

Considerations for Designing a Successful Water Affordability Technical Assistance Program

Prepared by Metropolitan Planning Council and Waterwell, LLC, in partnership with Elevate

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Introduction

The following report presents program design-related thoughts and considerations for offering water affordability technical assistance (TA). These considerations are based on insights and lessons learned during pilot projects with the cities of Chicago and Evanston, qualitative interviews with water affordability experts and TA program managers, and a review of best practices in implementing TA programs.

This report is a culmination of the learnings, interviews, and research on this topic, and its audience is TA providers, with a goal of informing successful program design.

Background

In 2019, Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC), Elevate, and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG) collaborated to produce a report titled, [Water Affordability in Northeastern Illinois: Addressing Water Equity in a Time of Rising Costs](#). Key findings from that report include:

- A water burden exists when a household must decide between paying the water bill and paying for other basic necessities (e.g., food, shelter, medical care), either because the cost of water service is too high or the household's income is insufficient to cover the cost
- Water burden is widespread throughout northeastern Illinois
- People of color bear inequitable water burden as compared to white people
- The commonly-used measure of water affordability – water charges as a percent of median household income – masks the extent of the problem
- Equity is an important consideration given that some municipalities lack the capacity to plan, pay for, or implement assistance programs
- Affordability solutions vary at the local level; a one-size-fits-all solution does not exist

The purpose of the initial research was to begin a dialogue on water affordability with relevant stakeholders and identify next steps for addressing this important challenge. Specifically, "given current fiscal challenges related to income growth and rising costs, more attention (and resources) at the national, state and county scale will be necessary to assist communities in ensuring safe and sustainable water service for communities now and into the future."¹

Since the release of the initial report, two pilot projects were carried out with the cities of Chicago and Evanston to assist those municipalities in understanding the particular water affordability

¹ "Water Affordability in Northeastern Illinois: Addressing Water Equity in a Time of Rising Costs," MPC, Elevate, and IISG, <https://www.metroplanning.org/work/project/16/subpage/12>.

challenges facing their community members. The success of these pilots confirmed the viability of a TA program to support communities² in addressing water affordability challenges.

² Note: Throughout this report, we use the terms community, municipality, and utility interchangeably, generally in reference to municipally-owned public water systems, the elected officials and staff charged with operating them, and/or the residents, businesses, and other stakeholders they serve.

Key Considerations: Lessons learned through pilots

Based on the experience of the team in working on pilot projects with the cities of Chicago and Evanston, the following provides key considerations for how a water affordability TA program could be most effective and successful.

Partner for holistic solutions

There is a long-established practice and process by which a municipal water utility bids to have a water rate study or cost-of-service study conducted. Likewise, there are numerous consulting firms that specialize in water rate studies and cost-of-service studies for communities. This is a competitive field of work and one that is also quite political in nature. It requires presenting at evening municipal public meetings and wading through local bureaucracy. Instead of going into the business of doing in-house water rate or cost-of-service studies for communities, TA providers would be **better served by partnering with progressive firms to offer a full package service for a community.**

Consider partnering with consulting firms that specialize in water rate studies. The consulting firm would do the traditional water rate study while TA providers could **specialize in developing a comprehensive analysis and recommendations that tackle the larger picture of water equity and affordability** within the community. A main takeaway from the pilots Elevate and MPC have done is identifying that equitable and affordable water service is not only about setting an appropriate water rate and/or structure – it entails a more holistic analysis and approach to solving equity and affordability challenges related to water service by looking in-depth at:

- Customer demographics, such as race, age, renter vs. owner, meter size
- Customer classes or categorizations, such as single family, multi-family, condominium, commercial, industrial
- Water bill burden and debt
- Shutoff and leakage policies
- Existing customer service and/or assistance programs

Based on this holistic analysis, TA providers would be able to **make recommendations that address the whole problem** – not just the water rate and/or structure – such as:

- Creating an overarching water affordability plan
- Developing new programs and policies (budget billing, affordability program, debt relief, leakage in homes, approach to shutoffs/reconnections, etc.)
- Improving community engagement, customer service, and relationship-building (town hall meetings, interactive website, social media, etc.)
- Re-envisioning the mission, branding, and practices of the utility to be more customer-focused
- Improving data management to better serve community members

