology which:

- Allows utilities to better detect leaks, respond more quickly, and reduce the amount of non-revenue water
- Reduces customer service calls related to meter readings and high bills
- Accurately records consumption and increases billable revenues
- Provides useful information for forecasting, facilities planning and rate setting

Using smart water meter technologies, utilities can provide real-time data to assist customers in tailoring their daily water consumption, creating the potential to reduce their water utility bill and contribute to water resource conservation.

“...The town of Spindale reviewed the ‘Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities’ while developing its wastewater system Asset Management Plan in 2012, especially those related to financial health. One of the outcomes was the need for a major rate increase to fund operation and maintenance as well as improve system assets. A four-year rate increase structure was put in place even though it was initially difficult to undertake.

Since the Asset Management Plan has been adopted the town has implemented all rate increases and replaced thousands of feet of old sewer lines. The wastewater treatment plant will soon be rehabilitated, making it possible to bring on a new bulk customer, significantly increasing the town’s revenue stream. The Asset Management Plan greatly facilitated changing the course of our wastewater system from financial difficulty to financial stability...

Mickey Bland
Mayor
Town of Spindale
Utilities of the Future

While public health and environmental protection will always be the central concern, industry leaders realize that the challenges and opportunities faced by wastewater agencies are unprecedented and that some paradigms that have been in place for decades are changing to meet these challenges. The most progressive of today’s clean water agencies are defining the Utilities of the Future (UOTF) and advancing a new business approach.

The UOTF recognize that it manages valuable resources, delivers public health and environment benefits and is a partner in local economic development and the watershed community. The Water Environment Federation (WEF), along with partner organizations, recently created the Utility of the Future Today Recognition Program. This program supports the progress and performance of forward-looking wastewater utilities as well as the widespread adoption of an innovative business model. (29)

WEF’s “Water Resources Utility of the Future: A Blueprint for Action” ties together diverse resource recovery activities, many of which likely could never have been foreseen 40 years ago when the Clean Water Act was enacted. Such practices include:

- Extracting and finding uses for nutrients and other constituents
- Capturing waste heat and energy in biosolids and liquid streams
- Generating renewable energy using its land and other assets

The Blueprint highlights the type of collaboration needed to ensure a sustainable future that minimizes waste, maximizes resources, protects the ratepayer, improves the community, and embraces innovation in a unique and unprecedented manner. (30)

5.3 The Role of the State in Achieving the Vision for Infrastructure Management

The Authority recognizes that North Carolina should provide incentives to encourage utilities to become more proactive in the management of its systems, and that some utilities may require assistance to implement or improve infrastructure management. The state currently supports utilities as they move toward viability through infrastructure management by:
Providing grants from the State Reserve Program for Asset Inventory and Assessment (AIA)

The purpose of these grants is to assist a utility with the first steps towards an asset management plan. Funds are provided for a utility to:

- Identify the water and wastewater infrastructure components that comprise its water and wastewater systems
- Create an asset inventory
- Determine the condition of these assets
- Prioritize the most critical infrastructure needs
- Develop a capital improvement plan (CIP) to fund the projects

AIA grants support a utility as it examines the purpose and value of its infrastructure, and the processes it uses to determine when and how to spend infrastructure dollars. Outcomes include identifying the most critical projects and the ability to demonstrate and explain why they are critical, which will help gain support from governing bodies, customers and stakeholders to make the needed investments.

Providing grant funds from the State Reserve Program for Merger/Regionalization Feasibility analyses

The purpose of these grants is to investigate voluntary partnerships that can result in improvements to physical infrastructure.

Providing subsidized loan and grant funds

The Division of Water Infrastructure administers five funding programs. The Authority determines the projects to be funded. Limited grant funds are used for projects that will move a utility toward permanent infrastructure management solutions. Priority rating systems recognize a utility’s efforts toward infrastructure management. Loan funds can be used for water meter technology and for projects that provide for energy recovery and water reuse.

Providing a wide range of resources in Appendix B – “Resource Toolbox” that are almost all related to infrastructure management
Section 6 – Achieving the Vision: Organizational Management

The long-term viability of any critical infrastructure system, no matter how resilient and sustainable it is, will ultimately rely on the human and organizational stewardship the infrastructure system receives. (31)

A utility’s organizational management, directly affects the quality of its physical infrastructure. Decisions about utility rates and fees directly impact the amount of infrastructure funds available. The decisions made about operations staff training and development impact the operation of its infrastructure components and system as a whole. Its decisions about communicating with customers and stakeholders affect utility service expectations and support for its rates and fees. Organizational management is a critical component of the state’s utilities moving toward and maintaining viability.

Organizational management involves all levels of the utility’s organization in understanding the long-term nature of water and wastewater infrastructure needs, supporting a plan to address and finance the needs in a prioritized manner, and building customer and stakeholder support.

Organizational management supports viability by creating a culture of organizational excellence that enables the utility to operate as a long-term, self-sufficient business enterprise.

6.1 Utility Governing Boards

Governing boards (elected officials, appointed officials and owners) need a solid understanding of the long-term nature of the water and wastewater infrastructure for which they are responsible, in order to support their staff in implementing their strategic plans for the future. They can then make proactive decisions that move the system toward or maintain viability, avoiding short-term actions that may not be best for the long-term health of their customers or the environment.
Governing boards make key decisions that impact their customers and stakeholders, their staff and the level of funding directed to the utility system. They may first need to assess their internal level of infrastructure understanding by considering these questions:

- What are the basics of infrastructure: what is it, what does it do and how does it directly impact public health, public safety, the environment, economic development, and other aspects of quality of life?
- What level of attention, operation, and maintenance does infrastructure take to function effectively and in compliance with regulations?
- What is the finite life of infrastructure components and when, even with the best maintenance, will they eventually need to be renewed, replaced or upgraded?
- What is the real possibility of potential infrastructure failures and how would they impact public health, safety and the environment?
- What is the current physical condition of the system’s assets and what is needed to maintain or improve the assets?
- What plans are in place to solve the most critical problems first?
- What long-term financial plans are in place to cover the future costs of infrastructure renewal or replacement?
- Is our system large enough to operate efficiently or do we need to look for opportunities to share resources or regionalize for maximize efficiency?
- What are the general duties of our utility staff and are we supporting them in their work?
- Do we have or can we obtain the level of expertise needed to effectively manage our utility system?

To answer these questions, a board should seek information and training about water and wastewater utility management. Next steps should include deciding what viability means specifically for their utility, and enabling and supporting their staff to implement infrastructure management activities to achieve the goals.

6.2 Operations Staff
To achieve viability, a utility's staff must be adequately trained to accomplish all of their duties, or be able to partner with organizations that can provide those services when necessary. Ideally, staff are engaged and adaptive – anticipating problems and proactively addressing issues well before they result in infrastructure failure, public health concerns or regulatory violations.
Vision for Utility Governing Boards

- Understand the long-term nature of infrastructure planning and management and the long-term needs of its system
- Set standards and expectations for system operations
- Make proactive decisions to address system needs in a prioritized manner
- Put in place financial plans to fund operation and maintenance, renewal/replacement and capital improvement plans according to schedule
- Understand local, state, and federal funding sources and availability

An environment that supports continual learning, improvement, and innovation and that emphasizes opportunities for professional and leadership development is needed. Particularly important is continuity planning to ensure that employee institutional knowledge is retained, transferred, and improved upon over time.

Actions could include:

- Having programs in place to retain and improve institutional knowledge
- Ensuring that staff members are cross-trained and can assist each other or fill-in by performing each other’s duties
- Scheduling required staff training events that are short, focused and part of the regular work day
- Establishing and clearly communicating staff performance requirements
- Creating incentive programs to retain staff, encourage training, or encourage staff to take on a wider variety of skills
- Training or assisting staff from neighboring utilities

Vision for Operations Staff

- Have adequate knowledge and resources to operate and maintain the systems according to regulatory and governing board standards and expectations including asset management planning
- Build strong relationships and constant communication with customers, governing boards, regulators and funders
- Pursue professional/skill development and career enhancement
- Assist staff from neighboring utilities
An option for any utility might be to share management, staff and/or contracted resources with neighboring utilities, thereby providing several utilities with access to resources that perhaps none could support alone. Some utilities may need to consider contracting services, either in the short-or long-term, for overall system operations, as internal staff receives education and training.

6.3 Customers and Stakeholders

Customers and stakeholders drive the service needs of the utility. When customers and stakeholders understand water and wastewater infrastructure enough to have realistic expectations for both water and sewer service levels, and the associated cost of those services, they more readily support utility plans, policies, rates and fees.

To achieve viability, a utility must provide accurate and transparent information to its customers, stakeholders and regulatory agencies, and actively seek support and feedback. Governing boards and staff must stay informed about what their customers expect in terms of service, water quality, rates and other concerns they may have. The utility works with its customers to build support for “what needs to be done” along with “how much we need to spend” to provide the expected level of service. (32) Ultimately, customers should be satisfied with the services that the system provides and understand and support the associated costs of that service.

Actions could include:

- Holding outreach and education events such as meetings at the treatment facility to explain the basics of utility operations
- Using these events as opportunities to gain an understanding of community and customer needs and interests related to utility operations
- Communicating information about rate requirements and system needs so that there is a better understanding within the community of why rate decisions and changes are made, by:
  - Using space in bills to promote the value of clean and safe water, and provide other important information to customers
  - Engaging customers through multiple channels to make information more accessible. Utility websites are prime locations to provide more details through fact sheets, videos, and FAQs.
- Sharing information with local media sources since they can be a key asset in reaching customers through digital media and editorial opportunities

Some governing boards may lack the tools needed to explain utility needs and operations to customers and stakeholders, and some may not have the resources to start or maintain the type of communication needed. Utilities that have these capabilities may be able to share staff, designed materials, and communications strategies with those that do not have these resources.

Vision for Customers and Stakeholders

- Have general understanding of water infrastructure and role of the utility provider
- Have realistic expectations for service and the cost of providing that service
- Pay utility bills on time
- Support the utility’s efforts to generate the revenue needed to fund operation and maintenance, reinvestment and reserves
6.4 The Role of the State in Achieving the Vision for Organizational Management

The Authority recognizes that North Carolina should provide an incentive to encourage utilities to become more proactive in the management of its systems, and some utilities may require assistance to implement or improve organizational management. Governing boards need to gain a better understanding of the ability of its utility to operate as a self-sufficient business enterprise for the long-term. Some boards may need information and training about water and wastewater utility management or may require assistance in organizational management.

The state currently supports utilities as they move toward viability through organizational management by:

**Providing grant funds from the State Reserve Program for Merger/Regionalization Feasibility analyses**

Some governing boards may recognize that the efforts or costs needed to achieve or maintain self-sufficiency is beyond what they can accomplish alone, and that an alternative path to viability might provide a solution. The state’s grant program for merger/regionalization feasibility (MRF) analyses enables entities to investigate the feasibility of voluntary merger/regionalization options. The purpose of an MRF grant is to provide funds for utilities to define and evaluate potential options for partnering with one or more utilities. While a range of options exist, in general:

- A merger involves the combination of two or more water and/or sewer systems into one system with common ownership, management, and operation, and
- Regionalization involves the physical interconnection with another system for the purposes of regional wastewater treatment or regional water supply.

