

Planners/State-level Community Reps.

RECENT PRACTICES

As we begin, please have your copy of the NC Water Infrastructure Commission handy for reference later in this interview. We will begin by discussing the current funding process for W/S projects. We define the funding process as beginning with the identification of a project and concluding when a community receives funds for that project.

Funding Process

- 1) Please briefly describe your organization's involvement in planning and/or funding water and sewer projects.

- 2) What methods of coordination (informal discussion, written agreements, joint funding, regional planning, etc.) have you seen used among stakeholders in the funding process?

- 3) What value do you think a well-prepared CIP and/or Water Supply Plan provide communities during the funding process?

- 4) Why do you think the current amount of planning among stakeholders is sufficient/insufficient to sustainably fund W/S infrastructure in NC?

- 5) What specific planning activities do you think communities need more assistance to complete during the funding process?

- 6) Do you have any suggestions for ways that funding agencies (individually or in coordination with other agencies) can promote better planning at the local or state level?

COMMISSION ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE & SERVICES

Thank you for completing the section on the current funding process in NC. The next section will ask questions about statewide coordination of W/S funding. Late in the 2005 session, the NC legislature amended the State statutes, replacing the State Infrastructure Council with the State Water Infrastructure Commission (G.S. 159 G). The Commission has the following purpose: "To identify the State's water infrastructure needs, develop a

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plan to meet those needs, and monitor the implementation of the plan.” The following questions address potential organizational structures of the commission and services that could be provided by the Commission or existing organizations. Please assume for this set of questions that the Commission decides to implement a plan that involves coordinated funding for W/S infrastructure.

Organizational Structure & Extent of Services

- 7) Are there any organizations that you think should work closely with the Commission to help it carry out its mission? Please refer to your list of current appointments to the Commission, which was provided by e-mail.

- 8) Do you have any opinions about how the commission should carry out its tasks? For example, should the Commission have any committees and/or subcommittees, should it have its own staff, or should it rely on existing services?

- 9) If the Commission were to be involved in prioritizing projects for funding, what criteria for prioritization would you like to see used?

- 10) I am going to read a list of eleven statewide funding and coordination services that could be provided at some point in the future. Tell me if you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), are Neutral (N), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD) with the provision of each of these services.
SA, A, N, D, SD
 - a. ___ Compiling a single statewide database of community W/S needs
 - b. ___ Compiling a statewide summary of funder eligibility requirements
 - c. ___ Long-term planning (State level)
 - d. ___ Actively promote regionalization of utilities
 - e. ___ Planning assistance for communities
 - f. ___ Maintain updated and accessible central information indicating which communities have secured funding, which ones are currently applying to specific funders, and how much funding each agency has available for the current funding cycle
 - g. ___ Hold informational conferences, workshops or fairs
 - h. ___ Develop a single application for funding from multiple funders
 - i. ___ Sell debt
 - j. ___ Work with existing funders to “leverage” their funds (i.e. Bonds backed by existing appropriations)
 - k. ___ Make recommendations to funders about which communities should receive funding and when they should receive it

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- 11) Of the activities named, are there one or two that you think would provide a substantial benefit or cost to local communities? Please elaborate.

- 12) Of the activities named, are there one or two that you think would be especially difficult to implement, and why?

- 13) Are there any other services that you think should be provided on a statewide coordinated basis?

How Much Coordination?

The final section of this interview will ask you some additional questions about potential statewide coordination with regard to W/S infrastructure projects. States throughout the country have very different coordination models. Consider the following two scenarios for statewide coordination:

I.) Formal Directive Role (similar to Arkansas model)

The Commission or a similar organization has the power to pool all applications and disburse grant and/or loan money according to a State triage system based on criteria such as needs, project feasibility, regional benefits, etc.?

II.) Informal Coordination Role (similar to Ohio model)

The Commission facilitates informal discussion and coordination between and among the funders, applicants, and other stakeholders.

- 14) Which scenario do you think would best accomplish the State's objective to "maximize the use of current funding resources?" Please describe your reasons why or discuss a middle ground that would be preferable.

- 15) Do you think a state-level body should play a role in the coordination of non-traditional infrastructure funding, such as land preservation to preserve water quality?

- 16) Do you think statewide coordination could help maximize the use of current funding resources distributed across the State? Why or why not?

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17) Do you think statewide coordination could help distribute money more fairly to communities (rural and urban) across the State? Why or why not?

18) Do you have any additional comments with regard to coordinated funding for W/S infrastructure in NC?