

2011 Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment

Frequently Asked Questions

RECORDING PROJECTS

Question: *What types of needs should I include in the questionnaire?*

Answer: Record the capital improvement projects that your system needs to address over the next 20 years. Consider your entire system inventory. Capital projects include new installation, and replacement or rehabilitation of existing infrastructure for source water, treatment, storage, pumping, transmission, and distribution. Do not include non-capital needs such as O&M, studies, or administrative costs.

Consider current as well as future needs. Record projects that are needed now, even if funding will not allow you to pursue the project. You should also record projects that may not currently be necessary but that you anticipate needing before December 31, 2030.

Finally, include projects even though you may not have final engineering design or cost estimates. If there is no cost estimate, EPA will model the cost based on the size of the project. Be sure to include the appropriate design parameters for cost modeling.

Question: *What types of projects are allowable?*

Answer: Most capital improvement projects are allowable and should be included. To answer this question, it is easier to list those that are not allowable. The major categories of unallowable projects are:

- Projects that are not SRF eligible such as those where a substantial portion is for future growth or fire protection and raw water reservoir or dam-related needs.
- Projects for source water protection.
- Projects that are not for capital improvements such as operations and maintenance needs, studies, water rights or fee payments, sample collection or analysis fees, or employee wages and other administrative costs.
- Projects that are not necessary to help the water system meet its public health goals such as projects for demolition, those for improving aesthetics of facilities, buildings and parking facilities not essential to providing safe drinking water, acquisition of land not required for an allowable project, or connecting existing homes that already have an adequate drinking water supply.
- Projects for which construction has already started by January 1, 2011.
- Multiple projects that meet the same need or repeated projects that address the same piece of infrastructure such as a project for a well and a separate project for a pump for that well (well projects are assumed to include a pump).

Question: *The number of users served by our water system is expected to double over the next 10 years. Do we include projects for future water users?*

Answer: Projects included in this survey must be necessary to serve current customers and/or other existing homes not connected to your system as of January 1, 2011. Do not include projects where a substantial portion of the project is for future growth or to entice development of an area. However, if you have a project necessary to continue to provide safe water to your current customers or existing homes that are not connected to your system, you can reasonably size it to accommodate future growth.

Question: *I understand that “operation and maintenance (O&M)”@ needs should not be included in the questionnaire. How is O&M defined for this survey?*

Answer: Routine maintenance of equipment such as repair of valves, hydrants, or generators and part replacement performed as preventive maintenance are not included in this survey. However, rehabilitation of major infrastructure components such as storage tanks and pump stations, where the infrastructure is restored to near new condition, are allowed.

Question: *Can I use more than one type of need code for a project?*

Answer: Multiple type of need codes can be used for a project only if you are providing a documented cost estimate. For instance, if you have a cost estimate for the drilling of a well and installation of a well house with chlorination, the project can have each of these types of need included. However, if no cost is provided, each of the three components must be recorded as their own project so that EPA can model the cost.

Question: *Can I use more than one reason for need, regulation, or documentation code for a project?*

Answer: Yes. You can use as many codes as needed to explain and justify the projects listed on the questionnaire. However, the codes should match reasons and regulations stated in the documentation. It is not uncommon for a project to have more than one of these types of codes.

Question: *What is the difference between the codes for “Expand/Upgrade” and “Rehabilitate?”*

Answer: The “Expand/Upgrade” code is used only in reference to a complete treatment plant (Type of Need codes T10 – T24). It is not used with any individual system components. It indicates a complete plant needs to undergo major improvements that may add or change unit processes or result in an increase in capacity. Examples include upgrading from direct to conventional filtration, adding membrane filtration, or adding an additional treatment train to expand capacity.

The “Rehabilitate” code can be used for most system components, including a treatment plant. It indicates that the infrastructure needs to undergo substantial work (beyond O&M) to restore it to “like-new” condition. An example is cleaning and lining existing water mains.