Create a market

There is a need to entice municipalities/utilities for this type of technical assistance – they either aren't fully sold yet on the value of TA or aren't willing to pay for it. Accordingly, a recommendation for a TA program would be to **develop template language that a utility could include in its regular Request for Proposals (RFP)** to consultants for doing a rate study or cost of service study. This way the larger perspective of water affordability would be included in those types of studies, and, in some cases, TA providers could capitalize on being a subcontractor for those consulting agencies in providing the holistic water affordability analysis. TA providers could market this holistic perspective to utilities before they release an RFP or work with consultants to include it in proposals.

Assess data availability

The quality and availability of data able to be provided by a community greatly impacts both the amount of staff time as well as the ability to make quality recommendations. It will be important for TA providers to **develop a standard data “wish list” to share with potential clients** as a way to identify, up front, what kind of quantitative analysis could be done to help identify affordability challenges and potential solutions. Items on the data list should include:

- Customer account details, such as customer class categorization (e.g., building type), billing amounts and history, past or current debt, shutoffs, leakage alerts, meter size, participation in an existing affordability program, etc.
- Current water and sewer rates, including current rates, the rate structure (e.g., flat rate, inclining block rate, seasonal rates, etc.), other fees or taxes charged on the water service bill (e.g., garbage fees), etc.
- Existing customer programs or policies, such as affordability assistance, shutoff/reconnection policy, leak notifications or assistance, metering or lead abatement initiatives, etc.

Improve data – a value add

The work Elevate and MPC did for the Chicago and Evanston pilot projects highlighted how much value a third-party can provide a municipality/utility. This includes not only identifying what a community's particular affordability challenges might be and what solutions would be appropriate, but also helping to identify areas for improvement in data management. This can include:

- Helping to clean up datasets
- More clearly organize and/or code datasets
- Provide information about customer accounts in a whole new light, e.g., customer categorization, meter sizing, merging of multiple datasets for ease of use, etc.

All of these improvements add great value to the TA recipient by enabling better management of its data and customers such that **future decisions can be based on quality data and information, and customers can be better served.**

Analyze work hours

In order to move forward in building a program of work that helps municipalities/utilities tackle water affordability, an **understanding of resource commitments** is critical. It is important for TA providers to evaluate how much time, funding, and what types of expertise will be required to complete each project. Compared to Evanston, the quantitative work for Chicago took a considerable amount of time, involving the cleaning and analysis of data from nearly nine million residential water bills. While future projects could be more streamlined, each project is expected to take several months depending on the size of the community and their priorities for the project. Each step of the process takes time, from the initial meeting to the finalized scope, development and execution of a memorandum of understanding or contract, the time required to fulfill the data request, and much, much more. This understanding will be helpful for future budgeting of time, resources (staff), and funding required to conduct a successful water affordability initiative with a community.

Identify dedicated staff

Understanding the complexity of this work and the analysis required highlights the importance of **identifying key staff** to work on water-related analyses. These staff members need not work exclusively on water affordability-related projects, but they should be slated as the dedicated staff that runs those types of projects when they come in. This would enable efficiency, continuity, and continued expertise development of staff for working in the water sector – and specifically on water affordability.

Invest time + skill in qualitative analysis

It **takes a considerable amount of time** to:

- Identify key staff, agencies, and community members to speak with
- Conduct outreach to those contacts
- Schedule and iron out logistics (e.g., online or in-person, interpreter needed, incentives offered) for interviews or focus groups
- Conduct the interviews or focus groups
- Write summaries and identify key messages and takeaways that will inform recommendations

However, the quality information and feedback obtained from qualitative analysis should not be overlooked. The analyses done during the Chicago and Evanston pilots yielded beneficial insights and directly informed recommendations based on firsthand experiences of both staff and community members. In addition to respecting the amount of time qualitative analysis requires,

there is also a need to **consider the sensitive nature of this type of research**. It will be important to have designated staff that have training and are most appropriate to conduct an interview.