Identifying and evaluating the details of various options can be a major project for some utilities. Frequently, smaller utilities that may benefit the most from merger or regionalization may not have funds for a comprehensive feasibility study, and a neighboring larger utility may see no benefit to its customers of such a study. The new grants provide a means to bridge this gap.

The Authority recognizes that while utility partnerships and regionalization can sometimes save money, utility coordination will take more time and may be difficult if there have been problems between local governments on other issues. In addition, some barriers to merger or regionalization may exist including large upfront costs, physical geography, the perception that there may be loss of local control, and the condition and/
Some of the potential barriers associated with mergers/ regionalization are addressed in publications by the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (33) and the UNC-EFC (34) or size of the possible partner systems. These grants will enable utilities to examine such issues objectively and in depth, determining whether merger or regionalization can increase the viability of one or more partners without any negative impact to the other potential partners.

Providing extensive resources for utility and organizational management in Appendix B – “Resource Toolbox”

The Resource Toolbox provides information gathered from dozens of resources, many of which include case studies and step-by-step actions that can serve as guides to help governing boards assess their utility’s situation and circumstances. The Toolbox also provides information about and links to the many agencies and organizations that operate in North Carolina and important information that they have produced in support of utilities.
Section 7 – Achieving the Vision: Financial Management

Financial management practices and capabilities are the key to assuring that utilities can fund, with decreasing reliance on grant money, the infrastructure needed to protect public health and the environment, comply with regulations, and deliver the expected level of water and wastewater service to their customers.

To function well over the long term, utilities must establish and maintain an environment in which the rates and fees that it charges are adequate to pay bills, put funds away for both future capital expenditures and unanticipated issues, and maintain, repair, and replace equipment and infrastructure before it reaches the end of its useful life. These revenues are essential to delivering safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater services that protect the environment.

Financial management involves planning to generate the revenues needed to construct, operate, maintain, and repair/replace utility infrastructure, including reserves for unexpected events, without long-term reliance on grant funds.

Financial management supports viability by enabling the utility to operate as a long-term, self-sufficient business enterprise.

In evaluating their utility’s financial environment and structure, governing boards may want to consider:

- Conducting a study on rate and fee requirements using an independent party, to support discussions about revenue requirements and to establish predictable rates and fees
- Reviewing budgets at least twice every year and discuss upcoming prioritized projects to plan for the allocation of funds
- Developing a CIP looking at needs for at least the next 10 years and update the CIP annually
- Ensuring financial accounting policies and procedures follow generally accepted accounting principles
- Making sure there is appropriate separation of duties between staff responsible for billing, invoicing, receipts, and other accounting areas
- Improving practices for reducing the number of outstanding bills
A potential option for smaller utilities, especially to ensure the separation of financial-related duties, could include sharing management and staff resources with nearby towns.

7.1 Revenue Generation
Historically, many water and wastewater utilities were able to expect steady growth with relatively stable costs and revenues. (35) As population shifts away from rural areas and businesses close or use less water, the basic assumptions of the traditional approach to financial management are no longer valid.

This comes at a time when capital needs are determined as much by renewal and replacement projects as by new infrastructure to serve growth and expansion. Independent of these changes, utilities must protect public health and the environment, and comply with regulations. As a result, many utilities have seen costs rise at the same time that its rates and fees have resulted in smaller amounts of money for the entity’s utility fund.

To address this shortfall, the American Water Works Association (AWWA) suggests that additional revenue funds need to come from local utility customers, most likely through higher rates. Utilities must ask their customers to invest more and be able to explain how the investment will provide actual benefits to the community. (3) Investments should be prioritized through implementing best practices that include asset management, risk analysis, prioritization of projects, and the development and implementation of CIPs.

Some utilities may find that they cannot increase their rates and/or fees enough to become financially viable in the long-term. This is just one potential reason they may benefit by developing regional partnerships to gain economies of scale.

7.2 Local Government Finance Requirements
In North Carolina, the State and Local Finance Division and the Local Government Commission (LGC) of the Department of State Treasurer State must approve almost all water and wastewater debt. Consequently, the LGC has oversight of local government units’ overall financial status, including municipal water and sewer utility operations.

Vision for Financial Management
Utilities have in place financial management plans that generate the revenues needed to operate, maintain, and repair/replace utility infrastructure – including reserves for unexpected events – without long-term reliance on grant funds. Financial management supports viability by enabling the utility to operate as a long-term, self-sufficient business enterprise.
The LGC monitors and analyzes the fiscal and accounting practices of local governments, with the goal of helping communities remain financially strong. Often, issues within a community’s water and sewer utility fund can contribute to overall financial difficulties of a community. The LGC can assist local governments in determining the effectiveness of their financial management, and in determining the feasibility of a project, the size of the financing, and potential forms of financing.

Compliance with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) (36) standards is required by Chapter 159 of the North Carolina General Statutes – Local Government Finance. These statutes are designed to ensure transparency in local government finance. For enterprise systems, it requires that:

- A water and sewer utility fund is kept separate from the general fund
- The utility fund has sufficient resources to meet all of its operating expenses, capital outlay, and debt service obligations
- The utility report annually to the LGC

GASB Statement No. 34, “Basic Financial Statements – and Management’s Discussion and Analysis – for State and Local Governments” established new financial reporting requirements for state and local governments throughout the U.S. These financial statements are designed to help users:

- Assess the finances of the government in its entirety, including the year’s operating results
- Determine whether the government’s overall financial position improved or deteriorated
- Evaluate whether the government’s current-year revenues were sufficient to pay for current-year services
- See the cost of providing services to its citizenry
- See how the government finances its programs – through user fees and other program revenues versus general tax revenues
- Understand the extent to which the government has invested in capital assets, including water and wastewater infrastructure assets

More information about GASB and North Carolina’s General Statutes related to Local Government Finance is presented in Appendix C.

“I think a lot of people are looking for these top-level, silver bullet solutions from the top down – thinking the federal government is going to lead, and they’re going to prescribe these huge stimulus-style packages to solve the challenge. I think if anything has become evident over the past few years...[it] is that a lot of states and localities realize they’re on their own. The cavalry, so to speak, isn’t coming to save the day.” (1)

The LGC’s oversight has resulted in widespread recognition that North Carolina’s local government debt capacity and reliability are among the best in the country.
7.3 The Role of the State in Achieving the Vision for Financial Management

The Authority recognizes that North Carolina should support governing boards in active financial planning that is essential for a utility to operate as a self-sufficient business enterprise for the long-term. Some boards may need information and training about water and wastewater utility management or may require assistance in financial management.

The state currently supports utilities as they move toward viability through financial management by:

**Services of the State and Local Finance Division and the Local Government Commission of the Department of State Treasurer**

The Pew Charitable Trusts recognizes the LGC as a “local government lifeline” (37, 38). The LGC monitors the fiscal health of local governments, including a community’s water and sewer utility fund. The LGC can assist local governments in determining the effectiveness of their financial management and offers broad assistance in financial administration to local governments.

The LGC, the Authority, and the Division of Water Infrastructure recognize that a community’s issues in funding its water and wastewater utility can be related to its overall financial management issues. Since the concerns of these state agencies are so closely linked, the LGC and the Division are working together to find ways to jointly support local governments as they work to resolve financial management problems that impact the viability of their water and wastewater utility.

A unit of local government that the LGC has assisted had a history of water and sewer finance issues as well as system operational issues. The LGC consulted with the town and determined that it needed a regional solution and also needed to secure outside accounting help. Through the local Council of Government (COG), the town had access to a water and sewer system consultant who is assisting with implementing a large capital project that moves it to a regional approach – the town will close its wastewater treatment plant and send wastewater to a larger town for treatment. While grants funded part of the project, the town will require USDA loan funds to complete the project. LGC staff reviewed the town’s financial situation and then addressed its board to make it aware of operational changes necessary for debt approval. The town needed a rate structure change that included a rate increase; it was approved by the town board. The town has also secured outside accounting assistance to put its books in order and to replace its old hardware and software systems.

The influence and oversight of the Local Government Commission is a major reason why North Carolina local government issuers have been able to weather this recession…North Carolina’s oversight model is one of the strongest of any state.

**Other states have formal and informal tools to assist local governments, but none has the same reach as North Carolina’s Commission, which imposes budget controls and advises troubled communities (37, 38)**
The University of North Carolina’s School of Government

The University of North Carolina’s School of Government provides North Carolina’s local and state government officials with nonpartisan legal, public administration, management, and financial expertise. It is the largest university-based local government training, advisory, and research organization in the United States.

Each year, the school offers hundreds of courses, webinars, and specialized conferences for over 12,000 North Carolina public officials. Attendees include city and county managers, county commissioners, city council members, finance officers, planning officials, among many others.

The School’s faculty members respond to thousands of phone calls and e-mail messages each year on routine and urgent matters and also engage in long-term advising projects for local governing boards, legislative committees, and statewide commissions. In addition, faculty members annually publish numerous books, manuals, reports, articles, bulletins, and other print and online content related to state and local government.

The School created a blog – Coates’ Canons: NC Local Government Law – to disseminate information about a broad range of legal issues affecting local governments and other public agencies in North Carolina. Although the focus of the blog is on legal issues, it serves as a valuable source of information for a variety of public officials including elected officials, managers, department heads, and attorneys as well as for individuals who interact with local governments and other public agencies. The blog is a joint effort of local government law faculty members at the School of Government.

The Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina’s School of Government

The state of North Carolina is fortunate to have the Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina’s School of Government (UNC-EFC) as a resource. The UNC-EFC is dedicated to building the capacity of governments and other organizations to provide environmental protection and public services, including water and wastewater services, in financially sustainable ways. Its vision is to assist communities in creating healthy environments that are supported by long-term sustainable financing.

One of the core services that the UNC-EFC has provided to utilities over the last 10 years is access to a comprehensive financial benchmarking and dashboard resource. This resource compiles information from a wide variety of sources and presents it in an accessible manner to utility managers. It allows managers and its governing boards to quickly gauge their financial health and to assess the impact of rate adjustments.
In addition to their benchmarking services, the UNC-EFC has developed a wide variety of capital planning and rate setting tools designed to help utilities assess and implement improved financial practices. Tools include spreadsheet-based capital planning models and rate-setting tools, as well as affordability assessment tools.

Providing extensive resources for utility financial management in Appendix B – “Resource Toolbox”

The Resource Toolbox provides information about and links to many agencies and organizations that are directly involved in water and wastewater utility financial management.

Resources that focus on smaller and rural systems include the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program (SERCAP) and the North Carolina Rural Water Association (NCRWA).
Section 8 – Assessing a Utility’s Financial Capacity

The Authority is charged with determining ways to better facilitate the dissemination of loan and grant funds and to meet the project needs of rural, economically distressed local governments. To meet these goals, the Authority recommended statutory changes to the General Assembly to allow the use of new affordability criteria.

Using affordability criteria is one of the fundamental changes made to the state’s approach to increase access to low-cost or no-cost capital by economically distressed utilities. The criteria recognize not only the economic situation of a utility but also its efforts towards managing its water utility as a financially viable business.