DOCUMENTING PROJECTS

Question: *How do I document the need for my projects?*

Answer: This is the most important element of the survey. If a need is not documented, it will be deleted. There are two types of documentation that may be used to justify project need: independent and survey-generated. List 4 in the *Lists of Codes* provides the most common types of documentation of need.

Independent documentation

This is documentation that was not generated specifically for this survey. Examples include a CIP, engineer's estimate, or sanitary survey report. You may submit the complete document or simply send an excerpt from it (indicate the document name and date). Please write the project number near the text that discusses each project.

Survey-generated documentation

For projects that do not require independent documentation, you may write your own documentation of need. This should include a description of the project(s) and a statement of why the project(s) are necessary. Please sign and date your statement. Survey-generated documentation may also be used to supplement or clarify a project that has independent documentation but the reason for need is not clear in the independent document.

Question: *What type of cost documentation is useful for the survey?*

Answer: Please do not generate a cost estimate for this survey. Only pre-existing and independent documentation may be used to justify a project cost. Cost estimates should include the total cost of the project including design, materials, site work, equipment costs, and contingencies. Do not include unallowable costs such as interest accrued in a project cost or fees added to support the state's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program.

If cost estimates are not provided, costs will be modeled from data obtained from the survey. In order to model costs, the appropriate design parameters (such as capacity, length and diameter of pipe) must be included.

Question: *Are there any projects for which I must include a cost estimate?*

Answer: Yes, we cannot model costs for the following:

- Off-stream raw water storage.
- De-stratification.
- Laboratory equipment.
- Security needs other than fencing.
- Land acquisition incidental to another project, or projects coded as "other".

Question: *Some of our projects have documentation of need or cost from several years ago. How old can the documentation for a project be in order to be valid for the Assessment?*

Answer: *Documentation of need*

Documentation of need may not be more than 4 years old (prior to January 1, 2007). However, if a project discussed in documentation more than 4 years old is still needed, provide a signed statement to that effect indicating that the scope is unchanged and construction has not started, and your statement along with the other document will suffice.

Documentation of cost

Documentation of cost may not be more than 10 years old (prior to January 1, 2010). If the cost document is too old, be sure to provide the modeling parameters so the project can be modeled.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Question: *How will the data in the inventory tables on the questionnaire be used?*

Answer: The inventory tables are not required for participation in the survey. The purpose of the inventory tables is to help you identify potential projects. By thinking through and listing your infrastructure inventory, EPA hopes you will be prompted to consider projects for all parts of your system. They are intended to help you recognize projects that may not have been included in your current budget or planning documents.

However, if you use survey-generated documentation for any rehabilitation or replacement pipe projects, you must provide the total miles (or feet) of pipe in your system in the inventory tables.

Question: *Our distribution system is in poor condition. How much of our pipe should I include to replace or rehabilitate?*

Answer: Begin by referring to any studies or planning documents that discuss your distribution needs. Include all projects justified by these documents.

If you do not have independent documents discussing these needs, refer to any inventory information you have indicating age and condition of your mains, and list projects for pipe that you expect to be old and deteriorated within the next 20 years. However, if you are relying on survey-generated documentation of need for any of these projects, do not include more than 10% of your total pipe inventory. Also, make sure you provide an estimate of your total miles (or feet) of pipe on the inventory table.

Question: *If my project is included in the survey, does it mean my system is more likely to receive SRF funding?*

Answer: Not necessarily. This survey is not an application for funding, but it does influence the amount of money your state will receive. This survey collects information that is used to help determine the percentage of appropriated Drinking Water State Revolving Fund money to be given to each state. It also informs Congress of the total drinking water infrastructure need nationwide.

Question: *What if I don't plan to apply for SRF funding?*

Answer: Your participation is still important! Whether your system ever applies for SRF funding or not should not effect your participation in this survey. Your participation will help determine the amount of money your state will receive by showing the amount of capital need for systems that are similar to yours in your state.

For more information about the Assessment and its policies, please see the 2011 DWINSA Reference Manual or contact the EPA Contractor.