Ensure buy-in + engage the right stakeholders

For recommendations to be successful, the right people need to be involved in the process, both from the municipality and utility, community members, and for the TA project team. As is best practice, TA providers and any partners should research and connect with local agencies and organizations within a potential client community to identify who might be key stakeholders and/or partners that should be engaged in some capacity during a project.

Knowing who the local players are and connecting with them will enable the team to more equitably and effectively **work in and with the community** on water affordability issues. These key players often have the trust of the community and can assist with general outreach as well as support and/or promote any new programs that might be developed long-term. Additionally, it may often be appropriate to identify and partner with local organizations in the community who could conduct interviews or focus groups on behalf of, or in tandem with, TA providers.

The following sections provide more detail about considerations for different stakeholder types.

Community and utility

The mayor/president, councilors/trustees, and other decision makers must be engaged early and often, of course, but so, too, does staff within the organization. When the values of every stakeholder are reflected in the ultimate plan, the result is more likely to be met with broad acceptance. Additionally, engagement of every department will improve the applicability of the plan. For example, a robust financial plan requires detailed knowledge about infrastructure, capital improvement goals and strategies, how recommendations can be paid for, the billing system, legal requirements, and more. This information then needs to be aligned with the different types of water customers, their proportional responsibility for the costs incurred by the utility, and a thorough understanding of the affordability challenges facing low-income residents and their ability to pay a share of the costs.

Depending on the municipality or utility's goals, it may be necessary to include others in these conversations, such as representatives from the wastewater utility, community organizations focused on water or environmental justice, workforce development organizations, environmental conservation groups, housing advocates, and other local stakeholders that care about water affordability.

Community members

In addition to the experts mentioned above, every project should include a communications specialist to lead the public outreach and, in particular, take technical results and turn them into key messages for various audiences. These audiences include a range of stakeholders (i.e., more

than just residents), and the communications piece should flow through the entire project. For example, begin stakeholder engagement at the beginning of a project, starting with elected officials, decision makers, and others who may have some interest in the outcome, such as environmental groups, homeowners associations, builders associations, the business community, etc.

Residential ratepayers are an important group to engage, too, and targeted engagement is key. Frequently, only a subset of the customer base will come to public meetings, and, even then, only the most vocal may provide feedback. Proactive engagement is necessary to determine what ratepayers know about a utility, about their water service, about rates, and to elicit their priorities. This work should pull from a variety of tools to address the unique needs of the target stakeholder group, to determine what is important and what trade-offs are acceptable (e.g., level of service vs. cost of service).

Utilities may have communications staff, but it is important to recognize that an affordability program will need to connect with low-income communities and may require special considerations to ensure a robust engagement strategy.

TA project team

The necessary experts will vary based on the project but may include a water economist, financial analyst, engagement specialist, data scientist, someone knowledgeable about utility operations and management, and legal experts.

Key Considerations: Advice from interviewed experts

To ensure a future water affordability TA program will be effective, MPC and Waterwell, LLC, conducted direct outreach to water affordability experts. The interviews sought to answer questions regarding what kind of TA municipalities and utilities require, as well as how to ensure such assistance meets the needs of the municipality/utility and is able to be implemented. The individuals interviewed include:

- **Adam Carpenter, PhD**, Manager of Energy and Environmental Policy, American Water Works Association
- **Janet Clements**, Director of Water Resources Planning and Economics, Corona Environmental Consulting
- **John Mastracchio, CFA**, Vice President, Raftelis Financial Consultants
- **Zoe Roller**, Water Equity Fellow, U.S. Water Alliance

See Appendix A for an overview of these organizations' water affordability-related work. What follows is a summary of their recommendations and key considerations for a successful water affordability TA program, followed by our research into best practices.

Interviews with leaders in the field of water affordability informed recommendations to create a water affordability TA program. Topics include: Important considerations; Ensuring buy-in and engaging the right stakeholders; Considerations to ensure success of local water affordability programs; and Evaluating impact.

