

ers or other existing authorities. The Administrator shall periodically review and, as appropriate, revise such authorities.

(July 1, 1944, ch. 373, title XIV, §1418, as added Pub. L. 104-182, title I, §125(b), Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1654.)

§ 300g-8. Operator certification

(a) Guidelines

Not later than 30 months after August 6, 1996, and in cooperation with the States, the Administrator shall publish guidelines in the Federal Register, after notice and opportunity for comment from interested persons, including States and public water systems, specifying minimum standards for certification (and recertification) of the operators of community and nontransient noncommunity public water systems. Such guidelines shall take into account existing State programs, the complexity of the system, and other factors aimed at providing an effective program at reasonable cost to States and public water systems, taking into account the size of the system.

(b) State programs

Beginning 2 years after the date on which the Administrator publishes guidelines under subsection (a) of this section, the Administrator shall withhold 20 percent of the funds a State is otherwise entitled to receive under section 300j-12 of this title unless the State has adopted and is implementing a program for the certification of operators of community and nontransient noncommunity public water systems that meets the requirements of the guidelines published pursuant to subsection (a) of this section or that has been submitted in compliance with subsection (c) of this section and that has not been disapproved.

(c) Existing programs

For any State exercising primary enforcement responsibility for public water systems or any other State which has an operator certification program, the guidelines under subsection (a) of this section shall allow the State to enforce such program in lieu of the guidelines under subsection (a) of this section if the State submits the program to the Administrator within 18 months after the publication of the guidelines unless the Administrator determines (within 9 months after the State submits the program to the Administrator) that such program is not substantially equivalent to such guidelines. In making this determination, an existing State program shall be presumed to be substantially equivalent to the guidelines, notwithstanding program differences, based on the size of systems or the quality of source water, providing the State program meets the overall public health objectives of the guidelines. If disapproved, the program may be resubmitted within 6 months after receipt of notice of disapproval.

(d) Expense reimbursement

(1) In general

The Administrator shall provide reimbursement for the costs of training, including an appropriate per diem for unsalaried operators,

and certification for persons operating systems serving 3,300 persons or fewer that are required to undergo training pursuant to this section.

(2) State grants

The reimbursement shall be provided through grants to States with each State receiving an amount sufficient to cover the reasonable costs for training all such operators in the State, as determined by the Administrator, to the extent required by this section. Grants received by a State pursuant to this paragraph shall first be used to provide reimbursement for training and certification costs of persons operating systems serving 3,300 persons or fewer. If a State has reimbursed all such costs, the State may, after notice to the Administrator, use any remaining funds from the grant for any of the other purposes authorized for grants under section 300j-12 of this title.

(3) Authorization

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Administrator to provide grants for reimbursement under this section \$30,000,000 for each of fiscal years 1997 through 2003.

(4) Reservation

If the appropriation made pursuant to paragraph (3) for any fiscal year is not sufficient to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (1), the Administrator shall, prior to any other allocation or reservation, reserve such sums as necessary from the funds appropriated pursuant to section 300j-12(m) of this title to provide reimbursement for the training and certification costs mandated by this subsection.

(July 1, 1944, ch. 373, title XIV, §1419, as added Pub. L. 104-182, title I, §123, Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1652.)

§ 300g-9. Capacity development

(a) State authority for new systems

A State shall receive only 80 percent of the allotment that the State is otherwise entitled to receive under section 300j-12 of this title (relating to State loan funds) unless the State has obtained the legal authority or other means to ensure that all new community water systems and new nontransient, noncommunity water systems commencing operation after October 1, 1999, demonstrate technical, managerial, and financial capacity with respect to each national primary drinking water regulation in effect, or likely to be in effect, on the date of commencement of operations.

(b) Systems in significant noncompliance

(1) List

Beginning not later than 1 year after August 6, 1996, each State shall prepare, periodically update, and submit to the Administrator a list of community water systems and nontransient, noncommunity water systems that have a history of significant noncompliance with this subchapter (as defined in guidelines issued prior to August 6, 1996, or any revisions of the guidelines that have been made in consultation with the States) and, to the extent practicable, the reasons for noncompliance.

(2) Report

Not later than 5 years after August 6, 1996, and as part of the capacity development strategy of the State, each State shall report to the Administrator on the success of enforcement mechanisms and initial capacity development efforts in assisting the public water systems listed under paragraph (1) to improve technical, managerial, and financial capacity.

(3) Withholding

The list and report under this subsection shall be considered part of the capacity development strategy of the State required under subsection (c) of this section for purposes of the withholding requirements of section 300j-12(a)(1)(G)(i) of this title (relating to State loan funds).

