**Decentralized Wastewater MOU Partnership**

**Workplans 2023 – 2026**

***Draft* November 28, 2023**

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| **PRIORITY #1: EDUCATION & OUTREACH****Increase public education and outreach through EPA’s SepticSmart program to ensure septic/decentralized wastewater systems are properly used and maintained to protect water quality and human health.**  |
| **ACTION**  | **PRODUCT**  | **WHO**  | **WHEN**  |
| **1-1**  | **Create materials and messaging for SepticSmart Week (SSW) to amplify impacts on a national scale** |   | **Lead: EPA**   |   |
| 1-1A  | Identify dates for SepticSmart Week     | * Create a ‘Save the Date’ postcard and logo to post on [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic)
 | Co-leads: MOU Partners, contractor  | Sept 18-22, 2023 Sept 16-20, 2024 Sept 15-19, 2025 Sept 21-25, 2026  |
| 1-1B  | Update resource materials for Tribal and indigenous audiences  | * Identify specific materials to update and share
 | Co-leads: IHS, contractor, WHO/UNICEF | 2024 – 2025  |
| 1-1C  | Revise and update SepticSmart Week social media guide for partners  | * Produce social media guide to promote SSW materials and products
 | Co-leads: SSW Steering Group, MOU Partners  | Annually  |
| **1-2**  | **Identify opportunities to promote the SepticSmart program**   |   | **Lead: EPA**   |   |
| 1-2A  |  Identify events, workshops, meetings, forums, webinars, and other industry campaigns to promote and collaborate on outreach  | * Develop list of activities for MOU Partners to promote SepticSmart messages

  | Co-leads: SSW Steering Group, MOU Partners  | Annually  |
| 1-2B  |   | * Produce webinars on decentralized technology topics and education
 | Co-leads: MOU Partners, Contractor  | Two to four a year  |
| **1-3**  | **Assess SSW outcomes and effectiveness through partnership feedback**  |   | **Lead: EPA**   |   |
| 1-3A  | Assemble list of engagement activities, social media, and outreach completed during SSW  | * MOU Partners provide information on SSW activities
 | Co-leads: MOU Partners, contractor  | Annually; 1 week after SSW  |
| 1-3B  |  Assemble summary of social media and outreach analysis  | * Produce a 4-pg partnership summary and 2-pg EPA management summary
* Include proclamations, local events, news coverage, other activities
 | Co-leads: MOU Partners, contractor  | Annually; 4 weeks after SSW  |
| 1-3C  | Outreach to communities to analyze the effectiveness of SepticSmart week  | * Survey partner audiences to see what strategies and materials are performing well, evaluate any improvements
 | Co-leads: MOU Partners, contractor  |   |
| **1-4**  | **Integrate workforce development into SepticSmart materials**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  |   |
|   |   | * Produce poster highlighting career opportunities, salaries, and benefits in the decentralized industry
 | Co-leads: SSW Steering Group and contractor  | 2023 (completed)  |
|   |   | * Produce video series featuring professionals across the decentralized industry
 | Co-leads: SSW Steering Group and contractor  | 2023 (completed)  |

