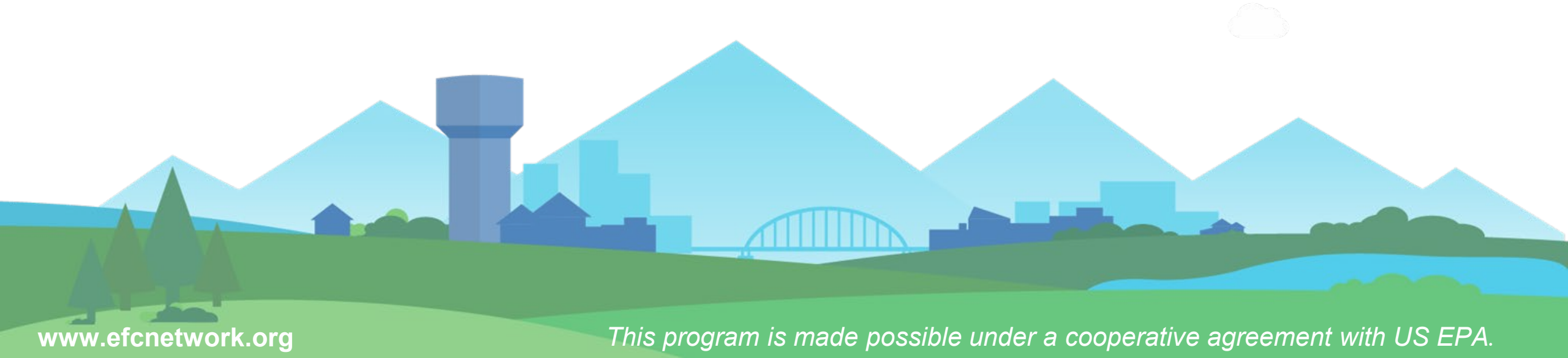
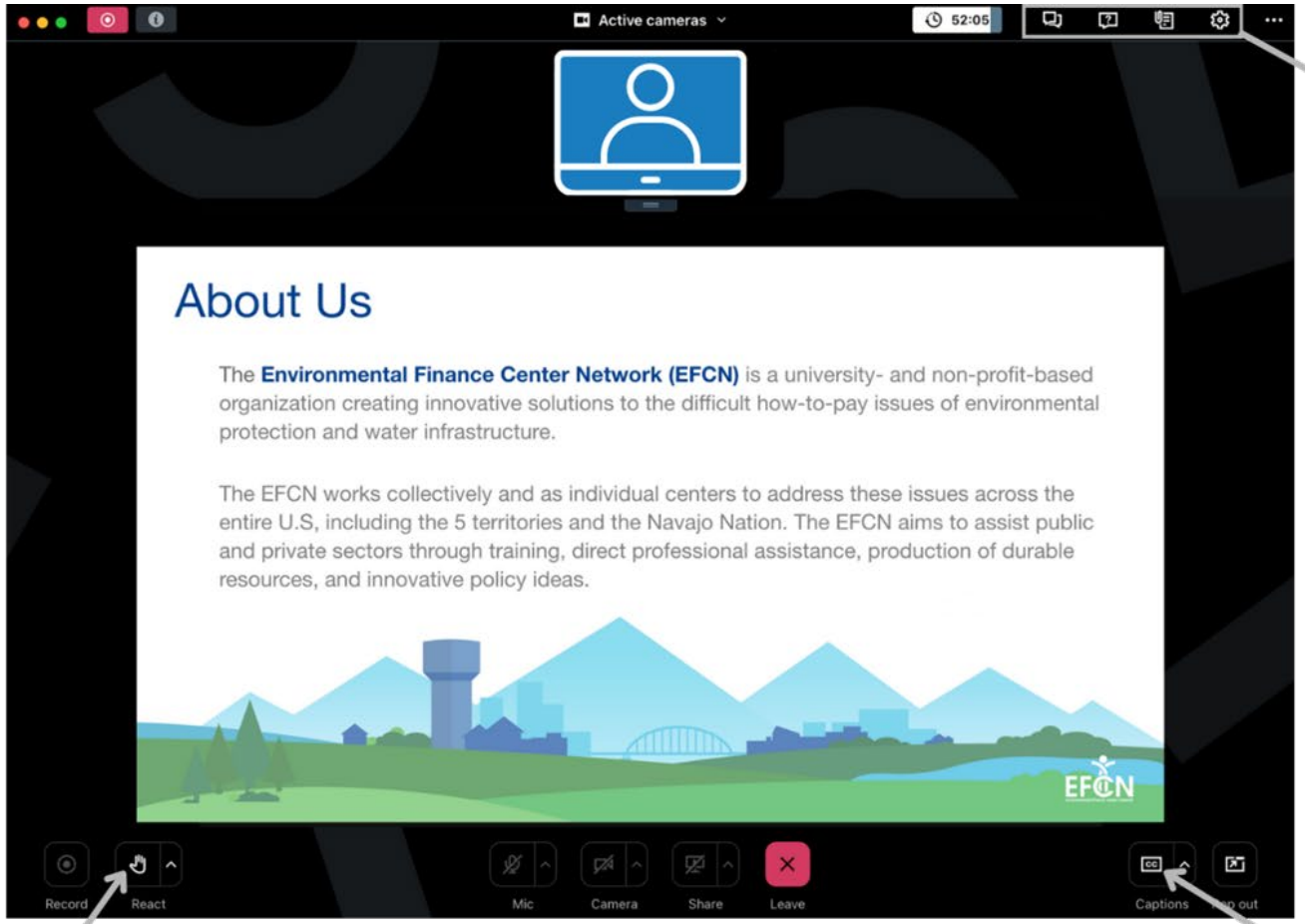
So you need a PER…

