



Rural Community  
Assistance Partnership

## RCAP to Launch New National Rural Water-Wastewater Leadership Development Program

*Initiative seeks to build the skills of emerging and underrepresented leaders in the water sector, particularly in rural areas that often face significant turnover and are threatened by the Silver Tsunami as experienced operators, managers, board members and administrative staff retire*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** (January 5, 2023) – The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) has been selected to lead an initiative to engage emerging leaders in the water industry at both the staff and governing board/council level to ensure that the sustainability of rural water and wastewater systems is maintained in the coming decades, and that the next generation’s leaders across rural America have the skills necessary to be successful. Although rural leaders of all walks of life are welcome, RCAP will work to recruit and empower leaders who are often underrepresented in the rural water sector including women and BIPOC leaders.

A national rural leadership curriculum is being developed based on successful programs in two of RCAP’s six regions and in year one will include a train the trainer workshop and will be piloted by RCAP’s Western partner, the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) and RCAP’s Great Lakes partner, the Great Lakes Community Action Partnership (GLCAP). Depending on funding availability for years two and three, RCAP plans to pilot the program with each of RCAP’s six regional partners, culminating in a national water leaders’ forum. In the future, RCAP plans to translate the curriculum into Spanish and will also pilot it in Indian Country and ensure it is relevant for up-and-coming Tribal leadership. Participants will cultivate personal and professional leadership skills that they can use in their current, or future, roles as water utility clerks, board members, or staff. For example, participants will learn about conflict management, which is very important when difficult decisions need to be made, as well as governance structures, often useful when planning for growth or consolidation of utilities. RCAP is experienced at training up rural water leaders across the country, mostly in more informal capacity building settings, but some of its regional partners, like RCAC, have formal programs. RCAC [recently completed](#) its second Water Leadership Institute in partnership with the Environmental Defense Fund(EDF), graduating 14 professionals from California’s water-starved Central Valley (one of many cohorts to graduate in the West under RCAC’s tutelage in the last decade plus of their leadership program’s existence). The first EDF and RCAC co-sponsored program [previously](#) graduated 30 participants in 2016.

“As one of the authors of the Leadership Program, it gives me great satisfaction to have this program elevated to the regional and now national level,” said RCAP CEO Olga Morales-Pate. “Sometimes the most obvious missing infrastructure in our rural communities is the human infrastructure. We need to invest in building and reinforcing that infrastructure to make sure our communities thrive, and it begins with that foundational piece – leadership development.





## Rural Community Assistance Partnership

The development of our current and future water leaders is critical to the sustainability of our rural communities.”

“RCAP is very excited to have the opportunity to take what has been very impactful for many years in a few of our regions and build the internal capacity across our entire network to provide intensive and robust rural water leadership development training to mixed cohorts of water/wastewater system staff and owners across the country to ensure strong leadership in Rural America that is representative of its customer base, and intentionally inclusive with a focus on up-and-coming women and BIPOC leaders,” said RCAP Chief Programs Officer Sarah Buck.

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*The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) is a national network of non-profit partners working to provide technical assistance, training, resources, and support to rural communities across every state, the U.S. territories, and Tribal lands. Through RCAP’s regional partners, more than 350 technical assistance providers (TAPs) build long-term, trusted relationships with thousands of communities across the country.*

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