



The Power of Partnership: Sharing Resources with Neighboring Systems

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 | 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm ET

Location: [Virtual via Zoom](#)

Description:

Running a small system can be challenging. Along with meeting regulatory obligations and satisfying customer expectations, you may have issues with aging infrastructure, lack of personnel, and limited financial resources. Furthermore, small systems often cost more to operate per capita than large systems because of economy of scale. This can further complicate operations.

One strategy to address these challenges is to work with other utilities or consider partnership options. In this training, we will discuss various regionalization models and approaches to collaboration:

- Informal information sharing
- Sharing equipment or personnel
- Leveraging shared purchasing power
- Emergency planning and networking
- Joint Service Agreements

Timed Agenda:

12:00 – 12:10 pm	Welcome and Introductions
12:10 – 12:30 pm	What Are Partnerships? Why might you form or strengthen partnerships with neighboring systems?
12:30 – 1:00 pm	<i>Exercise:</i> Resiliency Bingo – Attendees identify their capacity, or lack thereof, on a variety of technical, managerial, and financial topics. Attendees identify what types of partnerships would be beneficial.

1:00 – 1:15 pm	<i>Break</i>
1:15 – 1:50 pm	The partnerships Spectrum: Types of System Collaborations and Examples
1:50 – 2:00 pm	Benefits and Challenges to Collaboration
2:00 – 2:30 pm	Case Studies: Aguas del Norte (New Mexico) and City of Claremont (North Carolina)
2:30 – 2:45 pm	<i>Break</i>
2:45 – 3:15 pm	Small group brainstorm: What types of collaboration would benefit your system/community?
3:15 – 3:45 pm	Group Discussion: Findings and Next Steps
3:45 – 4:00 pm	Wrap-up and questions.

Course Materials: All materials will be digital, as this is a virtual training.

- Agenda for the training with description of activities, learning chapters, and time stamps (PDF)
- Copy of Presentation Slides (PDF)

Means to Assess Learning: An instructor-led group discussion at the end of the training will give all participants a chance to apply what was taught in the training, ask clarifying questions, and connect with other water/wastewater professionals and systems.

Trainer: Shannon Pepper, M.S., Research Scientist

Shannon is an environmental geographer based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. At the Southwest Environmental Finance Center, Shannon is a Research Scientist and coordinates the Tribal Drinking Water Operator Certification Program. She holds a Master of Science in Geography from the University of New Mexico and a Bachelor of Science in Resource Conservation from the University of Montana. At the SWEFC, Shannon focuses on State Revolving Funds and other state and federal funding research for small water and wastewater systems, program coordination for Tribal water operators, communication development and funding for green infrastructure projects, and outreach efforts for a variety of water, wastewater and stormwater projects.