8.1 Background

Between 2013 and 2015, state grant funds could be awarded to a local government unit only if the entity was located in a Tier 1 or Tier 2 county and if the entity met the high-unit-cost (HUC) threshold rather than the county tier and HUC threshold. Despite these criteria, the Authority recognized that funds from state grant programs might not be reaching the most economically distressed communities. (4, 5)

In 2015, the General Assembly modified NCGS 159G to include the new affordability criteria. Using the new criteria will help target the limited state loan and grant funds to some of the most distressed communities in the state – those that demonstrate the most need and can least afford a critical project.

However, the goal of providing funding remains unchanged – that the scarce funds available are used most effectively to transition utilities to permanent local funding solutions and eventually the ability to access non-subsidized forms of capital.

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6 The N.C. Department of Commerce annually ranks the state’s 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a tier designation. Counties designated as Tier 1 and 2 are the most distressed.

7 A high unit cost project was defined as one resulting in an estimated average household user fee for water and sewer service in excess of the high-unit-cost (HUC) threshold, where the HUC threshold was defined as 1.5% of the median household income in an area that receives both water and sewer service.
8.2 Affordability Criteria
The affordability criteria recognize not only the economic situation of a community, but also the community’s efforts towards managing its water utility as a financially viable business.

In general, the criteria prioritize those utility providers and local governments that:

- Have smaller populations as determined by the number of residential connections
- Are comparatively worse than the state benchmarks for the five key economic indicators shown in the table:
  - Population change
  - Poverty rate
  - Median household income (MHI)
  - Unemployment
  - Property valuation per capita
- Have higher current monthly utility rates
- Have higher debt service per connection

The financial capacity of a utility to fund a project without grant funds is also essential in determining the need for a grant. The combination of monthly bills and debt service per connection reflects a utility’s capacity for financing a proposed project along with past expenditures. For example, if a utility already has high rates, there may be limited ability to raise more revenue with future rate increases.

8.3 Outcomes
Using affordability criteria will better distinguish between entities that can least afford a critical project and those that can afford to incur some amount of debt or obligate some amount of funding toward a project.

More grant funding, as a percentage of the project cost, will be provided for utilities that are worse than the key state benchmarks, have the least affordable monthly bills and the most debt per connection.

Entities that are comparatively better than the state benchmarks, have relatively lower monthly bills and/or lower debt service per connection will be eligible for grant funds for a smaller percentage of the project cost.

Project costs that cannot be funded with grants are eligible for state loans and federal loans.

This restructured approach stretches the limited state loan and grant funding resources to benefit more utilities by combining loans and grants based on affordability while acknowledging that, in some cases, full grant funding of projects is still the most appropriate approach.
Section 9 – Troubled System Protocol

One of the Authority’s specific tasks is to assess the need for a “troubled system” protocol. However, it is recognized that most utilities throughout the state are probably somewhere within a range between “viable” and “troubled.”

The resources and tools in this Master Plan are designed to support utilities as they move toward the “viable” end of the range. As utilities do so, they may be better able to minimize or prevent situations that may move them toward the “troubled” end of the range. The grants available for voluntary merger/regionalization feasibility analyses might be an appropriate first step to investigate potential solutions for troubled units.

The LGC staff uses multiple benchmarks to evaluate the financial condition of a utility. The data for comparison to the established benchmarks is reported in the audited financial statements of each unit of local government that operates a water and/or wastewater system. In its reviews of the audited financial statements, staff also looks for indications of poor operational and internal controls over the utility system and often the entire governmental entity. Any combination of poor performance against set financial standards and poor controls can qualify a system as “troubled”.

The LGC and the Division of Water Infrastructure recognize that a community’s issues in funding its water and wastewater utility can be related to its overall financial management issues. The agencies have found that a system more on the “troubled” end of the range may lack sufficient organizational and/or financial management tools as evidenced by:

- Internal control issues, lack of timely audited financials, accounting and reporting issues, and low cash balances
- Issues related to water and wastewater system billing/revenue generation policies, utility rates, condition assessments, lack of enforcement of collection and cut-off policies, and affordability considerations

Some of the general characteristics of potentially “troubled” systems include:

- Populations of 2,000 people or less
- Four months or less of cash on hand in the utility and/or general fund
- Aging and/or inadequately maintained infrastructure

While an overarching protocol that could be applied to any system would be ideal, the Authority recognizes that the potential to be “troubled” may result from a number of different circumstances that may be unique to each community and require approaches tailored to an individual community’s needs. The Authority and the Local Government Commission are working together to develop a range of scalable practices and strategies to assist systems that are on the more “troubled” end of the range.
Section 10 – Moving Forward

The first version of the Statewide Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Master Plan is focused on addressing critical water and wastewater needs across the state through moving toward viability in three integrated focus areas:

- Infrastructure Management
- Organizational Management
- Financial Management

Together, the state, local governments and utility providers will move forward in achieving viability in the three focus areas through:

- Prioritized funding that is linked to utility viability
- Partnerships to help leverage existing resources and programs to provide more cohesive support to utility providers
- Resources and tools that support proactive utility management

**PRIORITYED FUNDING**

Funding is linked to utility viability and is targeted to specific needs that have been prioritized through a structured process of infrastructure, organizational and financial management and that create long-term solutions.

**RESOURCES AND TOOLS**

Utilities take advantage of available resources and tools to move toward proactive management of their systems.

**PARTNERSHIPS**

Strong partnerships among state agencies such as the Local Government Commission and Division of Water Infrastructure and with key organizations lead to creative solutions for utility viability.

**The Road to Viable Water & Wastewater Utility Systems**

Utilities take advantage of available resources and tools to move toward proactive management of their systems.
As with any master planning process, the master plan will be updated and refreshed as conditions, information and priorities change over time. The updated plan will address current key issues, how the future might look, the challenges that it might hold, and options to meet those challenges.

10.1 Near Term Activities

In the near term, the Authority’s next steps include:

- Monitoring and evaluating recent changes in funding programs
- Strengthening partnerships in planning, training and communications
- Developing a troubled system protocol

Monitoring and Evaluating Recent Funding Program Changes

Beginning with the 2013 creation of the Authority, and including the 2016 Connect NC bond funding, there has already been a great deal of change in the state’s approach to assistance with water and wastewater infrastructure funding. A key activity in the near term will be managing these changes and evaluating their impacts to ensure that funding is linked to supporting a utility’s viability. Future recommendations for modifications to the funding programs may be a result.

The Authority recognizes that the new approach of evaluating affordability criteria and making combination grant/loan awards based on these criteria will need to be closely monitored and evaluated, with the help of stakeholders and those receiving the awards. As with any major program changes, this will likely require some modification as experience is gained with the new approach. The Authority will continue its work to maximize the effective use of the state’s water infrastructure investments and ensure that the state realizes the most benefit over the long term through the best use of both state and federal funds.

Strengthening Partnerships

This master plan identifies multiple opportunities for strengthening partnerships among state agencies such as the LGC and the Division of Water Infrastructure. Partnerships with organizations such as the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) and North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) can be enhanced to leverage and expand on many existing resources and programs.

The Division, NCLM and NCACC already work collaboratively, and also work separately as partners with the LGC. These state and local government agencies will begin to work closely together to provide more cohesive support for local government utility providers.

Partnerships such as these will lead to creative solutions for utility viability and will enhance the long-term success of the state’s funding programs.
The Division also works closely with the Division of Water Resources Public Water Supply Section on many issues related to community water systems.

Division staff are and will continue to promote discussions on planning, training and communications programs with these and other partners that may include:

- University of North Carolina School of Government and the School’s Environmental Finance Center
- North Carolina Rural Water Association
- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
- North Carolina Waterworks Association and Water Environment Association
- North Carolina Councils of Government
- University of North Carolina System
- North Carolina Community College System
- North Carolina Department of Commerce

Topics and issues that may be addressed with these partners include:

- Affordability
- Water and sewer rates
- Infrastructure management training
- Asset management training
- Financial management training
- Technical issues training
- Building customer and stakeholder support
- Building the capacity of utility governing boards
- Communicating complex utility management issues to governing boards, customers and stakeholders
Developing a troubled system protocol
In partnership with the Local Government Commission and other agencies and organizations, the Authority will work to develop a troubled system protocol as described in Section 9. The goal of a troubled system protocol is to seek permanent solutions to water infrastructure issues. While an overarching protocol that could be applied to any system would be ideal, the Authority recognizes that the potential to be “troubled” may result from a number of different circumstances that may be unique to each community and require approaches tailored to an individual community’s needs.

10.2 Longer-Term Issues
There are a number of longer-term issues that the Authority and Division staff will continue to discuss, research and monitor for inclusion in future master planning efforts. These issues overlap the three management focus areas and may include:

- Resources available for communication to help engage and increase understanding of and support for infrastructure funding by:
  - Utility governing boards
  - Utility staff
  - Customers and stakeholders
- Regional coordination
  - The potential role of metropolitan and rural planning organizations
  - Interstate water sharing
  - Basinwide water resources management issues such as interbasin transfers and water quality
- Management of reclaimed water, grey water, stormwater, and other types of water
- Contract operations, public-private partnerships and/or shared management opportunities
- Improvement of procurement policies including laws, regulatory frameworks, communications, and universal practices
- Development of project plans, specifications and construction monitoring practices to ensure that the finished project meets its specific objectives, such as reducing inflow/infiltration, reducing water loss, and providing levels of treatment required to meet permit limits
Appendices
The State Water Infrastructure Authority was created within the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (then the Department of Environment and Natural Resources) by Session Law 2013-360.

### A.1. Current State Water Infrastructure Authority Positions and Members

The table below provides the statutory requirements for each position on the Authority as well as current member information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cite $§$ 159G-70.(b)</th>
<th>Statutory Position Requirements</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Appointing Authority</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Director of Division of Water Infrastructure* / Serves as Authority Chair</td>
<td>Kim Colson – Chair</td>
<td>Director, Division of Water Infrastructure</td>
<td>Ex-Officio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Secretary of Commerce* / Familiar with Water or Other Infrastructure Improvements for the Purpose of Promoting Economic Development</td>
<td>Dr. Patricia Mitchell</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary, Rural Development Division; Dept. of Commerce</td>
<td>Ex-Officio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Director of Local Government Commission* (Dept. of State Treasurer)</td>
<td>Robin Hammond</td>
<td>Assistant General Counsel, Local Government Commission</td>
<td>Ex-Officio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>Professional Engineer in Private Sector Familiar with Wastewater Systems</td>
<td>JD Solomon</td>
<td>Vice President, CH2MHILL</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>Knowledgeable about Federal Funding for Wastewater and Water Systems</td>
<td>Johnnie Carswell</td>
<td>Burke County Commissioner</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>Knowledgeable about Urban Wastewater or Water Systems</td>
<td>Leila Goodwin</td>
<td>Water Resources Engineer</td>
<td>Senate Pro Tempore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>Knowledgeable about Rural Wastewater or Water Systems</td>
<td>Charles Vines</td>
<td>Mitchell County Manager</td>
<td>Senate Pro Tempore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>County Commissioner or Resident of a Rural County Knowledgeable about Public Health Services</td>
<td>Cal Stiles</td>
<td>Cherokee County Commissioner</td>
<td>Speaker of the House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>Familiar with Wastewater, Drinking Water and Stormwater Issues and State Funding Sources</td>
<td>Maria Hunnicutt</td>
<td>Manager, Broad River Water Authority</td>
<td>Speaker of the House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Or designee
A.2 North Carolina General Statutes 159G-70 through 72

North Carolina General Statute Chapter 159G.
Water Infrastructure.
Article 5.
State Water Infrastructure Authority.