Important considerations

For the most part, the organizations we spoke with respond to utility solicitations or have an existing relationship with utilities. That said, when asked how we can elevate the importance of addressing water affordability challenges, they advised we **use the utility's own data**. Elected officials usually are aware of affordability issues – including food, housing, water, and more – but do not always realize the pace at which the cost of water has gone up relative to other household essentials. Using readily available data from the utility can highlight the extent of the problem or indicate which portions of the service area may be struggling to afford utility bills.

Besides data, the experts we interviewed recommended **connecting elected officials with peers** to discuss shared challenges, practices that have worked, and lessons learned. Concrete examples from other municipalities can be helpful when making the case for addressing affordability challenges. Local water advocates can also be helpful in this regard.

Even when responding to a request for proposals, though, the **utility may not highlight affordability as a top concern**. For example, when beginning work on a rate analysis, the consultant may ask what the utility's priorities are, and the answer is often related to increasing revenue and maintaining financial stability. Municipal and utility stakeholders need to be shown

how programs which address affordability can help generate additional revenue for the utility, the different rate structures that are possible, and where additional revenue might come from.

Considerations to ensure success of local water affordability programs

Among the water affordability experts we spoke with, one told us the plan is outdated the day after it is completed. Things change. New priorities get uncovered. Unexpected situations arise which can impact finances. Accordingly, it is important to **keep the plan flexible and revisit it frequently**. It is the utility manager's job to keep the plan in front of municipal elected officials, track progress, and, if not on-track, develop a plan to update implementation procedures.

Outreach is important, too. If people do not know an assistance program exists, it does not matter how well-designed that program is. Make things available through different mediums and in different languages. A third party outreach consultant can be helpful in this regard, such as a neighborhood ambassador to go out and talk to communities. Such individuals can help a utility determine the barriers to reaching people and to those individuals' accessing the program. Beyond this, we heard several recommendations for multiple agencies to collaborate on enrollment and providing assistance, such as partnering with Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Also, one interviewee mentioned that water utilities map roughly onto a bell-shaped curve. A small handful are at the cutting edge of offering affordability programs, many in a broad middle category are happy to move in that direction when there is precise guidance on how to do so and norms are established, while some others will only comply when required to do so. The advice that followed encouraged us to **target the front-runners and use them as positive examples**.

Evaluating impact

Key performance measures will vary from project to project. Revenue is, obviously, a key consideration – e.g., cash on hand for emergencies, sufficient revenues for debt service coverage, not overly borrowed (% of capital improvement plan funded) – but, for water affordability programs, enrollment is the primary metric. Who is eligible vs. who signed up? We heard program participation is usually around 15%, and Manny Teodoro, PhD, points out that even Philadelphia's much-lauded program has an enrollment rate around 25%.³

Looking beyond enrollment, evaluation metrics can assess housing security, measured by liens, shutoffs, and reconnections among program participants. Also, over time, are shutoffs and delinquencies reduced? If so, how does that impact revenue for the utility? If it results in a net gain, that can provide the business case to expand the program. One of the experts we interviewed mentioned a municipal partner that did not have the financial resources to launch an affordability all at once, choosing a staged implementation instead. At the beginning, eligibility requirements were extremely, i.e., only households making 100% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The goal was to

³ Manny Teodoro, "Batting .400," Manny Teodoro, March 29, 2021, <http://mannyteodoro.com/?p=1856>.

increase that to 250% FPL, which would make many more households eligible, but the utility plans to increase to that level in steps, starting with 150% FPL. This way, they were able to help households most in need and increase participation over time, as revenues increase.

Interviews + Research on Effective TA Programs

In addition to water affordability experts, the project team also conducted interviews with TA program administrators, as well as conducted research on best practices for administering TA programs. The following section highlights the advice and findings from these efforts.

Interviews with TA program managers

The project team conducted interviews with Bob Dean from the Center for Neighborhood Technology and Nancy Firfer from the Metropolitan Planning Council, based on their experience with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance (LTA) Program and “Homes for a Changing Region” (a program aimed at assessing and planning for municipal housing needs), respectively. The discussions focused on the application process and vetting applicants with a view to choosing projects which are likely to succeed.