October 22, 2026



This program is made possible under a cooperative agreement with US EPA.

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If you have questions or need assistance, please contact smallsystems@syr.edu.

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About Us

The **Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN)** is a university- and non-profit-based organization creating innovative solutions to the difficult how-to-pay issues of environmental protection and water infrastructure.

The EFCN works collectively and as individual centers to address these issues across the entire U.S, including the 5 territories and the Navajo Nation. The EFCN aims to assist public and private sectors through training, direct professional assistance, production of durable resources, and innovative policy ideas.



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Request Free Technical Assistance Today

Our team of partners can help you tackle your Technical, Managerial, and Financial (TMF) challenges head -on.

Areas of assistance include, but are not limited to:

- Funding & Financial Strategy
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- Regulatory Compliance
- Rate Setting & Affordability
- Asset Management
- System Performance
- Public Engagement
- Utility Management
- Succession Planning

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Receive Expert Guidance On:

- Finding the right funding programs for your project
- Understanding eligibility & application timelines
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Today's Agenda– We'll answer these questions

- What is a PER?
- What are the benefits of a PER?
- What should be included in a PER?
- Who should be involved in preparing a PER?
- How long does it take to prepare a PER?
- How do I pay for a PER?
- How do I get someone to write the PER?

What is a PER?

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Preliminary Engineering Report (PER)