§ 159G-70. State Water Infrastructure Authority created.
(a) Authority Established. - The State Water Infrastructure Authority is created within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
(b) Membership. - The Authority consists of nine members as follows:
   (1) The Director of the Division of Water Infrastructure of the Department or the Director’s designee who is familiar with the water infrastructure financing, regulatory, and technical assistance programs of the Department.
   (2) The Secretary of Commerce or the Secretary’s designee who is familiar with the State programs that fund water or other infrastructure improvements for the purpose of promoting economic development.
   (3) The Director of the Local Government Commission or the Director’s designee who is familiar with the functions of the Commission.
   (4) One member who is a professional engineer in the private sector and is familiar with the development of infrastructure necessary for wastewater systems, to be appointed by the Governor to a term that expires on July 1 of even-numbered years.
   (5) One member who is knowledgeable about, and has experience related to, direct federal funding programs for wastewater and public water systems, to be appointed by the Governor to a term that expires on July 1 of odd-numbered years.
   (6) One member who is knowledgeable about, and has experience related to, urban local government wastewater systems or public water systems, to be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate to a term that expires on July 1 of even-numbered years.
   (7) One member who is knowledgeable about, and has experience related to, rural local government wastewater systems or public water systems, to be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate to a term that expires on July 1 of odd-numbered years.
   (8) One member who either (i) is a county commissioner of a rural county or (ii) resides in a rural county and is knowledgeable about, and has experience related to, public health services, to be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives to a term that expires on July 1 of odd-numbered years.
   (9) One member who is familiar with wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater issues and related State funding sources, to be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives to a term that expires on July 1 of odd-numbered years.
(c) Terms. - The members appointed by the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall serve two-year terms. The other members, who are ex officio members or designees of those members, shall serve until they are no longer in office or are replaced with another designee.
(d) Chair. - The Director of the Division of Water Infrastructure, or the Director's designee, shall serve as Chair of the Authority. The Chair must call the first meeting. The Chair shall serve as a nonvoting member, provided, however, that the Chair shall vote to break a tie.

(e) Meetings. - The Authority shall meet at least four times a year and may meet as often as needed. A majority of the members of the Authority constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. The affirmative vote of a majority of the members present at a meeting of the Authority is required for action to be taken by the Authority.

(f) Vacancies. - A vacancy in the Authority or as Chair of the Authority resulting from the resignation of a member or otherwise is filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made. The term of an appointment to fill a vacancy is for the balance of the unexpired term.

(g) Compensation. - Each member of the Authority shall receive no salary as a result of serving on the Authority but shall receive per diem, subsistence, and travel expenses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, and 138-6, as applicable. (2013-360, s. 14.21(b); 2013-363, s. 5.12.)

§ 159G-71. State Water Infrastructure Authority; powers and duties.

The Authority has the following additional duties:

1. After reviewing the recommendations for grants and loans submitted to it by the Division, to determine the rank of applications and to select the applications that are eligible to receive grants and loans, consistent with federal law.

2. To establish priorities for making loans and grants under this Chapter, consistent with federal law.

3. To review the criteria for making loans and grants under G.S. 159G-23 and make recommendations, if any, to the Department for additional criteria or changes to the criteria, consistent with federal law.

4. To develop guidelines for making loans and grants under this Chapter, consistent with federal law.

5. To develop a master plan to meet the State's water infrastructure needs.

6. To assess and make recommendations on the role of the State in the development and funding of wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater infrastructure in the State.

7. To analyze the adequacy of projected funding to meet projected needs over the next five years.

8. To make recommendations on ways to maximize the use of current funding resources, whether federal, State, or local, and to ensure that funds are used in a coordinated manner.

9. To review the application of management practices in wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater utilities and to determine the best practices.

10. To assess the role of public-private partnerships in the future provision of utility service.

11. To assess the application of the river basin approach to utility planning and management.

12. To assess the need for a “troubled system” protocol. (2013-360, s. 14.21(b).)

§ 159G-72. State Water Infrastructure Authority; reports.

No later than November 1 of each year, the Authority shall submit a report of its activity and findings, including any recommendations or legislative proposals, to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Natural and Economic Resources, the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Natural and Economic Resources, and the Fiscal Research Division of the Legislative Services Commission. (2013-360, s. 14.21(b).)
The Resource Toolbox provides extensive, but not exhaustive, information about many organizations and agencies that are engaged in the support of water and wastewater utilities, as well as publications and tools that have been produced by many of the organizations. The goal in providing this information is to introduce users of this Master Plan to some of the resources, tools, and guidance that are available for use by utilities. Inclusion in this Toolbox does not imply a recommendation or endorsement by the State Water Infrastructure Authority or the State of North Carolina.

Resources are organized into the following categories and are alphabetical within each category:

B.1 Organizations and Agencies
B.2 Publications
B.3 Tools and Webinars
B.4 Partnerships and Education
B.5 Funding Resources
B.6 Design-Build and Public-Private Partnerships

Note that throughout this Appendix, information pertaining to small, rural communities and systems is highlighted in blue.

### B.1 Organizations and Agencies

Resources are available from many state, national and international organizations, associations, and agencies, as well as the University of North Carolina system. They provide support in the areas of technical assistance, asset management, organizational management, financial management and other key issues described in this Master Plan.

The table below lists and briefly describes many organizations. A more detailed description of each organization with link(s) to their resources and websites is provided following the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization / Agency</th>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Water Works Association (AWWA)</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>The largest nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to the management and treatment of water</td>
<td>B.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buried Asset Management Institute – International (BAMI-I)</td>
<td>Asset Management</td>
<td>Education and assistance in applying best practices in underground water infrastructure asset management</td>
<td>B.1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN)</td>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>University-based network creating solutions to the “how-to-pay” issues of environmental protection</td>
<td>B.1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Resource for entities seeking to address water infrastructure needs with limited budgets</td>
<td>B.1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute of Asset Management</td>
<td>Asset Management</td>
<td>Support focused on acquisition, operation and care of critical infrastructure physical assets</td>
<td>B.1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization / Agency</td>
<td>Primary Purpose</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Council for Public-Private Partnerships</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Non-profit that facilitates forming public-private partnerships, where appropriate, and raises awareness of governments and businesses of the cooperative means by which the public can be provided with cost effective quality goods, services and facilities</td>
<td>B.1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC American Water Works Association / NC Water Environment Association (NC AWWA-WEA) and Academy for Water Professional Development</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>NC chapter of the AWWA and WEF dedicated to providing water and wastewater education, training, and service to protect public health and the environment</td>
<td>B.1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Works to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of North Carolinians with particular emphasis on rural communities</td>
<td>B.1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC Local Government Commission (LGC)</td>
<td>Financial and Organizational Management</td>
<td>Staffed by the Department of State Treasurer; assists local government units with fiscal management and approves issuance of debt</td>
<td>B.1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC Rural Water Association (NCRWA)</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Non-profit dedicated to helping its members attain the highest standard in drinking water and wastewater service</td>
<td>B.1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Works in small, rural communities across the nation, territories, and tribal areas. Most communities are low-income and have a population under 2,500</td>
<td>B.1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP)</td>
<td>Technical Assistance, Funding and Organizational Management</td>
<td>Regional office of RCAP assisting NC’s small rural communities with training, technical assistance and funding</td>
<td>B.1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina Environmental Finance Center (UNC-EFC)</td>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>Located within the School of Government; builds capacity of local government units to provide environmental programs and services in fair, effective, and financially sustainable ways</td>
<td>B.1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina School of Government (SOG)</td>
<td>Financial and Organizational Management</td>
<td>Provides NC’s local and state government officials with nonpartisan legal, public administration, management, and financial expertise</td>
<td>B.1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### B.1.1 American Water Works Association


### B.1.2 Buried Asset Management Institute – International

The Buried Asset Management Institute – International (BAMI-I) is a non-profit corporation whose main purpose is to educate and assist those who have an interest in applying best buried asset management practices to extend the life and efficiency of their assets. Although BAMI-I has been mainly focused on water and wastewater systems, the principles of asset management apply to all different types of buried assets. The purpose of BAMI-I is to provide a center of excellence for owners of underground water infrastructure to join with industry and researchers, using sound science, to evaluate and/or develop buried asset management protocols for application worldwide. The [BAMI-I website](http://138.47.28.11/bami/index.php) is: [http://138.47.28.11/bami/index.php](http://138.47.28.11/bami/index.php).

### B.1.3 Environmental Finance Center Network

The Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN) is a university-based organization creating innovative solutions to the difficult how-to-pay issues of environmental protection and improvement. The EFCN works with the public and private sectors to promote sustainable environmental solutions while bolstering efforts to manage costs. The EFCN offers free help on financial and managerial topics to systems serving 10,000 or fewer people. Examples of assistance the EFCN can provide include:

- Creating an Asset Management Plan
- Near-term financial planning and rate setting
- Analyzing revenues and expenses
- Offering ideas on how to effectively budget
- Long-term capital planning
- Assessing options for lowering energy use and/or water loss
- Identifying sources of outside funding
- Collaborating with other water systems
- Resiliency planning

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization / Agency</th>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water Environment Federation (WEF)</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Mission is to connect water professionals, enrich the expertise of water professionals, increase the awareness of the impact and value of water, and provide a platform for water sector innovation</td>
<td>B.1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The UNC-EFC is a member of the network and is leading a project, Smart Water Management for Small Water Systems. The project is a collaborative effort between the members of the EFCN and AWWA, and is made possible through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA. The project seeks to address major issues facing the nation’s smallest drinking water systems (those serving 10,000 or fewer people). The project’s team of experts works with water systems across the country to address these issues, which range from asset management and rate setting to water loss detection and conservation, through training and technical assistance. Information is available here: http://efcnetwork.org/small-systems-project/

B.1.4 EPA Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center
The Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center serves as a resource for communities, municipal utilities, and private entities seeking to address water infrastructure needs with limited budgets. It provides objective financial advice to help communities make informed decisions on financing drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. The Center works actively with the UNC-EFC on several programs to provide assistance to communities addressing water infrastructure challenges. Information is available here: https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/about-water-infrastructure-and-resiliency-finance-center

B.1.5 Institute of Asset Management
The Institute of Asset Management (IAM) is a professional body for those involved in the acquisition, operation and care of physical assets, especially critical infrastructure. The IAM website is: https://theiam.org/

B.1.6 National Council for Public-Private Partnerships
The National Council for Public-Private Partnerships defines a public-private partnership as a contractual arrangement between a public agency (federal, state or local) and a private sector entity. Through this agreement, the skills and assets of each sector (public and private) are shared in delivering a service or facility for the use of the general public. In addition to the sharing of resources, each party shares in the risks and rewards potential in the delivery of the service and/or facility. The Partnership's website is: http://www.ncppp.org/ppp-basics/7-keys/