CMAP LTA Program

CMAP is the metropolitan planning organization for the seven-county region of northeastern Illinois. Their [LTA program](#) was launched in 2010 to support communities in developing and implementing plans that align with the region's long-range plan. They issue an annual call for projects, and eligible applicants include municipalities, nonprofits, neighborhood groups, and others.

We spoke with advisors about how to select projects with a high likelihood of success, and their recommendations were incorporated into MPC's Drinking Water 1-2-3 Technical Assistance program application (see Appendix B). In addition to standard questions about Geographic Scope, Problem Statement, Proposed Project, etc., the application includes a section for the applicant to explain the Local Commitment (i.e., to specify key officials and staff who will support the project, if selected) and requires a Letter of Commitment from the top elected official representing the primary applicant and, if applicable, a Letter of Support from the seniormost official representing each project partner.

After narrowing the field of applicants, conducting in-person interviews with senior staff and elected officials from the municipality and utility is the next step. Sample questions include the following:

- Have you discussed this TA application with your Aldermen, Council members, or Trustees? What is their opinion? Do you have buy-in from them?
- Does this idea exist anywhere else, e.g., in the municipality's comprehensive plan? That is, is this a longstanding priority?
- Which staff members would assist on this project? Where does this project rank in their priorities relative to existing work and other projects? Do they have time to support this project?
- What outside partners/organizations do you plan to involve in this project?

The goal of all of these steps is to determine, essentially, the seriousness of the applicant, their ability to support the TA project team – such as fulfilling the data request – and the likelihood of the project to be implemented upon completion. This interview is then followed by discussions with the applicant’s references, i.e., individuals or firms with experience working with the applicant to determine whether there are any concerns to be aware of.

Homes for a Changing Region

[Homes for a Changing Region](#) is a joint initiative between the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, MPC, and CMAP which helps municipalities evaluate and plan for future housing needs. The program has been in existence since 2005 and assists three communities in a typical year.

The project selection process shares many similarities with CMAP’s LTA program. First, there is a general call for projects, which was included in the process as a deliberate choice because they prefer that a community ask for assistance. The project team wants to be “invited in,” as this serves as an indication of the seriousness of the applicant. In many cases, they also court applicants by calling a select few who they know would benefit from the assistance. Either way, the mayor must be directly involved in the project. The project team does background research on the community and, as with CMAP’s LTA program, interview elected officials and the staff who will be involved before final selection. This is to ensure commitment and as well as to clarify the expectations of the project team. The project team has specific goals of what they hope to accomplish with the program and want to make sure the community is aligned with their vision.

Research on TA administration + provision

The following outlines findings of best practices in the administration and provision of TA identified through a desktop review.

- **Application considerations**

Application windows can be quarterly, biannually, or annually, depending on the capacity of the program. Annual is the most common. Application dates can be fixed or variable, such as announced via Call for Projects. The application window is often two months, and the application review period ranges from two months to a maximum of eight months.

To assist potential applicants, within the first few weeks of an application window, one or more informational meetings should be offered. For example, one session can be held to provide information on the program and a second can be held to explain the application process. These are often supplemented by FAQs and other materials, such as evaluation and selection criteria, process timeline, application checklist, etc.