Pre-project study

Reviews existing infrastructure

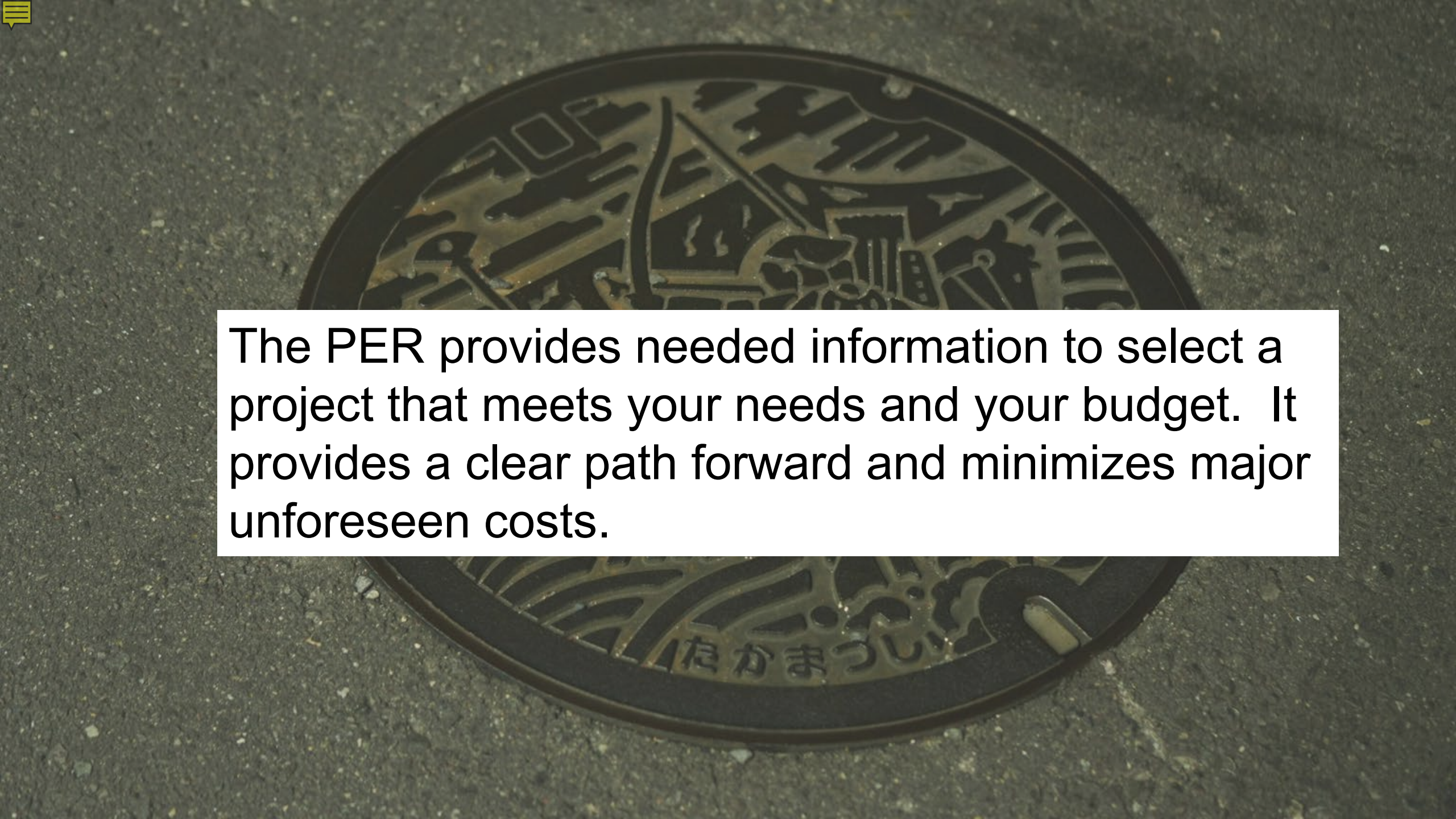
Identifies needs

Proposes solutions

Estimates costs

What are the benefits of a PER?

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The PER provides needed information to select a project that meets your needs and your budget. It provides a clear path forward and minimizes major unforeseen costs.

What should be included in a PER?

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A PER should include the following as a minimum

- Overview of the community
- Assessment of existing infrastructure
- Need for the project
- Alternatives considered
- Cost estimates
- Recommended Alternative
- Stamped by a Professional Engineer (PE) licensed in the state

Community Overview

An overview of the community being impacted by the project should include

- a location description of the area impacted,
- population trends,
- and any environmental resources that are known to be present in the area



Assessment of Infrastructure

The assessment should include:

- Infrastructure location
- Condition (past, present and future)
  - Any current failures and outcomes of those failures (i.e. Consent Order from State)
- Ability to provide the desired level of service
- Financial impacts of continuing to operate and maintain the infrastructure



Need for the Project

Projects can be needed for many reasons. The PER should spell out reasons such as:

- Health and Safety
- Aging Infrastructure
- Growth



Alternatives Considered

This section of the report should review several different approaches to solve the problem. It should also identify any impacts on environmental resources. If several upgrades are needed, it should prioritize the order of construction.