B.1.7 North Carolina AWWA-WEA and Academy for Water Professional Development
In North Carolina, the affiliates of the AWWA and the WEF operate jointly under one board of trustees and function as both a Section of the AWWA and as a Member Association of the WEF. Formed in 1928, it is dedicated to providing water and wastewater education, training, and service to protect public health and the environment. There are over 3,000 members in North Carolina representing municipal and private utilities, consulting engineering firms, government agencies, companies who provide equipment and supplies to the industry, and representatives of academia who teach and conduct research in water and wastewater-related areas. The website is: http://www.ncsafewater.org/

The Academy for Water Professional Development is a NC AWWA-WEA initiative to fill an industry training gap and advance the careers of participants. The program includes multi-year technical and soft-skill training courses, which have been developed based on input from industry leaders across North Carolina. The NC AWWA-WEA consulted with industry experts and North Carolina utility managers to develop The Academy for Water Professional Development (The Academy). The Academy provides a structured and specialized training and certification program for water professionals to demonstrate competency at defined levels.
through completion of courses and passing of comprehensive exams. The Academy delivers a demonstrated return on investment as employees move through a certification track, and will increase the pool of qualified candidates available for supervisory-level positions. Completion of the Academy levels and ladders (or industry specialization areas) is a quantifiable method to compare employee’s skills and development. The website is: [http://www.ncsafewater.org/?page=Academy](http://www.ncsafewater.org/?page=Academy)

### B.1.8 North Carolina Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division

The North Carolina Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division was created in 2013 to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of North Carolinians with particular emphasis on rural communities. The Division has a number of grant programs and planning services to assist rural counties and census tracts. Information can be found here: [http://www.nccommerce.com/rd](http://www.nccommerce.com/rd)

#### Community Development Block Grant Program

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is responsible for the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program which works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses. These grants primarily serve persons of low-to-moderate incomes. Since states are in the best position to know, and to respond to, the needs of local governments, Congress has given each state the ability to administer the CDBG funds for non-entitlement areas – these are generally cities and towns with populations of less than 50,000 and counties with populations of less than 200,000. The NC Department of Commerce administers these federal funds through the Rural Economic Development Division. The Division offers the Community Development Block Grants for Economic Development (CDBG-ED). CDBG-ED grant funds are specifically provided to assist with infrastructure projects that will lead to the creation of new, full-time jobs.

#### U.S. Economic Development Administration

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is the only federal government agency focused exclusively on economic development. Its role is to foster regional economic development efforts in communities across the nation. Through strategic investments that foster job creation and attract private investment, EDA supports development in economically distressed areas. Guided by the basic principle that communities must be empowered to develop and implement their own economic development and revitalization strategies, EDA works directly with local economic development officials. In North Carolina, EDA works primarily with the N.C. Department of Commerce Rural Development Division.

#### Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a unique federal-state partnership providing social and economic support for a 13-state region stretching along the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. The ARC was established by the U.S. Congress in 1965 and has worked to bring Appalachia’s 22 million people into America’s economic mainstream. In North Carolina, the program is administered through the Rural Economic Development Division to support economic development activities in 29 western counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Davie, Forsyth, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson,
Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey counties.

**B.1.9 North Carolina Local Government Commission**

In 1931 the North Carolina General Assembly established the Local Government Commission (LGC) to help address the problems in local government finance caused by the Great Depression. Currently, North Carolina has a larger percentage of units rated “AAA” by national bond rating agencies when compared to other states, and the debt of its local governments in general finds a significantly better reception on the national bond markets than the national average. Many attribute this favored credit status, in part, to the work of the Local Government Commission.

The LGC, established by NC GS 159-3, is unique in the nation. It provides assistance to local governments and public authorities in North Carolina. It is staffed by the Department of State Treasurer. It assists units of local government with fiscal management and approves the issuance of debt for all units of local government.

The primary mission of the LGC is focused in three areas of responsibility and authority. First, a unit of government must seek LGC approval before it can borrow money. In reviewing each proposed borrowing, the LGC examines whether the amount being borrowed is adequate and reasonable for the projects and is an amount the unit can reasonably afford to repay. Second, once a borrowing is approved, the LGC is responsible for selling the debt (or bonds) on the unit’s behalf; it is the combination of the power of approval with the power of sale that makes the LGC unique. Third, the LGC staff regulates annual financial reporting by oversight of the annual independent auditing of local governments, by monitoring the fiscal health of local governments and by offering broad assistance in financial administration to local governments. The LGC website is: [https://www.nctreasurer.com/slg/Pages/Local-Government-Commission.aspx](https://www.nctreasurer.com/slg/Pages/Local-Government-Commission.aspx)

**B.1.10 North Carolina Rural Water Association**

The North Carolina Rural Water Association (NCRWA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping its members attain the highest standard in drinking water and wastewater service. Members represent both community and non-community water and wastewater systems and are directly involved with the day to day operation of rural water and wastewater systems. The Association focuses on the needs of these systems and has developed a network of information and technical services available statewide. Although the list is too long to include every service, NCRWA has developed a reputation for assisting with just about any need a system has. The NCRWA website is: [http://www.ncrwa.com/](http://www.ncrwa.com/)

**B.1.11 Rural Community Assistance Partnership**

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) works in small, rural communities across the United States, its territories, and in tribal areas. Most of the communities where RCAP works are low-income and have a population under 2,500. RCAP’s assistance enables communities to provide reliable, safe and clean supplies of drinking water and sanitary wastewater disposal systems. RCAP has six regional offices in the U.S. The RCAP website is: [http://rcap.org/](http://rcap.org/)

**B.1.12 Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project**

The Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP) is the regional office of the RCAP (mentioned above) that serves North Carolina and six other states in the eastern U.S. It helps small rural towns and communities needing aid in upgrading their water and wastewater systems; provides training and technical
assistance to rural residents for managerial issues, systems operation, and maintenance; and supports capacity building and economic development. To date, SERCAP has brought clean water and wastewater facilities to more than 450,000 residents in its seven state network. SERCAP also provides limited funding to communities for certain types of water and wastewater projects. The SERCAP website can be accessed here: http://sercap.org/.

**B.1.13 University of North Carolina Environmental Finance Center**

The U.S. EPA supports a network of eight environmental finance centers (EFCs) located across the country. EFCs are university-based organizations that provide innovative solutions to communities to help manage the costs of environmental protection programs and activities. EPA provides partial funding for the EFCs. The state of North Carolina is fortunate to have the University of North Carolina Environmental Finance Center (UNC-EFC) which is dedicated to building the capacity of governments and other organizations to provide environmental programs and services in fair, effective, and financially sustainable ways through applied research, teaching, program design and partnerships. Its vision is to create communities with healthy environments maintained and improved by sustainable financing.

One of its major roles is to increase the capacity of other organizations to address the financial aspects of environmental protection and service delivery. For this reason, the Center provides most of its community training in a collaborative manner – partnering with established organizations that have environmental but not necessarily financial expertise. In addition to direct community outreach, the UNC-EFC works with decision-makers to assess the effectiveness of environmental finance policies at a regional or state level, and to improve those policies as a way of supporting local efforts. The UNC-EFC website is available here: http://www.efc.sog.unc.edu/

**B.1.14 University of North Carolina School of Government**

The University of North Carolina’s School of Government provides North Carolina’s local and state government officials with nonpartisan legal, public administration, management, and financial expertise. It is the largest university-based local government training, advisory, and research organization in the United States. The mission of the School of Government is to improve the lives of North Carolinians by engaging in practical scholarship that helps public officials and citizens understand and improve state and local government. It is the largest university-based local government training, advisory, and research organization in the United States. The website is: https://www.sog.unc.edu/

Each year, the school offers hundreds of courses, webinars, and specialized conferences for over 12,000 North Carolina public officials. Attendees include city and county managers, county commissioners, city council members, finance officers, planning officials, among many others.

The School’s faculty members respond to thousands of phone calls and e-mail messages each year on routine and urgent matters and also engage in long-term advising projects for local governing boards, legislative committees, and statewide commissions. In addition, faculty members annually publish numerous books, manuals, reports, articles, bulletins, and other print and online content related to state and local government.

One of the School’s blogs – Coates’ Canons: NC Local Government Law – provides information about a broad range of legal issues affecting local governments and other public agencies in North Carolina. The blog serves as a valuable source of information for elected officials, managers, department heads, and attorneys and for
individuals and other public agencies. The blog is a joint effort of local government law faculty members at the School of Government and is available here: http://canons.sog.unc.edu/

**B.1.15 Water Environment Federation**

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization founded in 1928 to protect public health and the environment. WEF’s mission is to connect water professionals, enrich the expertise of water professionals, increase the awareness of the impact and value of water, and provide a platform for water sector innovation. WEF’s diverse membership includes scientists, engineers, regulators, academics, utility managers, plant operators, and other professionals. WEF provides many resources that are available at http://www.wef.org/about/. The website contains links to information about utilities of the future (UTOF), energy and resource recovery, and many other timely topics.

**B.2 – Publications**

Many of the organizations and agencies listed above, as well as others, have produced and published manuals, guides, articles, and papers that address many of the key issues described in this Master Plan. The table below lists and briefly describes many publications. A more detailed description of each publication with link(s) to the resources is provided following the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordability and Capability Issues of Small Water and Wastewater Systems: A Case for Regionalization of Small Systems</td>
<td>RCAP</td>
<td>Addresses many of the potential barriers associated with mergers/regionalization</td>
<td>B.2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Better Water Rates for an Uncertain World: Balancing Revenue Management, Resource Efficiency, and Fiscal Sustainability</td>
<td>Alliance for Water Efficiency</td>
<td>Provides practical guidance to help water managers understand, design, and implement rate structures that contribute to revenue stability, support long-term financial health, and incentivize efficiency</td>
<td>B.2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Utility Management: A Primer for Water and Wastewater Utilities</td>
<td>USEPA, et. al.</td>
<td>Known as “The EUM Primer”; describes the Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Utilities and Five Keys to Management Success</td>
<td>B.2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Performance of Small Water Systems through Shared Management</td>
<td>UNC-EFC</td>
<td>Examines a non-physical form of consolidation – the consolidation of water management and operations – but not ownership, with systems being served by regional teams of highly trained personnel</td>
<td>B.2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing Asset Management: A Practical Guide</td>
<td>WEF et. al.</td>
<td>Step-by-step guide for utilities to improve infrastructure asset management</td>
<td>B.2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication Title</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Section</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Public Infrastructure Assets to Minimize Cost and Maximize Performance</td>
<td>AWWA et al.</td>
<td>Known as “The Asset Management Handbook”</td>
<td>B.2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Toward Sustainability: Sustainable and Effective Practices for Creating Your Own Water Utility Roadmap</td>
<td>USEPA</td>
<td>Assists utility leaders with implementing proven and effective practices to proactively address challenges, improve operations and move toward sustainability</td>
<td>B.2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Infrastructure Reform: Improving America’s Procurement System</td>
<td>Brookings Institution</td>
<td>Reviews collaboration between the public and private sector</td>
<td>B.2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Benchmarking for Effectively Managed Water Utilities</td>
<td>Water Research Foundation</td>
<td>Provides metrics and strategies to achieve performance excellence</td>
<td>B.2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Sustainability: A Handbook for Water and Wastewater Utilities</td>
<td>USEPA</td>
<td>Steps utilities can take to develop processes to ensure infrastructure investments are cost-effective</td>
<td>B.2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management</td>
<td>USEPA and USDA</td>
<td>Uses strategies from “The EUM Primer” to help managers of rural and small water/wastewater systems develop an operations management work plan</td>
<td>B.2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking the Next Step: Findings of the Effective Utility Management Review Steering Group</td>
<td>USEPA, et. al.</td>
<td>Contains changes and updates to “The EUM Primer” to better reflect the changing operating context of utilities</td>
<td>B.2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Infrastructure Asset Management: Adopting Best Practices to Enable Better Investments</td>
<td>McGraw-Hill Construction</td>
<td>Explore trends in Canadian asset management to determine practices that utilities are implementing</td>
<td>B.2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Resources Utility of the Future: A Blueprint for Action</td>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>Links diverse resource recovery activities and innovative approaches to water resource management</td>
<td>B.2.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Many of the potential barriers associated with mergers/regionalization are addressed in this publication by the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, available here:

