



# Department of Commerce

Innovation is in our nature.

## Small Communities Initiative

*Helping small, rural communities improve their water and waste water systems*

### Purpose

The Small Communities Initiative (SCI) Program provides technical assistance to small, rural communities that are required to meet the same public health and environmental mandates as larger cities but often lack the administrative, technical, or financial capacity to effectively do so.

### Results and Achievements

- Since 1999, SCI staff have assisted more than thirty-one communities secure more than \$75 million in state and federal funding resulting in safer drinking water, environmental protection, and infrastructure that can serve community and economic development activities.
- On average, each year SCI helps bring at least two communities into regulatory compliance with the Departments of Health or Ecology through improved water and/or wastewater systems.

### Services

- Communities that need to upgrade their drinking water or wastewater systems are nominated by regional offices of the Departments of Health and Ecology to participate in the SCI Program.
- SCI staff assist small incorporated cities and towns, unincorporated communities, and counties, utility districts, and water associations in developing more focused projects, making strategic investments, and identifying and accessing funding sources.
- SCI staff meet with communities on an as-needed basis (usually between once a month and once a quarter) serving as facilitators, advisors, and resource brokers.
- Although each community's situation is different, SCI staff typically form a local team comprised of local elected officials and staff and a technical team comprised of funding and regulatory staff. Together, these teams develop an action plan to address water or wastewater system compliance issues including realistic funding scenarios.

### Fast Facts

- The SCI Program is a collaborative effort between Commerce and the Washington State Departments of Health, and Ecology.
- Projects in SCI communities usually take between two and seven years to complete planning, design, and construction.
- SCI has regional offices in Olympia and Spokane.

### Contact Information

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## **Performance Measures**

- Each community's action plan includes major milestones that are necessary to complete improvements to their water and/or wastewater systems. SCI staff track the number of milestones met by each community. Examples of major milestones include completion of planning documents, completion of environmental review, completion of bid documents and the acquisition of construction funding.