

## **Municipal Infrastructure Funding Experience: Welcome to The Funder Games!**

### ***A New Vision for the Town of Calamity Falls***

#### **Introduction**

Welcome to the Town of Calamity Falls, a vibrant community of 10,000 residents. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the town has become a hotspot for tourism, especially for remote workers seeking quiet getaways by the scenic Keunca Lake. However, the town has been grappling with water quality challenges, and seasonal tourism has added stress to the town's already failing septic systems, as documented by the local health department.

Approximately 50% of Calamity Falls is connected to sewer, routed to the town's small and aging wastewater treatment plant, while the rest relies on septic. Adding to the complexity, the lake is troubled by harmful algal blooms, and resident concerns linger about the quality of the source water.

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#### **Question 1**

The town would like to extend sewer services to address these water quality concerns but doesn't know where to start. They know it will be a multimillion-dollar investment to extend sewer services to the downtown district of Calamity Falls. The Calamity Falls wastewater treatment plant could also increase its treatment capacity with a few key upgrades. **What is the first step the town should take?**

- A. Have an exploratory meeting with town officials to define the project scope and begin to establish a relationship with NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (NYS EFC) by listing the project on the Clean Water SRF Intended Use Plan (IUP) Multi-Year List before seeking financing.
- B. Begin by applying for a Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning and MS4 Mapping Grant (NPG) administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC)

#### **Question 2**

Great News! The Calamity Falls project team has agreed that extending sewer services to the emerging downtown district is highly beneficial and aligns with their long-term planning document. They have also initiated conversations with NYS EFC to begin listing their project on the Clean Water SRF Intended Use Plan (IUP) Multi-Year list.

They realize that they need a Map, Plan, Report – or MPR – to move forward with extending sewer service but do not have the funds to pay for its preparation. **What is the next step the town should take?**

- A. Check the latest census and income data to verify the town's population and apply for a Pre-Development Planning Grant from USDA.
  - B. Assess eligibility and prepare an application for the Green Innovation Grant Program through the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (NYS EFC).
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### **Question 3**

Congratulations! Time has passed and the Town of Calamity Falls has successfully extended its sewer district boundaries with the support of town residents. To reach this point, the town determined the district extension boundaries, used USDA funds to fund engineering services for Map, Plan, Report (MPR) preparation, received approval from the State Comptroller, and held a public hearing to assess the extension's beneficiaries and whether it's in the public's interest.

Now armed with a shovel-ready project to extend sewer service, the town also faces the need for crucial treatment plant upgrades to replace aging infrastructure and increase treatment capacity, with an estimated cost of around \$15 million. **To secure funding for this project, what should be the town's immediate next step?**

- A. Apply for a Local Government Efficiency Grant (LGE) from the NYS Department of State (NYS DOS) to improve municipal wastewater treatment capacity and efficiency.
- B. Begin the process of listing the project on the Clean Water SRF Intended Use Plan (IUP) Annual List.

**3.1. For a bonus point: True or False?** If you have questions about getting your project listed on the Clean Water SRF IUP, you should talk to NYS Department of Health.

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### **Question 4**

You are working with stakeholders and other project collaborators on listing your project on the CWSRF IUP Annual List. **What key things should you do?**

- A. Immediately procure a trusted firm that you have worked with before to perform all engineering and construction services, including preparing a Preliminary Engineering Report and initiating the Environmental Review process before listing project on the IUP.

- B. Review procurement standards before soliciting bids for engineering services and carefully proceed with completing a Preliminary Engineering Report, Environmental Review, and other requirements before listing project on the CWSRF IUP.

**4.1. For a bonus point:** When can you submit a new project to be listed on the IUP?

- A. End of the state fiscal year
  - B. Any time
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### **Question 5**

Following the project rank and scoring process, the draft Intended Use Plan (IUP) was published. The Town of Calamity Falls received positive news – its project is listed on the Clean Water SRF Intended Use Plan (IUP) Annual List! Historically challenged with accessing State Revolving Funds, recent efforts have qualified the town for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) General Supplemental (GS) financing after meeting hardship criteria thanks to the completion of a new income survey. This paves the way for critical updates to the town's WWTP. Now, town officials can move forward to gather the needed materials and proceed with the SRF financing application.

With additional project funds on the horizon with the help of the State Revolving Funds, Calamity Falls realizes that some residents may not have the means to pay for lateral connections to the new sewer extension. Simultaneously, the town would also like to incentivize the decommissioning of septic systems. **What are the available funding options to address these needs?**

- A. Apply for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund administered by the NYS Department of Health and NYS EFC.
  - B. Apply for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program through the NYS Office of Community Renewal's housing program.
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### **Question 6**

Several years have passed and the Town of Calamity Falls has successfully upgraded its wastewater treatment plant to improve treatment capacity and make other vital upgrades. Now, a neighboring town, Doomsday, has reached out to Calamity Falls expressing interest in exploring a shared services agreement for wastewater treatment.

Recognizing the benefits of collaboration, including potential long-term cost savings, the towns of Doomsday and Calamity Falls are interested in funding a feasibility study to assess the technical, economic, and environmental feasibility of this joint venture to

extend sewer services to the residents of Doomsday. **How can these towns jointly finance this study, laying the groundwork for a potential collaborative wastewater treatment project?**

- A. Apply for a Local Government Efficiency Grant (LGE) Grant program from the NYS Department of State to fund planning activities for the joint wastewater project.
  - B. Immediately apply for an Intermunicipal Grant (IMG) from the NYS EFC to fund planning activities for the joint wastewater project.
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### **Question 7 – Drinking Water**

Unfortunately, Keunca Lake, the primary source of drinking water for Calamity Falls, is experiencing a Harmful Algal Bloom. While there are no current detected impacts on the drinking water quality, town officials have unanimously decided to proactively address the situation. They would like to invest in a new carbon filtration system capable of removing algal toxins from drinking water. **What funding sources are available to support this drinking water project?**

- A. Apply for the Green Innovation Grant Program through the NYS EFC.
- B. Apply for Water Infrastructure Improvement (WIIA) program grant funding from the NYS EFC.

**7.1. For a bonus point (open-ended):** How else might the Town of Calamity Falls fund or finance this new carbon filtration system?

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### **Conclusion**

With diligent efforts and strategic planning, the Town of Calamity Falls has successfully navigated its journey towards addressing crucial infrastructure needs. Their inclusion in the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Intended Use Plan (IUP) Annual List marked a turning point, allowing the town to secure financing for essential wastewater treatment plant upgrades. In addition, the town's proactive response to the Harmful Algal Bloom in Keunca Lake showcased the town's commitment to water quality, with a new carbon filtration system in the pipeline.

Thanks to funding administered by New York State, the Town of Calamity Falls has been able to meet these infrastructure challenges head-on. This story highlights the collaborative impact of infrastructure funding programs in NYS, showcasing how these programs work hand-in-hand to finance community investments that shape a sustainable and improved future for the Town of Calamity Falls.