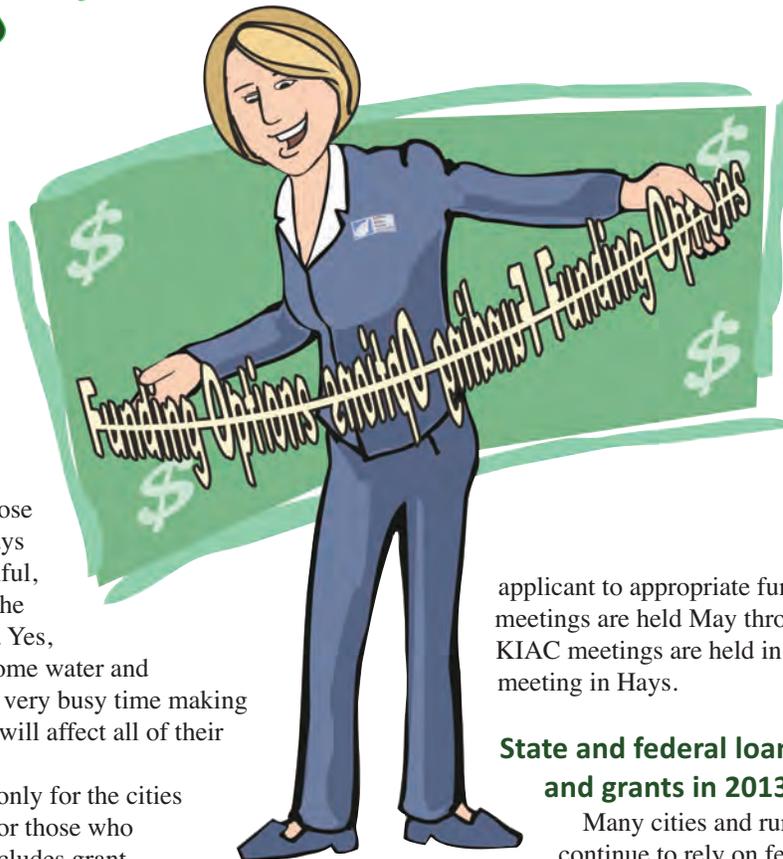


# KRWA Is a Marketplace – From Funding Options to Board/Council Training



It's that time of year. Summer has ended and those steamy, 90-plus degree-days are over. Mornings are beautiful, with cool, crisp breezes and the daytimes have 70's for highs. Yes, it's Fall in Kansas. And for some water and wastewater systems, Fall is a very busy time making some very big decisions that will affect all of their customers.

Fall is especially busy not only for the cities and water districts, but also for those who provide help to them. This includes grant administrators and engineers as they prepare applications for the Kansas Department of Commerce for Community Develop Block Grant (CDBG) funding. Application for CDBG funding requires the project owner to attend a meeting of the Kansas Interagency Coordinating Committee (KIAC pronounced ki-ak). The KICA meetings are held with all funding agencies present; the agencies include Commerce, USDA Rural Development and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Presentations are made by the applicants to help agencies better understand the projects and to help direct the

applicant to appropriate funding sources. KIAC meetings are held May through August. All KIAC meetings are held in Topeka, with one meeting in Hays.

## State and federal loans and grants in 2013

Many cities and rural water districts continue to rely on federal and state funding to construct or improve water and wastewater systems, streets, etc. And of course, everyone would appreciate receiving "free money". But grants are more and more difficult to obtain.

So how many loans and grants were provided to cities and RWDs in the last funding period? In the next paragraphs, I've listed the funding that was provided through the various agencies in 2013. It is as follows:

**USDA Rural Development:** \$47 million in loans and grants for water and more than \$20 million in Community Facility loans and grants. With September 30th being the end of the federal fiscal year, USDA usually does a press release in October that highlights all of the program investments. USDA has no application deadlines.

