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# FY25 City of Austin Training Programs for Water Operators and Wastewater Operators Report

As required by Laws of Minnesota 2024, Chapter 120, Article 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(h)

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As required by Minnesota Statute 3.197: This report cost approximately \$222.93 to prepare, including staff time, printing, and mailing expenses.

Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, Braille, or audio recording. Printed on recycled paper.

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## Legislative History

[Laws of Minnesota 2024, Chapter 120, Article 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3\(h\)](#) authorized a direct appropriation of \$350,000 in FY25 from the Workforce Development Fund for a grant to the City of Austin to develop and implement training programs for water operators and wastewater operators. Riverland Community College must offer the training programs. This was a onetime appropriation and is available until June 30, 2027. Of this amount, the City of Austin may use up to 5% for administration of the program.

## City of Austin Training Programs for Water Operators and Wastewater Operators Overview

The City of Austin will utilize the appropriated funds to support the development and marketing of Water Operator training and Wastewater Operator training programs. The programs will be created and administered by Riverland Community College. The training programs will follow the guidance provided in materials from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The programs will be designed to prepare students to take the MDH and MPCA exams for licensure to operate the respective facilities for water and wastewater. Credentials available to participants will be Water Operator Certificates I and II and Wastewater Operator Certificates I and II, all through Riverland Community College, which is Minnesota Office of Higher Education compliant. These funds will not be used for tuition and/or individual support to individual participants.

The City of Austin's grant agreement with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) started on May 27, 2025. The grant funds will be available through June 30, 2027. The majority of the project is to develop the curriculum for training. The programs will launch in the fall 2026 semester.

### Geographic Area(s) to be Served

Services will be marketed across Minnesota, with an emphasis on the Southern Minnesota area.

### Target Population

The programs target individuals of all individuals who are interested in training as water and/or wastewater operators. Participants will be licensed by the State of Minnesota after passing the state exams for operating such facilities.

### Recruitment Strategies

Students are being recruited through a diverse network of partners. Riverland Community College has amplified awareness of the programs through its career advisors, program navigators, and Adult Basic Education partners. In addition to this direct student outreach, the college utilized all college social media platforms, television, radio, and print outlets for recruitment and community awareness. Workforce Center staff have been sharing the information about the programs with their clientele.

All interested candidates have been encouraged to connect with area cities interested in hiring and funding the training for the prospective student. Interested candidates were also informed that they could self-fund tuition in the program while finding an employer match. Materials highlighted the availability of loans offered by Sallie Mae to cover expenses that may not be covered by other entities.

The Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities (SEMLM) assisted in providing information and communication to and from cities with both the Workforce Centers and Riverland Community College to facilitate connections between potential training candidates and cities looking to hire such candidates. The SEMLM has a strong email communication system to reach cities in Southeast Minnesota and is building further contacts with cities in South Central and Southwest Minnesota. The SEMLM meets in person four times per year, providing opportunities for cities to discuss their operational needs. The SEMLM also has a quarterly email newsletter to share information and updates with cities across Southern Minnesota on this topic. The SEMLM shares information about the new programs with local media and will continue to do so as a way of reaching the public about these programs and opportunities.

Project staff

- Customized Training Business Consultant, 0.3 Full Time Equivalent Staff (FTE)
- Curriculum Developer, 1 FTE
- Part-time Instructor Water I and II, 0.25 FTE
- Part-time Instructor Wastewater I and II, 0.25 FTE

Specific industry recognized credentials to be awarded

Credentials available to participants are Water Operator I, Water Operator II, Wastewater Operator I, Wastewater Operator II

## FY25 Program Results

The City of Austin and its partners will record demographic information for program participants, their activities, services received, and outcomes in DEED’s web-based client management application, WorkForce One. However, only those activities related to education, training, and employment are tracked in WorkForce One.

The table below presents the evaluation metrics for which data will be recorded. Data below represents the reporting period of 5/27/2025 (date of grant agreement execution) through 11/30/2025. No data has been collected in this reporting period due to the fact that training for participants will begin in the fall semester of 2026.

**Table 1. Program Evaluation Metrics**

	<b>TOTAL</b>
Number of participants served	ND
Number of participants enrolled in training	ND
Total complete training and attain a credential	ND
Total exit to unsubsidized employment	ND
Total exit to employment related to training industry	ND
Total exit to employment at or above \$16 per hour	ND
Average Wage at Exit	ND

ND = Data not available as project is in development stage.

**Table 2. City of Austin FY25-FY27 Budget**

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Legislative Allocation</b>	<b>Total Expenses/Reimbursements</b>
Administration:	\$16,625.00	\$0.00
Direct Customer Training:	\$144,000.00	\$0.00
Outreach:	\$20,000.00	\$0.00
Capacity Building:	\$151,875.00	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$332,500.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>