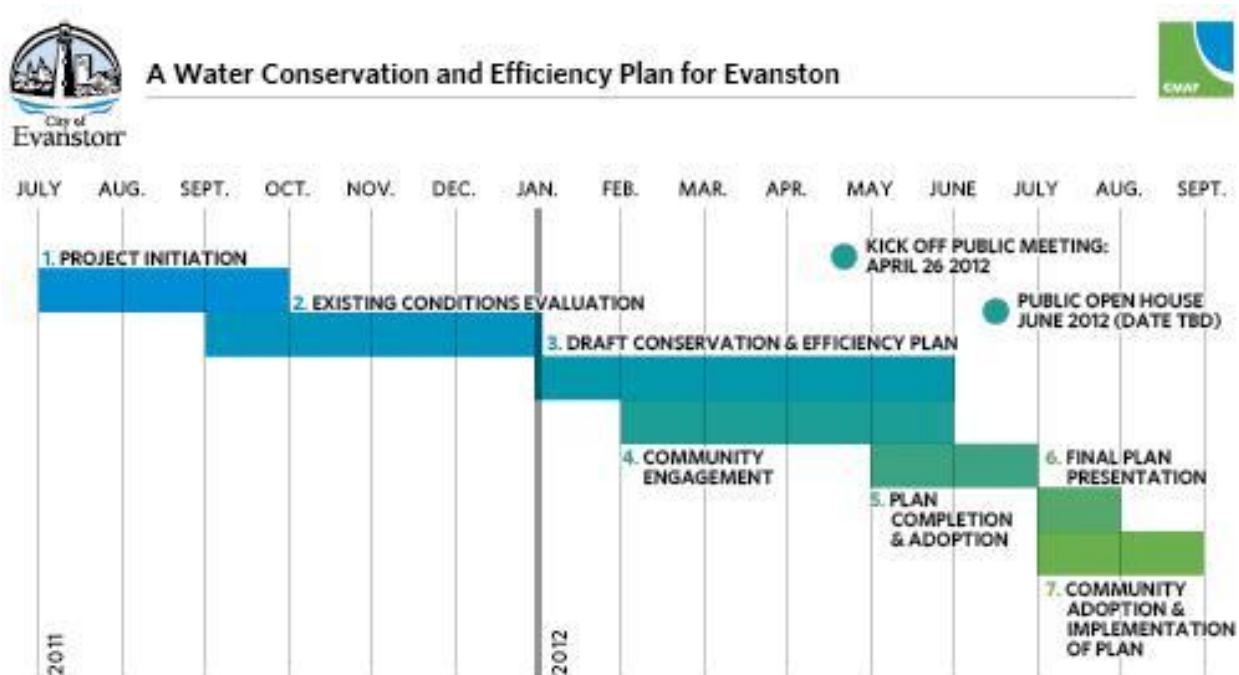
Application forms are usually editable PDF or Excel documents that can be submitted via mail, email, or online application portal. If deemed appropriate, consider including the TA

program in directories, catalogs, etc., e.g., the Illinois Catalog of State Assistance to Local Governments.⁴

- Project timeline

Based both on interviews and our desktop search, we found that TA programs range in length from as short as 3-6 months (for small communities or intensive engagement) to two years or more (for larger communities or more complex project scopes). Homes for a Changing Region engages municipal partners for a term of 18 months, and implementation is built into the timeline. CMAP LTA projects last one year and then transition to less-intensive implementation support (see figure below). This timeline also matches MPC’s Drinking Water 1-2-3 Technical Assistance program as well as the water affordability pilot projects in the cities of Chicago and Evanston conducted by Elevate and MPC.

Figure. Sample timeline of a CMAP LTA project⁵



⁴ “Catalog of State assistance to local governments: Thirteenth Biennial Edition” Illinois General Assembly Legislative Research Unit, <https://www.ilga.gov/commission/lru/salg.pdf>.

⁵ Screenshot. “A Water Conservation and Efficiency Plan for Evanston,” CMAP, <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs/ta/evanston>.

Conclusion

The Water Affordability in Northeastern Illinois report highlighted the extent of water burden in our region, and pilot projects in Chicago and Evanston confirmed that a TA program can support communities in addressing water affordability challenges. Applying lessons learned from these projects, key considerations for ensuring a water affordability TA program will be effective include partnering with firms that already offer rate studies or cost of service studies. TA providers' value add can be a specialization in developing recommendations that tackle water equity and affordability and holistically address the problem.

In support of this work, template language can be developed for utilities to include in RFPs and a data "wish list" to streamline the process with potential municipal/utility partners. It is important to consider the quality and availability of data, in addition to the proposed deliverables, when determining the staff, time, and resource commitments of a given TA project. Given the sensitivities surrounding this type of work, community engagement is vital at every step of the project, and a broad range of stakeholders must be involved – from the community and utility, community members, and on the TA project team.