**The Kansas Department of Health and Environment Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund (KDHE Wastewater SRF)** executed 16 loans for a total of

**KRWA works to help water and wastewater utilities with technical, managerial and financial issues. KRWA staff are familiar with various funding options. And a new board/council training program is in development.**

\$15,684,278 and disbursed \$32,415,540.00 to loan recipients during state fiscal year 2013. This SRF does not have a set deadline for applications; if a project is on the Intended Use Plan (IUP), the applicant can submit the application at any time. The IUP is posted on the KDHE website at <http://www.kdheks.gov/muni/index.htm>. A project will remain in the IUP list of potential projects to be funded until it is funded by the KWPCRF, funded by another state or federal agency or by city bonds, or the applicant decides the project will not proceed.

**The Kansas Department of Health and Environment Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (also known as the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund)** executed 23 loans for \$41,529,763 and disbursed \$19,529,388 to loan recipients during fiscal year 2013. The drinking water SRF sets deadlines in May and December for pre-applications (the actual dates are not set). Systems typically have three months to complete an application once they receive notice to do so. The drinking water SRF sent applications to 27 systems for 38 projects so far for SFY 2014, according to William Carr at KDHE.

**The Kansas Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**, administered through the Kansas Department of Commerce, awarded 12 applications for 2013; there were six for water and six for wastewater. The agency made grants of \$4,575,425. Kansas Commerce has criteria for both water and wastewater rates that systems must meet to qualify for CDBG grants. Water rates must be at \$33 and sewer rates at \$26.25 based on 5,000 gallons use. The agency also paid out \$3,282,571 for approximately ten Community Facility projects across Kansas. The agency's housing section awarded \$1,874,600 in grants to five Kansas cities.

### **KRWA providing grant administration**

Something that I've always personally wanted to do is to become qualified to administer grants. I've worked with numerous grant administrators and I've watched them become the project caretaker and in some cases, hand-holder. I discussed my desire with Elmer at KRWA – and with agencies. I attended the Department of Commerce's training held at Hutchinson in July, and, yes, I passed the exams and so I am now a "certified grant administrator".

KRWA recently bid on a project to administer a \$1 million regional water supply grant to Doniphan County. KRWA's bid was \$7,000. The KRWA bid was the lowest of four bids that were submitted.

### **New training for boards and councils**

KRWA is working on the development of a new board / council training program. This is being done at the request of systems. KRWA's prior efforts to provide board/council training utilized the KanCap training materials which were developed by KRWA in 2003 under contract with KDHE. KDHE has awarded a contract to Kansas Municipal Utilities to update that project and so KRWA is no longer involved with it.

Numerous cities and water districts have requested KRWA staff to attend work sessions in their communities to discuss primarily management and financial issues as those relate to their utilities. It is also KRWA's opinion that cities and rural water district board members prefer to have training brought to them vs. their taking a day off of work to attend a session in the area. That was KRWA's experience when the Association facilitated and conducted prior KanCap training.

KRWA's new board/council training is not going to be a lecture series, but instead, a short presentation on the issues and then general discussions to answer any questions anyone has concerning regulations, rates, management issues and funding options. We're going to make it fun – even if we have to bring our own Tupperware container of homemade cookies! (Been there, done that too – and homemade cinnamon rolls!) Watch for more on this in the coming months.

At KRWA, my job includes numerous programs. My eleven years of experience working in city hall in a small town provided an invaluable experience to help me understand how smaller towns and rural water district governing bodies function. Combined with that experience ... the willingness of several agencies that have offered to also provide some case studies, the new board/council training will be tailored for the needs of each utility – and it's going to be fun! Send an email to me at [rita@krwa.net](mailto:rita@krwa.net) or call me directly at 785-850-0192, or the KRWA office at 785-336-3760 if you want to visit more about board/council training, other training topics, funding options, or any other issues concerning your city or rural water district.

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*Rita has extensive municipal experience with the city of Troy, KS for eleven years. She was a certified EMT and served as the Ambulance Director for two years and supervised the volunteer staff. Rita also worked on or completed most water and wastewater utility reporting requirements. Her focus at KRWA is to provide assistance with applications for funding for cities and rural water districts.*