This section of the report provides communities with options. If this section of the report is not well thought out, the community is not being well served.



Alternatives Considered

This section could include the following elements:

- Description
- Design Criteria
- Map
- Environmental Impacts
- Land Requirements
- Potential Construction Problems
- Sustainability Considerations (Water & Energy Efficiency, Green Infrastructure, etc.)
- Cost Estimates



Cost Estimates

Typically costs estimates should be provided for each alternative presented. The costs should include the capital costs and the long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) costs.

A detailed cost estimate should be provided to the best of the engineer's ability. Lump sum costs should be avoided if at all possible.



Recommended Alternative

This section should identify the recommended alternative and provide details such as a projected timeline for construction, permitting needs and any needs for operator certification, specialized maintenance equipment, etc.



Recommended Alternative

This section could include the following elements:

- Preliminary Project Design
- Project Schedule
- Permit Requirements
- Sustainability Considerations
- Total Project Cost Estimate (Engineer's Opinion of Probable Cost)
- Annual Operating Budget (Income, Annual O&M Costs, Debt Repayments, Reserves)



Other items that can be included in a PER

- Community Engagement Efforts
- Maps of the system
- Current Financial Situation of the System
- Water and/or Energy Audits
- Sustainability Considerations

Many states and funding agencies suggest or require that the PER meets the requirements of the United State Department of Agriculture RUS Bulletin 1780-2 Preliminary Engineering Reports for the Water and Waste Disposal Program.

Some states and funders have their own requirements. Be sure to check with them.



Who should be involved in preparing a PER?

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Your PER Team– Your involvement is essential to the success of the PER

Engineer	Understand challenges and propose solutions
System Manager	Provide guidance and data, understand impacts of project on community and system
Financial Manager	Provide financial data, understand impacts of project on finances
System Operator	Define challenges, help identify solutions, understand impacts of project on overall system

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How long does it take to prepare a PER?

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It depends…

Simpler scope of work

- No environmental review required
- No public input or hearings required
- Streamlined State review process

- 2-3 Months

Complex scope of work

- Requires environmental review
- Requires public input or hearing
- State review process could extend the process
- 9-12+ months

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How do I pay for a PER?

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The cost of a PER can range from $10,000 to over $100,000 depending on project scope

- Planning grants can help pay for a PER. They include:
  - United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD)
    - Water & Waste Disposal Predevelopment Planning Grants
    - Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households (SEARCH) Grants
  - United States Army Corps of Engineers Planning Assistance to States
  - US Economic Development Administration Public Works program
  - Each state and Tribe has a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) fund. These programs vary by state.
  - State-level programs vary. Check the EFCN Funding Tables
  - EPA's RealWaterTA program

See EFCN's blog on planning grants: https://efcnetwork.org/funding-pipeline-from-need-to-next-steps-infrastructure-planning-grants/

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How do I get someone to write the PER?

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Services Procurement

- Process of finding, evaluating, negotiating, and acquiring the services needed – follow the procurement rules of your community
- Likely will need to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Quotes (RFQ)
- RFP should clearly define the problem and identify the goals of the project
- RFP should have clear selection criteria – often in points rubric format