B.2.2 Building Better Water Rates for an Uncertain World: Balancing Revenue Management, Resource Efficiency, and Fiscal Sustainability

In 2014, the Alliance for Water Efficiency published this handbook to provide practical guidance to help water managers understand, design, and implement rate structures that contribute to revenue stability, support long-term financial health, and incentivize efficiency. It provides tools for designing better rate structures and for quantifying and evaluating the impact of those rates to promote better decision-making. It also contains communication guidance for different internal and external audiences, including management within the utility, the general public, and boards. It is available here: http://www.financingsustainablewater.org/

B.2.3 Effective Utility Management: A Primer for Water and Wastewater Utilities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and organizations representing North American water and wastewater utilities have long recognized the challenges water sector utilities face and have identified effective utility management practices to address them. In 2006, EPA and six organizations including the American Water Works Association (AWWA), Water Environment Federation (WEF), and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) formed the Effective Utility Management Collaborating Organizations to “formalize a collaborative effort among the organizations in order to promote effective utility management”. The group developed a framework for effectively managed water utilities and published “Effective Utility Management: A Primer for Water and Wastewater Utilities (the EUM Primer)” in 2008. This document identified Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Utilities as well as Five Keys to Management Success and is available here: http://www.watereum.org/resources/. The same link also contains a Resource Toolbox that provides a compilation of resources from the organizations collaborating on the Effective Utility Management effort and is organized according to the ten attributes of effectively managed utilities and the five keys to management success. The homepage for EUM is: http://www.watereum.org/

B.2.4 Enhancing Performance of Small Water Systems through Shared Management

This white paper prepared by the UNC-EFC identifies opportunities to enhance management capacity for small systems through shared management, a non-structural form of regionalization, and would not require owners to give up ownership of their systems. It provides background on aspects of small systems, performance, and regionalization in the state. It then explores the opportunities for cost savings through capturing economies of scale in this unique alternative by recognizing the tasks and duties of running a water system that would be affected by consolidation of management and operations. The paper is available here: http://www.efc.sog.unc.edu/sites/www.efc.sog.unc.edu/files/2015/SmallWaterSystemsSharedManagement.pdf

B.2.5 Implementing Asset Management: A Practical Guide

The Water Environment Federation (WEF), the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) collaborated on this step-by-step guide for utilities to assist in improving the management of their infrastructure assets. The concepts and processes presented are applicable to utilities of all sizes. Utilities can address their infrastructure assets at a broad, system-wide level or can drill-down to individual assets components and elements. The guide is available, for a fee, here: https://www.e-wef.org/Store/ProductDetails.aspx?productId=4130
B.2.6 Managing Public Infrastructure Assets to Minimize Cost and Maximize Performance
The Water Environment Federation (WEF), the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) and the American Water Works Association (AWWA) collaborated on this publication which is often referred to as the "Asset Management Handbook". It is available here: https://www.e-wef.org/Store/ProductDetails.aspx?productId=4131

B.2.7 Moving Toward Sustainability: Sustainable and Effective Practices for Creating Your Own Water Utility Roadmap
In 2014, the U.S. EPA published a report designed to assist water sector utilities of various sizes in becoming more sustainable. The purpose of this document is to assist utility leaders with implementing proven and effective practices over time to improve their operations and move toward sustainability at a pace consistent with their needs and the needs of their communities. It provides utility leaders with a cohesive structure to help them address various challenges proactively and with confidence. It is available here: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-04/documents/sustainable_practices_utilities_roadmap_crwu.pdf

B.2.8 Opportunities for Infrastructure Reform: Improving America's Procurement System
This Brookings Institution’s report suggests that collaboration between the public and private sector can deliver better projects. Public-private partnerships can provide opportunities for efficient risk transfer and allow the partners to focus their work on creating a better infrastructure project. Visionary leadership, a talented pool of private and public sector professionals, and increased collaboration can make public-private partnerships more effective. The report is available here: http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2015/09/30-infrastructure-reform-procurement-puentes-sabol

B.2.9 Performance Benchmarking for Effectively Managed Water Utilities
Despite the number of effective utility management related documents available, the Water Research Foundation (WRF) found that there were no specific or discrete recommendations on how utilities would develop and implement the Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Utilities. In 2014, the WRF developed a structured benchmarking exercise to help utilities identify performance metrics that can be scored to guide the development of strategies to achieve performance excellence, and is aligned with the EUM Primer. The document identify practice areas used by water and wastewater utilities to support each attribute, designed to help utilities conduct a self-assessment of any or all of the ten attributes. Performance measures are defined so that utilities can track their progress in achieving goals. It is available here: http://www.waterrf.org/Pages/Projects.aspx?PID=4313

B.2.10 Planning for Sustainability: A Handbook for Water and Wastewater Utilities
The U.S. EPA published this Handbook which builds upon the EUM Primer Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Utilities. It describes steps utilities can undertake to enhance their planning processes to ensure that water infrastructure investments are cost-effective over their life-cycle, resource efficient, and support community goals. Developed after extensive consultation and input from utilities, states, and other stakeholders, the Handbook is organized around a series of Core Elements, including:
• Setting utility sustainability goals and objectives that also support relevant community goals;
• Analyzing a range of alternatives, including green infrastructure and other innovative approaches, based on full life-cycle costs; and
• Implementing a financial strategy, including adequate rate structures, to ensure the alternatives selected are sufficiently funded, operated, maintained, and replaced over time.


B.2.11 Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management
In 2013, the U.S. EPA and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) adapted many of the ideas from The EUM Primer, including the Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Utilities, to help managers of rural and small water and wastewater systems develop a work plan to effectively manage their operations. The publication contains a step by step approach to create a framework for organizational management that includes financial viability, infrastructure stability, and stakeholder understanding and support. In addition, the guidebook itself contains dozens of references and links to additional information and guidance specifically for small systems. It available here: http://search.usa.gov/search?query=guidebook+to+sustainable+utility+management&op=Search&affiliate=usda-rd&ga=1.142067186.1788800348.1470168004

B.2.12 Taking the Next Step: Findings of the Effective Utility Management Review Steering Group
In 2015, the same organizations that developed The EUM Primer asked a Steering Group of utility and state leaders to review the Effective Utility Management framework. The group discussed the ways in which the operating context of utilities had changed since 2008 and recommended changes to the original EUM materials. The group also held two national webinars with over 200 participants each, including utility managers, operators, consultants, and assistance providers. The publication was made available in February 2016 at this location: http://www.awwa.org/Portals/0/files/legreg/documents/201602_EUM_Review_Report.pdf

B.2.13 Water Infrastructure Asset Management: Adopting Best Practices to Enable Better Investments

B.2.14 Water Resources Utility of the Future: A Blueprint for Action
The Water Environment Federation (WEF) defines and ties together diverse resource recovery activities and innovative approaches, many of which were never contemplated, and likely could never have been foreseen, 40 years ago when the Clean Water Act was enacted in this publication. It is available here: http://www.nacwa.org/index.php?option=com_ntent&view=article&id=1604&Itemid=250
# B.3 – Tools and Webinars

Many of the organizations and agencies listed above, as well as others, have produced tools, webinars and videos that address many of the key issues described in this Master Plan. The table below lists and briefly describes several resources, and a more detailed description with link(s) to the resources is provided following the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Tool / Resource</th>
<th>Type of Resource</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWWA Water Loss Control Committee Free Water Audit Software</td>
<td>Spreadsheet-based Tool</td>
<td>AWWA</td>
<td>Water audit tool to help quantify and track water losses</td>
<td>B.3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basics of Financial Management for Small-Community Utilities</td>
<td>Webinar</td>
<td>RCAP</td>
<td>An overview of financial management for small drinking water and wastewater utilities</td>
<td>B.3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Benchmarking for Effectively Managed Water Utilities Web-based Tool and Webcast</td>
<td>Web-based Tool and Webcast</td>
<td>Water Research Foundation</td>
<td>Tool and webcast to be used for performance benchmarking</td>
<td>B.3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool for Risk Management of Water Utility Assets</td>
<td>Spreadsheet-based Tool</td>
<td>Global Water Research Coalition, et. al.</td>
<td>Simple water industry risk management tool</td>
<td>B.3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and Wastewater Utility Operation and Management for Small Communities</td>
<td>Video-based Training Program</td>
<td>USEPA</td>
<td>Modules covering asset management, rate structure development and more, including case studies</td>
<td>B.3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WaterClips</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>UNC-EFC et. al.</td>
<td>Videos highlighting important financial considerations</td>
<td>B.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop in a Box: Sustainable Management of Rural and Small Systems Workshops</td>
<td>Tool</td>
<td>USEPA and USDA</td>
<td>Steps to create a framework for financial viability, infrastructure stability, and stakeholder understanding and support</td>
<td>B.3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B.3.1 AWWA Water Loss Control Committee Free Water Audit Software
The AWWA makes available at no cost this spreadsheet-based water audit tool designed to help quantify and track water losses associated with water distribution systems and identify areas for improved efficiency and cost recovery. While very useful, it does not take the place of a full-scale, comprehensive water audit. It is available at: http://www.awwa.org/resources-tools/water-knowledge/water-loss-control.aspx

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership developed this two-part webinar to provide an overview of financial management for small-community drinking water or wastewater utilities, from developing and balancing an expense budget to estimating and collecting revenue. This primer is ideal for a board member of a utility who needs to understand the financial aspects of a utility's operations. The guide explains in simple, easy-to-understand terms how to read and interpret common financial statements so more informed decisions can be made using that information. The webcasts are available here: http://rcap.org/resource/the-basics-of-financial-management-for-small-community-utilities-a-webcast-on-financial-management-part-1/