This report presents program design-related thoughts and considerations for offering water affordability TA. The recommendations reflect lessons learned from pilot projects, interviews, and a research of best practices, all of which confirmed the importance of this type of assistance and provided key considerations on how to meet the needs of the municipality/utility and choosing projects likely to be successful.

For more information, visit: metroplanning.org/wateraffordability.

Appendix A – Overview of organizations interviewed and their water affordability-related work

MPC and Waterwell, LLC, conducted direct outreach to water affordability experts from the following organizations:

[American Water Works Association](#) focuses on advocacy and education. The organization works with U.S. Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency to develop regulations to protect safe water without hurting affordability and, if possible, establish federal funding streams to assist utilities. They also produce educational materials to assist utilities, such as how to design an assistance program, how to increase efficiency through water loss control and operational efficiency.

[Corona Environmental Consulting](#) develops metrics to assess affordability. They develop a detailed picture of the customer base and characteristics of customers needing assistance based on billing data and differences amongst households in different census tracts. Having this understanding allows the municipality/utility to narrow the pool of households in need of assistance and identify targeted interventions.

[Raftelis Financial Consultants](#) works with utilities to develop rate structures that balance community values and objectives, among which affordability is often a priority. They frequently have an existing relationship with these utilities.

[U.S. Water Alliance](#) is a membership-based organization that, among other water-related projects, works with utilities that see affordability as a challenge but are overwhelmed or do not know what is possible. The organization has members throughout the country, and their affordability challenges differ – for example, Rust Belt cities are frequently concerned with poverty and offering assistance programs while maintaining sufficient revenue, while western/southwestern states often look at the connection between conservation and affordability.

Appendix B – Drinking Water 1-2-3 Technical Assistance program application

Drinking Water 1-2-3 Academy **Technical Assistance Application Form**

As part of the [Drinking Water 1-2-3 Academy](#), the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) is accepting applications for targeted assistance and on-the-ground implementation of critical best practices in drinking water management. Up to three projects will be selected for technical assistance with a coordinated team of experts. Project selections will be made in late 2019, with projects taking place in 2020.

The deadline for application is **Friday, October 11, 2019**. Proposed projects should align with best practices featured in the [Drinking Water 1-2-3 guide](#). Applicants must be representatives of a municipality or a municipal partnership (i.e., multiple municipalities or a municipality with a non-profit organization, park district, etc.) within northeastern Illinois. Applicant(s) must have the authority and ability to implement project initiative(s).

1. Primary Applicant Municipality: _____

2. Applicant Contact Person:

Name _____
Title/Position _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____

3. Type of Applicant:

- Individual municipality
- Municipal partnership (Please list)

4. Geographic Scope:

In what geographic area would the proposed project take place? Can also attach a map.

5. Problem Statement:

Provide a detailed description of the proposed project and what assistance is required.

6. Proposed Project Type:

What type of water best management practice(s) does the proposed project address? (Check all that apply)

- Incorporating water supply needs & goals into community comprehensive plans
- Public education & engagement to reduce drinking water demand
- Water loss control best management practices
- Addressing affordability and/or conservation in water rate setting
- Implementing sensible salting practices
- Exploring service sharing and/or joint procurement for cost savings
- Assistance creating a community plan for lead service line education & remediation
- Other idea(s), please specify:

7. Statement of Need:

Identify obstacles, barriers or constraints which make the project otherwise infeasible for the applicant(s) to complete without technical assistance.

8. Local Commitment:

A commitment of time and effort from the applicant(s) is required; submission of an application constitutes acceptance of this stipulation. Specify key officials and staff who will lead, work on, and/or support this project, if selected.

9. Supplemental Material – Letter(s) of Commitment:

In addition to this application form, a Letter of Commitment is required from the top elected official representing the primary applicant. If the proposed project involves a partnership or multijurisdictional group, a Letter of Support is also required from the senior-most official representing each project partner. Please attach.

Send completed applications to academy@metroplanning.org. Applicants are encouraged to contact MPC with any questions prior to submitting an application.

A committee of advisors will assist MPC in reviewing submissions. The project selection process may include follow-up calls and/or site visits. If selected, a Memorandum of Understanding with the primary applicant and any partner applicants, if applicable, will be required.