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| **PRIORITY #2: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR UNDERSERVED/DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES** **Promote technical assistance (TA) resources and foster connections between TA providers and underserved communities (including tribes) to support the design, construction, and financing of sustainable decentralized wastewater infrastructure.**  |
|   | **ACTION**  | **PRODUCT**  | **WHO**  | **WHEN**  |
| **2-1**  | **Closing America’s Wastewater Access Gap Community Initiative: Path Forward**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  | **2024 – 2026**   |
| 2-1A  | Identify additional communities for TA  | * Support additional communities with addressing decentralized infrastructure needs
* Partnering with TA Providers (RCAP, NRWA) to leverage TA services and community engagement in communities
 |  Co-leads: USDA-RD, NRWA, RCAP, NOWRA |   |
| **2-2**  | **Connect communities to funding sources (i.e., federal, state, or innovative mechanisms/ resources)**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  | **2023 – 2026**  |
| 2-2A  | Promote and market funding strategies  | * Identify and work with state and local finance champions to increase community accessibility to funding (e.g., CWSRF, USDA-RD, BIL)
 | Co-leads: USDA-RD  |   |
| 2-2B  | Compile information on other potential state financing and governance approaches (such as emergency or disaster relief funds) for decentralized systems  | * Develop a document of best governance approach
* Expand “Pathways” documents with learnings (from “Closing the Gap”) on how to better access CWSRF funding
 |  Co-leads: SORA, EPA, NOWRA |   |
| 2-2C  | Update and maintain decentralized finance information online  | * Include updates on [EPA Water Finance Clearinghouse](https://ordspub.epa.gov/ords/wfc/f?p=165:2:15602433577351:::2,RIR::)
* Identify ways to make it more user friendly
 |   |   |
| **2-3**  | **Build the capacity of TA resources targeted towards underserved communities**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  | **2023 – 2026**   |
| 2-3A  | Connect homeowners in rural, underserved communities to funding and educational resources on septic system types and maintenance  | * Develop educational/outreach materials geared toward TA providers on septic system maintenance and affordable funding strategies
 |  Co-leads: GWPC, NOWRA, NRWA, DigDeep  |   |
| 2-3B  |  Promote funding opportunities and TA resources for Tribal communities  | * Engage with Tribal governments/organizations to assess needs; develop and promote relevant materials on septic management and affordable funding opportunities
 |  Co-leads: IHS, WHO/UNICEF?  |   |
| 2-3C  | Compile and publish new decentralized technology resources online  | * Include technological resources on [EPA Searchable Clearinghouse of Wastewater Technology (SCOWT)](https://ordspub.epa.gov/ords/wfc/f?p=259:1:12368761318191:::::)
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| **PRIORITY #3: RESILIENCY & SUSTAINABILITY** **Showcase information and technologies that demonstrate how innovative approaches can help decentralized systems be more resilient to climate change and natural disasters and become sustainable for the long-term.**  |
|   | **ACTION**  | **PRODUCT**  | **WHO**  | **WHEN**  |
| **3-1**  |  **Identify how decentralized systems contribute to community resiliency**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  |   |
| 3-1A  | Develop materials that showcase decentralized technologies and approaches’ benefits and challenges relative to climate and weather impacts  | * Produce a series of factsheets on the benefits and challenges of decentralized wastewater technologies and approaches during extreme weather or natural disasters
* Incorporate messages into SSW as appropriate
 |  Co-leads: WRF, DigDeep, WEF,NEHA? SORA?  |   |
| 3-1B  |   | * Identify resiliency benefits from decentralized systems and include on [EPA Searchable Clearinghouse of Wastewater Technology (SCOWT)](https://ordspub.epa.gov/ords/wfc/f?p=259:1:12368761318191:::::)
 |   |   |
| **3-2**  | **Assemble information on the role of climate change on decentralized system function**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  |   |
| 3-2A  |   | * Conduct literature review on climate change impacts on septic systems and opportunities to mitigate effects
 | ​​ Co-leads: Contractor, WRF? WHO? **​****​****​****​**  |   |
| **3-3**  | **Expand website focus on climate change and decentralized technology**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  |   |
| 3-3A  |   | * Identify those states or municipalities that are developing actionable strategies to improve decentralized system resiliency related to climatic events such as flood, wildfires or sea level rise and share online
 |  Co-leads: CDC, NACWA? |   |
| 3-3B  |   | * Enhance [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic) to include resources on climate change and disasters for homeowners with septic systems
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| **PRIORITY #4: DATA COLLECTION & APPLICATION** **Utilize federal and MOU partners’ networks to collect, analyze and apply varying types of decentralized system data.** |
|   | **ACTION**  | **PRODUCT**  | **WHO**  | **WHEN**  |
| **4-1**  |  **Identify and leverage existing data on decentralized system use and performance**  |   | **Lead: EPA**   |   |
| 4-1A  | Collaborate with partners for current data and statistics  | * Produce an updated one-page factsheet on septic system prevalence and distribution in the U.S. and include on [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic)
 | Co-leads: NEHA, SORA, NOWRA  |   |
| **4-2**  | **Continue support for US Census’ addition of ‘septic system use’ question on American Community Survey (ACS)**  |   | **Lead: EPA**   |   |
| 4-2A  |   | * U.S. Census completed analysis and recommended to OMB the inclusion of ‘septic system use’ question on 2026 ACS questionnaire; OMB decision expected in spring 2024
 |  Co-leads: USDA, NOWRA  |   |
| **4-3**  | **Utilize related data to extrapolate to septic system use and needs**  |   | **Lead: EPA**   |   |
| 4-3A  | Use existing private drinking well data to extrapolate to septic system use  | * Develop model that estimates septic system density for the entire US at a census block resolution
 | Co-leads: EPA-ORD/CESER  | September 2024  |
| 4-3B  |  Visualize local and national decentralized needs through GIS maps and other geospatial tools  | * Evaluate if computer vision can identify failed septic systems
 | Co-leads: CDC/National Center for Environmental Health  |   |
| 4-4 | Evaluate strategies to address septage receiving issues at the local level | * Assess factors contributing to difficulties of local septage disposal at WWTPs
 | Co-leads: NAWT, ICC? |  |
| 4-5 | Develop strategies to quantify the inventory of large flow/commercial decentralized systems and estimate the number of new and replacement systems installed annually in the US. | * Develop report on this
 | Co-leads: GWPC? |  |

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| **PRIORITY #5: WORKFORCE & TRAINING** **Expand mechanisms to address the workforce, training and research needs in the decentralized wastewater industry.**   |
|   | **ACTION**  | **PRODUCT**  | **WHO**  | **WHEN**  |
| **5-1**  | **Build capacity to expand outreach, share training resources and lead the expansion of the decentralized workforce**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  |   |
| 5-1A  | Develop educational campaigns to promote workforce development in collaboration with higher education institutions  | * Promote or develop materials geared towards young adults about the wastewater industry, the future of the industry and career opportunities
 |  Co-leads: NACWA? |   |
| 5-1B  | Reconvene workforce steering group to review workforce strategy and determine needs and future actions    | * Identify new products or resources needed to expand the decentralized workforce
 | Co-leads: ICC?  |   |
| **5-2**  | **Identify decentralized research priorities**  |   | **Lead: NOWRA**  |   |
| 5-2A  |   | * Develop prioritized list of research needs
 | Co-leads: DigDeep, WRF, NOWRA, NACWA? OSA? |   |
| 5-2B  |   | * Leverage results of Horizon Scanning Research
 |  Co-lead: WRF |   |
| **5-3**  |  **Identify online decentralized training materials**  |   | **Lead: EPA**  |   |
| 5-3A  | Link to other relevant training websites  | * Identify Partner ​materials, online trainings, websites, and resources to link to on [www.epa.gov/septic](http://www.epa.gov/septic)
 | Co-lead: NOWRA  |   |
| 5-3B  | Link to educational programs to build the decentralized wastewater workforce  | * Identify university-based programs that can be promoted through MOU Partnership networks
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