B.3.3 Performance Benchmarking for Effectively Managed Water Utilities Web-based Tool and Webcast
As a companion to the benchmarking document, the Water Research Foundation published a web-based tool aligned with the EUM Primer. The tool identifies practice areas used by water and wastewater utilities to support each of the Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Utilities. It is designed to help utilities conduct a self-assessment of any or all of the ten attributes. Performance measures are defined so that utilities can track their progress in achieving goals. The tool is accompanied by a User’s Guide (PowerPoint presentation) that will help in conducting internal performance benchmarking. The web-based tool (in Excel) is available here: http://www.waterrf.org/resources/pages/PublicWebTools-detail.aspx?ItemID=26
A webcast presented on March 6, 2014 can be located here: http://www.waterrf.org/resources/webcasts/pages/PublicWebcasts-Detail.aspx?ItemID=23

B.3.4 Tool for Risk Management of Water Utility Assets
The Global Water Research Coalition, the AWWA Research Foundation, the Water Environment Research Foundation, and the Water Services Association of Australia developed a simple risk management tool. The participants reviewed current practices in the water and other industries and developed an approach to risk management that was suitable for use in the water industry. It is available here: http://simple.werf.org/simple/media/documents/RiskMgt/Volume%201%20-%20Tool%20for%20Risk%20Management%20of%20Utility%20Assets.pdf

B.3.5 Water and Wastewater Utility Operation and Management for Small Communities
The U.S. EPA developed a video-module training program covering topics such as asset management and rate structure development; it includes case studies and is available here: https://www.epa.gov/small-and-rural-wastewater-systems/tools-training-and-technical-assistance-small-and-rural#training
B.3.6 WaterClips
The UNC-EFC collaborated with the WRF to produce a series of short videos, called WaterClips, designed with water utility governing boards in mind. The series describes the many challenges water utilities face through clear explanations and visual representations. The videos highlight important financial considerations for the water industry including financial benchmarking, new business models, and credit rating agency considerations. The videos were recently used by the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (New Mexico) in a large scale customer engagement campaign. The videos are available here: http://www.waterrf.org/Pages/Projects.aspx?PID=4366 or through the following links:

- Whiteboard Video: Financial Benchmarking for the Water Industry
- Whiteboard Video: New Business Models for the Water Industry
- Whiteboard Video: Credit Rating Agency Considerations for the Water Industry

B.3.7 Workshop in a Box: Sustainable Management of Rural and Small Systems Workshops
As a companion to the Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management, the U.S. EPA and USDA also developed these materials to help systems and technical assistance providers work with systems using the Guidebook; it is available here: http://search.usa.gov/search?query=guidebook+to+sustainable+utility+management&op=Search&affiliate=usda-rd&_ga=1.142067186.1788800348.1470168004

B.4 – Partnerships and Education
Utility governing boards and local governments can benefit from partnering with other public agencies on issues such as economic development, regional/shared solutions for organizational and financial management, and from educational opportunities for public officials and staff. The table below lists and briefly describes some of these resources, and a more detailed description with link(s) to the resources is provided following the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization / Agency Name</th>
<th>Type of Support</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Section Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>Oversees NC’s efforts in business and job recruitment/retention; utility providers are key partners since the availability of water supplies, wastewater treatment capacity and overall utility infrastructure capacity are crucial to keeping, attracting and expanding businesses</td>
<td>B.4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina Community College System</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Some campuses offer a public administration track that prepares individuals for entry into state and local government management positions</td>
<td>B.4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Organization / Agency Name

### North Carolina Councils of Government (COGs) / Association of Regional Councils

**Type of Support**: Partnership

**Description**: 16 regional COGs provide services such as administrative and financial, interim executive management, financial administration, human services program delivery and economic development; COGs often partner with small local government units to provide financial and administrative support

**Section Reference**: B.4.3

### University of North Carolina System – Commerce Fellows / Building Community through Capacity and Knowledge program

**Type of Support**: Education

**Description**: A collaborative effort enabling local governments to engage in high-quality professional development and training especially for improving opportunities for low- to moderate-income individuals

**Section Reference**: B.4.4

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**B.4.1 Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina**

A strong relationship exists between comprehensive infrastructure planning and economic development. The North Carolina Department of Commerce advances its mission to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for all North Carolinians with the collaborative assistance of a wide variety of partners and allies. Seven Regional Partnership Organizations across the state are dedicated to working to advance economic development; the website is [http://www.nccommerce.com/about-our-department/partners-allies](http://www.nccommerce.com/about-our-department/partners-allies).

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that oversees the state's efforts in business and job recruitment and retention, international trade, and tourism, film and sports development. Emphasizing customer service, the Partnership fosters collaboration between businesses and government, local and regional economic development organizations, other businesses, community leadership and the state's universities and community colleges. The partnership also provides access to research, innovative technology and research and a robust analysis of facilities and sites available for relocation.

Utility providers play an important role with these organizations because the availability of water supplies, wastewater treatment capacity and overall utility infrastructure capacity and its condition are keys to keeping, attracting or expanding businesses.

**B.4.2 North Carolina Community College System**

Several campuses of the North Carolina Community College System offer a public administration track or concentration within their Business Administration programs. The Public Administration track prepares students for entry into management positions in state and local governments and not-for-profit organizations and provides education for current government employees. Course work includes the study and practical application to decision-making, ethics, organizational theories, public finance, budgeting and other governmental issues. The website is [http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/](http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/).
B.4.3 North Carolina Councils of Government (COGs) / Association of Regional Councils

There are 16 regional Councils of Government (COGs) in North Carolina. The mission of the COGs is to provide creative regional solutions to relevant and emerging issues in North Carolina while providing a standard of excellence in the delivery of federal, state and regional services. The regional councils provide a broad range of programs and services; the nature and extent of the programs vary depending on local needs and the priorities of the board that governs each council. Through contact with state and federal agencies, regional councils advise their members on program changes and the availability of funding or programs that are important to their local governments. The Association’s website is: http://www.ncregions.org/.

Some of the services are traditional such as the delivery of federal and state programs in aging, transportation planning, workforce development, community planning, GIS mapping services and convening of regional leaders for problem solving. A more robust range of services has emerged through member demand for administrative and financial services, interim executive management, financial administration, human services program delivery and economic development.

Many small governments contract with their regional councils to provide financial and administrative support. The economies of scale created through these regional solutions can provide significant savings for small communities.

B.4.4 University of North Carolina System – Commerce Fellows / Building Community through Capacity and Knowledge

This program is a collaboration among the NC Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division CDBG program, Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, and UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government. The Department of Commerce offers grants to enable local governments to engage in high-quality professional development and training with an eye toward improving opportunities for low-to-moderate income individuals. These grants are designed to facilitate capacity-building and will enable local administrators to participate in professional development courses/seminars at one of these three universities. More information can be found here: https://www.nccommerce.com/rd

B.5 – Funding Resources

Funding resources are available from several state and federal funding programs. Each program has unique eligibility requirements, application processes and deadlines, match requirements and other characteristics. The UNC-EFC provides a table that lists the primary public funding sources for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater projects in North Carolina. The table is updated frequently, since contact information and details for the programs change. The table can be accessed here: http://www.efc.sog.unc.edu/reslib/item/north-carolina-water-wastewater-and-stormwater-funding-sources.

The table below lists and briefly describes the primary public funding sources for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater projects in North Carolina many organizations. A more detailed description of each organization with link(s) to websites is provided following the table.
B.5.1 The Golden LEAF Foundation

In 1999, the North Carolina legislature created the Golden LEAF Foundation to administer one-half of North Carolina’s share of the Master Settlement Agreement with cigarette manufacturers in accordance with the court consent decree between North Carolina and the manufacturers. From its inception, Golden LEAF has been committed to using the funds entrusted to it for projects with the most potential for bolstering North Carolina’s long-term economy, especially in tobacco-dependent, economically distressed, and/or rural communities. Water and sewer and other public infrastructure projects are typically funded through the Economic Catalyst Grant Cycles and are tied directly to job creation activities (http://www.goldenleaf.org/). More information can be obtained by contacting Mr. Ted Lord, Vice President for Programs, at tlord@goldenleaf.org.
B.5.2 North Carolina Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division
The Department’s Rural Economic Development Division was created in 2013 to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of North Carolinians with particular emphasis on rural communities. The Division has a number of grant programs and planning services to assist rural counties and rural census tracts. In particular, the Economic Infrastructure Program administered by the Rural Grants/Programs Section of the Division provides grants to local governments to assist with infrastructure projects that will lead to the creation of new, full-time jobs (http://www.nccommerce.com/rd). For more information, contact Ms. Melody Adams at melody.adams@nccommerce.com.

B.5.3 North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Division of Water Infrastructure
At the same time that the State Water Infrastructure Authority was created by the North Carolina General Assembly, the Division of Water Infrastructure was created within the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. The goal of this action was to consolidate the major water- and wastewater-related infrastructure funding programs within one division and one department. The Division website is: http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wi/home

The five funding programs are:
- Federal-state funded Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)
- Federal-state funded Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
- Federal funded Community Development Block Grant-Infrastructure (CDBG-I)
- State funded State Wastewater Reserve
- State funded State Drinking Water Reserve

For more information, contact:
- Mr. Seth Robertson regarding the State Revolving Fund and State Reserve programs at seth.robertson@ncdenr.gov.
- Ms. Julie Cubeta regarding the Community Development Block Grant-Infrastructure Program at julie.cubeta@ncdenr.gov.

B.5.4 Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
The Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP) provides a very limited amount of funding for certain types of projects. Its Loan Fund program provides low-interest loans to low-income rural communities for predevelopment costs, system upgrades and new construction of water and wastewater services and facilities. Loan amounts range from $1,000 to $150,000, and interest rates range from 4% to 7%. A household well water system loan program is available to assist low-to-moderate income individuals needing loans to construct, refurbish and service their individual household well systems. The SERCAP website is: http://sercap.org/. For more information, contact Mr. John Crowder at jcrowder@sercap.org.
**B.5.5 U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development**

USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD) provides funding for the construction of water and waste facilities in rural communities and is the only Federal program exclusively focused on rural water and waste infrastructure needs of rural communities with populations of 10,000 or less. The Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant program provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems and sanitary sewage disposal in eligible rural areas. The website of the North Carolina office of the USDA-RE is: [http://www.rd.usda.gov/nc](http://www.rd.usda.gov/nc). More information can be obtained by contacting Mr. Dennis Delong at [dennis.delong@nc.usda.gov](mailto:dennis.delong@nc.usda.gov).

**B.6 – Design-Build and Public-Private Partnerships**


**B.6.1 Design-Build Method**

The legislation acknowledges that, in some instances:

- More efficient delivery of quality design and construction can be realized when a governmental entity is authorized to utilize an integrated approach for the design and construction of a project under one contract with a single point of responsibility.
- The design-build integrated approach to project delivery, based upon qualifications and experience, in some instances, can yield improved collaboration among design professionals, builders, and owners throughout the entire process and deliver a quality and cost-efficient project.

**B.6.2 Public-Private Partnership**

The legislation also acknowledges that:

- Some governmental entities within the State lack the financial resources required to undertake capital construction projects that are necessary to satisfy critical public needs.
- Partnerships with private developers may offer an effective financial mechanism for governmental entities to secure public projects to satisfy critical public needs that cannot otherwise be met.

