



WATER/WASTEWATER APPRENTICESHIPS IN CITIES

KENTUCKY RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION (KRWA)/
KENTUCKY LEAGUE OF CITIES (KLC) PARTNERSHIP

SPRING 2023

According to estimates from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were two job openings for every unemployed person in Kentucky as of January 2023. At KLC, we hear from members that water and wastewater employees are few and far between. As many retire, there are valid concerns about who will operate our city utilities.

- ◆ If city utilities don't have staff, they get fined and/or the state takes over.
- ◆ Some cities use contract operators, which are very expensive and add to liability because they are often onsite for just a few days a week or month.

To help with this city issue, KLC has partnered with the Kentucky Rural Water Association to help promote its [Kentucky Rural Water Association \(KRWA\) registered apprenticeship program](#), a fully vetted and state-approved provider for state water/wastewater training. Nearly 20 Kentucky municipalities currently participate in the apprenticeship program.



"The apprenticeship is truly on-the-job training. Our apprentice didn't have to leave work and go to school - he learned while he worked. That's the beauty of the program."

- Fran Bowsher, Deputy City Clerk, City of Munfordville

How the KRWA Apprenticeship Works

Cities/municipal utilities of any size can sign on as KRWA partners in the program that provides on-the-job training for water/wastewater certification. KRWA will provide guidance and paperwork assistance throughout the program.

- ◆ Apprentices are considered employees and are provided benefits.
- ◆ There is an application process.
- ◆ The municipal utility's responsibilities are the cost of employment and benefits, as well as the cost of apprenticeship training - 4,000 hours of on-the-job training and 288 hours of related technical instruction over two years.
- ◆ Cities can budget for the cost of the apprenticeship or obtain funding from sources such as grants, area workforce development boards, or Area Development Districts (ADDs). Every ADD has a water management council, and many mayors serve on them.
- ◆ Applicant pools include high schools, technical colleges, current employees that want to move up, and people with a good work ethic that would enjoy the outdoor work.
- ◆ High school students can use Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) funding; veterans can use the GI Bill.
- ◆ Once the apprentice completes the program and is certified, they are ready to work.

Current and past municipal participants include Beattyville, Butler, Calvert City, Greensburg, Henderson, Island, Jamestown, Lebanon, Morganfield, Mount Washington, Munfordville, Raceland, Sacramento, Vine Grove, and West Liberty. Other cities are preparing to join the program soon.

ARPA Funds

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding may be used to support the apprenticeship if the city elected the revenue replacement option, which allows for the general provision of government services. The apprenticeship would qualify as long as the apprentice works for the city. KLC Municipal Law would recommend an employment contract (and can provide samples) where the apprentice agrees to work for a certain number of years for the city or repays the program's cost.



"The apprenticeship has been very positive for a number of reasons. As an employer, it's important for retention to give employees pathways for advancement and a sense of pride, and it shows citizens that the city is ahead of the curve and taking advantage of the best programs."

- Dustin Burchett, City Administrator, City of Raceland

Learn More



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