

# Infrastructure for Tomorrow: A Water Workforce Needs Assessment

The Pacific Northwest faces billions of dollars in investments to update its water infrastructure to serve growing cities, address climate change, and restore freshwater systems. Willamette Partnership and Portland State University are partnering to deliver a workforce needs assessment that will help water utilities and other infrastructure providers get ready to design, build, and maintain the infrastructure of tomorrow.

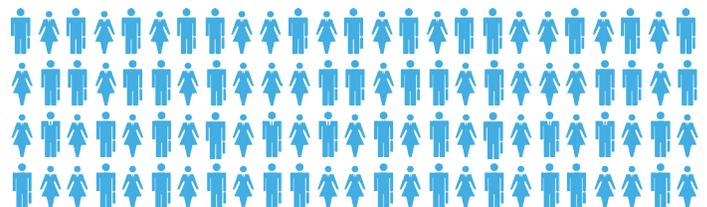


The Puget Sound's Manchester Stormwater Park is an example of innovative infrastructure that's good for nearby freshwater systems, good for growing communities, and cost effective for managers. Photo: Northwest Cascade Inc.

## BACKGROUND

Clean water is our most precious resource, it is critical to public health, vibrant economies, and healthy wildlife. The Northwest's water utilities provide clean drinking water to our homes, process wastewater that goes back into rivers and streams, and manage the runoff from city streets and businesses. They also provide thousands of stable, living wage jobs. In the next 50 years, those utilities will face unprecedented challenges. Across the Northwest, the sector needs to adapt to new regulatory requirements, a changing climate, and an aging workforce. For urban areas, those issues are compounded by the need to keep pace with population growth. In rural areas, the challenge is more often about accessing the funding or financing to make costly upgrades. Northwest utilities need a diverse and prepared workforce to meet those challenges.

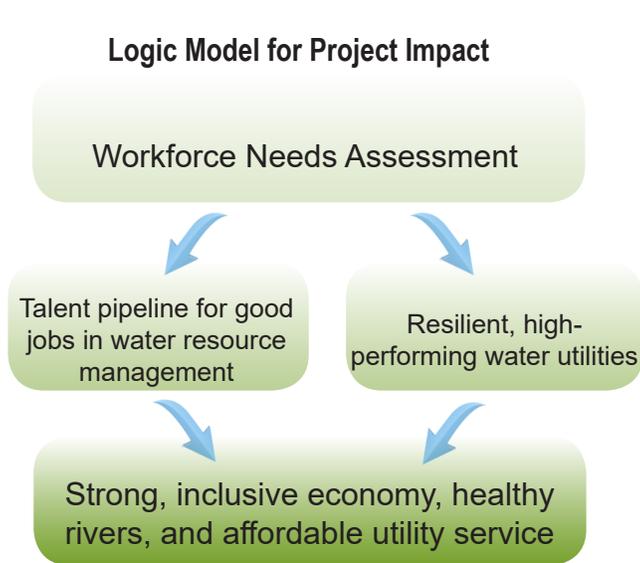
Closing the investment gap for needed water infrastructure in the U.S. would create **1.3 million American jobs**



Source: Value of Water

## OPPORTUNITY

Willamette Partnership and the Portland State University Center for Public Service are collaborating with partners across the region to launch a workforce needs assessment for the Northwest's water utility sector to learn how we can recruit and prepare workers for the infrastructure challenges of our future.



Innovative programs like water quality trading can be used to restore watershed functions and save money for ratepayers. These kind of projects take a creative and talented workforce. Photo: Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District

## WORKPLAN

Throughout 2018, the project team will investigate the critical barriers that water infrastructure providers face in developing and retaining a reliably qualified and talented workforce. The team will use surveys, interviews, and literature review to identify workforce-related barriers to high performance (such as availability of training programs, recruitment, retention, etc.) and propose solutions to improve the region's water infrastructure talent pipeline, including tailored recommendations for large, small, rural, and urban settings.

In 2019, we will begin sharing the findings by reaching out to utilities, technical training and apprenticeship programs, engineering and management programs of the region's universities, and other workforce development partners.

## FULL PROJECT

The Water Workforce Needs Assessment is one piece of a larger project focused on the Northwest's critical infrastructure. The project team includes Willamette Partnership, Portland State University, and the Center for Sustainable Infrastructure. Learn more by contacting members of the project team listed below.

## Contact Us

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