The legislation defines a public-private project as a capital improvement project undertaken for the benefit of a governmental entity and a private developer pursuant to a development contract that includes construction of a public facility or other improvements, including paving, grading, utilities, infrastructure, reconstruction, or repair, and may include both public and private facilities.

Recognizing that the general public must have confidence in an entities’ processes for construction contracting, that open competition delivers the best value for taxpayers and public owners, and that transparent, fair, and equitable contracting procedures for the use of public funds in government construction contracting is necessary, the legislation requires the following:
• The public entity must declare in an open meeting its intention to enter into a P3
• The approval of any P3 debt by the Local Government Commission or State Treasurer
• The contract terms with the private entity must be reviewed at a public meeting and be open for public inspection

Local government units may be interested in P3s for several reasons such as those described throughout this Master Plan:

• Traditional funding sources such as grants and loans are limited
• Financing through bonds may not be feasible
• There are competing budget pressures such as for police, fire, economic development, etc.
• There may be an urgent need for water infrastructure projects, possibly due to past deferred investments
C.1 North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 159 – Local Government Finance

In order to assist local governments in carrying out their financial management responsibilities for water and sewer utilities, the North Carolina General Assembly has enacted statutes that govern local government finance – Chapter 159 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Together, these statutes are designed to ensure that a local government has a water and sewer utility fund that is kept separate from the general fund; that the utility fund has sufficient resources to meet all of its operating expenses, capital outlay, and debt service obligations; and that it reports annually to the LGC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected North Carolina General Statutes</th>
<th>Area of Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NCGS 159-26</td>
<td>Governs accounting systems and provides that each utility owned or operated by a unit of local government must establish and maintain a separate fund that is specific to that utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCGS 159-13(b)(14)</td>
<td>Governs budget ordinances and requires that money in a utility fund cannot be appropriated to another fund unless it is demonstrated through the budget process that the utility fund will meet all of its operating expenses, capital outlay, and debt service obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCGS 159-25</td>
<td>Addresses the duties of finance officers and the requirements for the accounting system and internal control procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCGS 159-34</td>
<td>Requires local government units to have an audit prepared at the end of each fiscal year and to submit the audits to the LGC; the financial statements must be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C.2 Governmental Accounting Standards Board

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) is an independent organization that establishes and improves standards of accounting and financial reporting for U.S. state and local governments. It was established in 1984 by agreement of the Financial Accounting Foundation and ten national associations of state and local government officials. GASB is not a government entity but it is recognized by governments, the accounting industry, and the capital markets as the official source of generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) for state and local governments. [http://www.gasb.org/home](http://www.gasb.org/home)

Accounting and financial reporting standards designed for the government are essential because governments are fundamentally different from for-profit businesses. The GASB standards are not federal laws or regulations and the organization does not have enforcement authority. However, compliance with GASB’s standards is required directly by NCGS 159-25(a)(1) and through the audit process as required by NCGS 159-34 because auditors must render opinions on the fairness of financial statement presentations in conformity with GAAP.

GASB Statement No. 34 is entitled “Basic Financial Statements – and Management’s Discussion and Analysis – for State and Local Governments” and was issued in June 1999. The Statement established new financial reporting requirements for state and local governments throughout the U.S. It requires the government’s
financial manager to discuss and analyze the government’s financial performance for the year and provide readers with an objective and easily readable analysis to help them assess whether the government’s financial position has improved or deteriorated as a result of the year’s operations.

Compliance with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) standards is required by Chapter 159 of the North Carolina General Statutes – Local Government Finance
Appendix D – Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities

A comprehensive description of a viable utility is found in the 2016 publication “Taking the Next Step: Findings of the Effective Utility Management Review Steering Group” and includes the Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities. For utility managers seeking to improve organization-wide performance, the Attributes encompass operations, infrastructure, customer satisfaction, community welfare, natural resource stewardship, and financial performance that are applicable to all water and wastewater utilities. 


The ten attributes align with the three focus areas of this master plan:

Infrastructure Management

- Organizational Management – it is important to note that five of the ten attributes relate to organizational management and, of the five, four deal directly with communication
- Financial Management

The ten attributes are:

1. **Product Quality**: Produces “fit for purpose” water that meets or exceeds full compliance with regulatory and reliability requirements and consistent with customer, public health, ecological, and economic needs. Products include treated drinking water, treated wastewater effluent, recycled water, stormwater discharge, and recovered resources.

2. **Customer Satisfaction**: Provides reliable, responsive, and affordable services in line with explicit, customer-derived service levels. Utilizes a mix of evolving communication technologies to understand and respond to customer needs and expectations, including receiving timely customer feedback and communicating during emergencies. Provides tailored customer service and outreach to traditional residential, commercial, and industrial customers, and understands and exercises as appropriate the opportunities presented by emergent customer groups (e.g., high strength waste producers, power companies).

3. **Employee and Leadership Development**: Recruits and retains a workforce that is competent, motivated, adaptive, and safety-focused. Establishes a participatory, collaborative organization dedicated to continual learning, improvement, and innovation. Ensures employee institutional knowledge is retained, transferred, and improved upon over time. Provides a focus on and emphasizes opportunities for professional and leadership development, taking into account the differing needs and expectations of a multi-generational workforce and for resource recovery facilities. Establishes an integrated and well-coordinated senior leadership team.

4. **Operational Optimization**: Ensures ongoing, timely, cost-effective, reliable, and sustainable performance improvements in all facets of its operations in service to public health and environmental protection. Makes effective use of data from automated and smart systems, and learns from performance monitoring. Minimizes resource use, loss, and impacts from day-to-day operations, and reduces all forms of waste. Maintains awareness of information and operational technology developments to anticipate and support timely adoption of improvements.
6. **Infrastructure Strategy and Performance**: Understands the condition of and costs associated with critical infrastructure assets. Plans infrastructure investments consistent with anticipated growth, system reliability goals, and relevant community priorities, building in flexibility for evolution in technology and materials, and uncertainty in the overall future operating context (e.g., climate impacts, customer base). Maintains and enhances the condition of all assets over the long-term at the lowest possible life-cycle cost and acceptable risk consistent with customer, community, and regulator-supported service levels. Assures asset repair, rehabilitation, and replacement efforts are coordinated within the community to minimize disruptions and other negative consequences.

7. **Enterprise Resiliency**: Ensures utility leadership and staff work together internally, and with external partners, to anticipate, respond to, and avoid problems. Proactively identifies, assesses, establishes tolerance levels for, and effectively manages a full range of business risks (including interdependencies with other services and utilities, legal, regulatory, financial, environmental, safety, physical and cyber security, knowledge loss, and natural disaster-related) in a proactive way consistent with industry trends and system reliability goals.

8. **Community Sustainability**: Takes an active leadership role in promoting and organizing community sustainability improvements through collaboration with local partners (e.g., transportation departments, electrical utilities, planning departments, economic development organizations, watershed and source water protection groups). Manages operations, infrastructure, and investments to support the economic, environmental, and social health of its community. Integrates water resource management with other critical community infrastructure, social, and economic development planning to support community-wide resilience, sustainability, and livability to enhance overall water resource sustainability.

9. **Water Resource Sustainability**: Ensures the availability and sustainable management of water for its community and watershed, including water resource recovery. Understands its role in the complete water cycle, understands fit for purpose water reuse options, and integrates utility objectives and activities with other watershed managers and partners. Understands and plans for the potential for water resource variability (e.g., extreme events, such as drought and flooding), and utilizes as appropriate a full range of watershed investment and engagement strategies (e.g., Integrated Planning). Engages in long-term integrated water resource management, and ensures that current and future customer, community, and ecological water-related needs are met.

10. **Stakeholder Understanding and Support**: Engenders understanding and support from stakeholders (anyone who can affect or be affected by the utility), including customers, oversight bodies, community and watershed interests, and regulatory bodies for service levels, rate structures, operating budgets, capital improvement plans, and risk management decisions. Actively promotes an appreciation of the true value of water and water services, and water’s role in the social, economic, public, and environmental health of the community. Involves stakeholders in the decisions that will affect them, understands what it takes to operate as a “good neighbor,” and positions the utility as a critical asset to the community.
### Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Master Plan Focus Areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Quality</td>
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<td>Customer Satisfaction</td>
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<td>Employee &amp; Leadership Development</td>
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<td>Operational Optimization</td>
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<td>Financial Viability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Strategy and Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterprise Resiliency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Sustainability</td>
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(*) Attributes deal directly with communications

In addition to the Ten Attributes, the Five Keys to Management Success are also a critical component of effective utility management:

1. **Leadership:** Leadership responds to both internal organizational and broader external community imperatives. It is critical to effective utility management, particularly in the context of driving and inspiring change within an organization and in its surrounding community.

2. **Strategic Business Planning:** Strategic business planning provides a framework for decision making and helps to achieve balance and cohesion across the Ten Attributes.

3. **Measurement:** Measurement is the backbone of successful continual improvement management and strategic business planning. A measurement system serves to focus attention on key issues, clarify expectations, facilitate decision making, support learning and improving, establish and maintain accountability, and, most importantly, communicate effectively internally and externally.

4. **Continual Improvement Management:** Continual improvement management is usually implemented through a complete, start-to-finish management system, also referred to as a “Plan-Do-Check-Act” framework.

5. **Knowledge Management:** Knowledge management is critical to ensuring reliable utility operations. It includes standard operating procedures, human resource management, and business systems and operating systems data integration to support dependable operations and continual improvement.

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Acronyms Used in this Master Plan

AIA
Asset Inventory and Assessment

AMWA
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

AWWA
American Water Works Association

BAMI-I
Buried Asset Management Institute-International

CDBG
Community Development Block Grant

CDBG-ED
Community Development Block Grants for Economic Development

CDBG-I
Community Development Block Grant-Infrastructure

CIP
Capital Improvement Plan

COG
Council of Government

CWA
Clean Water Act

CWSRF
Clean Water State Revolving Fund

DW
Drinking Water

DWSRF
Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

EDA
(U.S.) Economic Development Administration

EFCN
Environmental Finance Center Network

EPA
U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency

EUM
Effective Utility Management

FAQs
Frequently Asked Questions

GAAP
Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

GASB
Governmental Accounting Standards Board

GIS
Geographic Information System

HUC
High Unit Cost

HUD
(U.S.) Department of) Housing and Urban Development

IAM
Institute of Asset Management
LGC
Local Government Commission

MHI
Median Household Income

MRF
Merger/Regionalization Feasibility

NACWA
National Association of Clean Water Agencies

NCACC
North Carolina Association of County Commissioners

NCAWWA-WEA
North Carolina American Water Works Association-Water Environment Association

NCGS
North Carolina General Statute

NCLM
North Carolina League of Municipalities

NCRWA
North Carolina Rural Water Association

RCAP
Rural Community Assistance Partnership

SERCAP
Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project

SDWA
Safe Drinking Water Act

SRF
State Revolving Fund

UIM
Utility Infrastructure Management

UNC
University of North Carolina

UNC-EFC
University of North Carolina Environmental Finance Center

UNC-SOG
University of North Carolina School of Government

UOTF
Utilities of the Future

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

USDA-RD
United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development

US EPA
United States Environmental Protection Agency

WEF
Water Environment Federation

WRF
Water Research Foundation

WW
Wastewater
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