RFP process

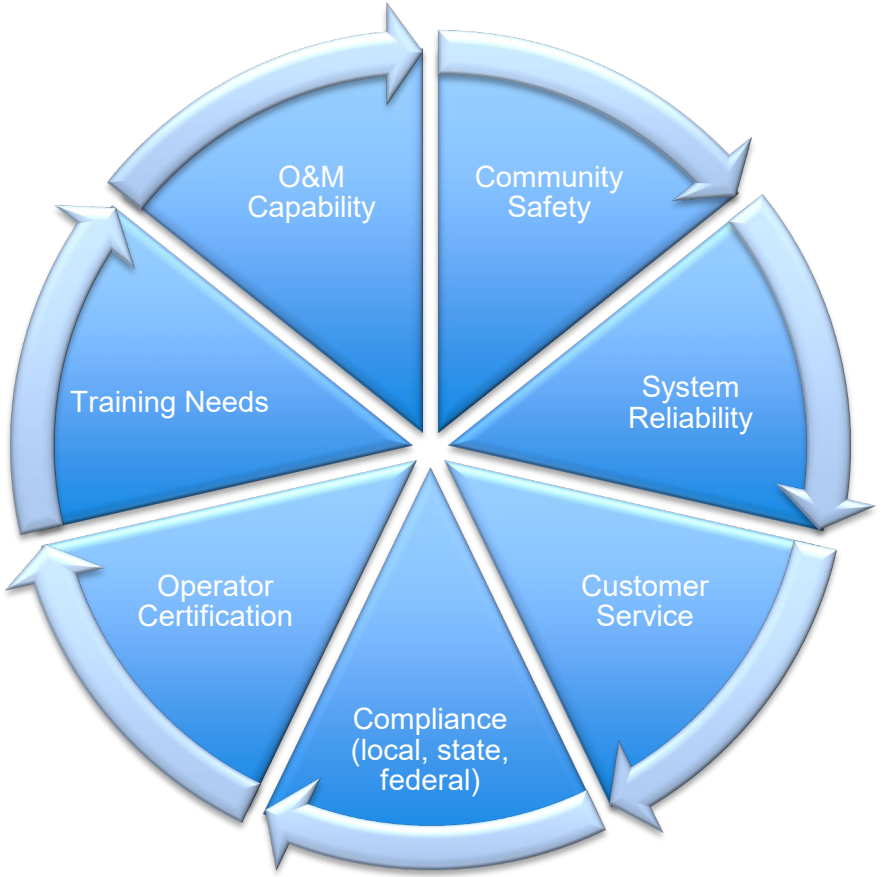

Identify Selection Team
Understand Needs
Understand Goals
Develop RFP
Evaluate Proposals

The Selection Team

- Members should be familiar with system operations, maintenance demands, compliance history and management
- Each department should be involved



Understand Utility Needs



Has your utility set goals?

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Understand Goals of the Project
Define the Scope of Work

- What needs to be in the PER?
- What alternatives would you like to see considered?
- What permitting will be needed?
- Do you have an immediate compliance concern?
- Identify the must haves and the nice to haves
- Understand budget impacts to rates

RFP Content- Possibilities

- Purpose
- Background Information
- Scope of Work
- Project Area
- Contact Information – do you want to provide an email/phone
- Submittal Information – deadline, how to submit, timelines, formatting requirements
- Selection Process
- Disclosures and Attachments

Evaluation Criteria Possibilities

- Evaluate engineer's experience with similar projects and reports
- Firm's experience – years in business, previous work, experience in wastewater projects
- Staff's experience – biographies, key personnel, any subcontractors
- Capacity & Capability – previous work in the region, capacity to take on new work
- References
- Fee proposal

PER Outcomes

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PER Outcomes

- Project Feasibility & Proof of Need
- Alternative Analysis & Selection
- Recommended Project Plan
- Detailed Cost Estimates
- Funding & Regulatory Eligibility
- Stamped Engineering Certification

Remember…

A detailed PER will provide the information needed to select a project that meets your needs and your budget. It will show the need for the project to the funding agencies and will provide a clear path forward that can limit any major unforeseen costs. Working closely with your engineer is the key to success.



Any Questions?

Feel free to contact me:

Dawn Nall

dnall@unm.edu



Thank You For Attending!

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Tools & Publications:
efcnetwork.org/resources/tools-and-publications

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