(c) Capacity development strategy**(1) In general**

Beginning 4 years after August 6, 1996, a State shall receive only—

- (A) 90 percent in fiscal year 2001;
- (B) 85 percent in fiscal year 2002; and
- (C) 80 percent in each subsequent fiscal year,

of the allotment that the State is otherwise entitled to receive under section 300j-12 of this title (relating to State loan funds), unless the State is developing and implementing a strategy to assist public water systems in acquiring and maintaining technical, managerial, and financial capacity.

(2) Content

In preparing the capacity development strategy, the State shall consider, solicit public comment on, and include as appropriate—

- (A) the methods or criteria that the State will use to identify and prioritize the public water systems most in need of improving technical, managerial, and financial capacity;
- (B) a description of the institutional, regulatory, financial, tax, or legal factors at the Federal, State, or local level that encourage or impair capacity development;
- (C) a description of how the State will use the authorities and resources of this subchapter or other means to—
 - (i) assist public water systems in complying with national primary drinking water regulations;
 - (ii) encourage the development of partnerships between public water systems to enhance the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of the systems; and
 - (iii) assist public water systems in the training and certification of operators;
- (D) a description of how the State will establish a baseline and measure improvements in capacity with respect to national primary drinking water regulations and State drinking water law; and
- (E) an identification of the persons that have an interest in and are involved in the development and implementation of the capacity development strategy (including all appropriate agencies of Federal, State, and

local governments, private and nonprofit public water systems, and public water system customers).

(3) Report

Not later than 2 years after the date on which a State first adopts a capacity development strategy under this subsection, and every 3 years thereafter, the head of the State agency that has primary responsibility to carry out this subchapter in the State shall submit to the Governor a report that shall also be available to the public on the efficacy of the strategy and progress made toward improving the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of public water systems in the State.

(4) Review

The decisions of the State under this section regarding any particular public water system are not subject to review by the Administrator and may not serve as the basis for withholding funds under section 300j-12 of this title.

(d) Federal assistance**(1) In general**

The Administrator shall support the States in developing capacity development strategies.

(2) Informational assistance**(A) In general**

Not later than 180 days after August 6, 1996, the Administrator shall—

- (i) conduct a review of State capacity development efforts in existence on August 6, 1996, and publish information to assist States and public water systems in capacity development efforts; and
- (ii) initiate a partnership with States, public water systems, and the public to develop information for States on recommended operator certification requirements.

(B) Publication of information

The Administrator shall publish the information developed through the partnership under subparagraph (A)(ii) not later than 18 months after August 6, 1996.

(3) Promulgation of drinking water regulations

In promulgating a national primary drinking water regulation, the Administrator shall include an analysis of the likely effect of compliance with the regulation on the technical, financial, and managerial capacity of public water systems.

(4) Guidance for new systems

Not later than 2 years after August 6, 1996, the Administrator shall publish guidance developed in consultation with the States describing legal authorities and other means to ensure that all new community water systems and new nontransient, noncommunity water systems demonstrate technical, managerial, and financial capacity with respect to national primary drinking water regulations.

(e) Variances and exemptions

Based on information obtained under subsection (c)(3) of this section, the Administrator

shall, as appropriate, modify regulations concerning variances and exemptions for small public water systems to ensure flexibility in the use of the variances and exemptions. Nothing in this subsection shall be interpreted, construed, or applied to affect or alter the requirements of section 300g-4 or 300g-5 of this title.

(f) Small public water systems technology assistance centers

(1) Grant program

The Administrator is authorized to make grants to institutions of higher learning to establish and operate small public water system technology assistance centers in the United States.

(2) Responsibilities of the centers

The responsibilities of the small public water system technology assistance centers established under this subsection shall include the conduct of training and technical assistance relating to the information, performance, and technical needs of small public water systems or public water systems that serve Indian Tribes.

(3) Applications

Any institution of higher learning interested in receiving a grant under this subsection shall submit to the Administrator an application in such form and containing such information as the Administrator may require by regulation.

(4) Selection criteria

The Administrator shall select recipients of grants under this subsection on the basis of the following criteria:

(A) The small public water system technology assistance center shall be located in a State that is representative of the needs of the region in which the State is located for addressing the drinking water needs of small and rural communities or Indian Tribes.

(B) The grant recipient shall be located in a region that has experienced problems, or may reasonably be foreseen to experience problems, with small and rural public water systems.

(C) The grant recipient shall have access to expertise in small public water system technology management.

(D) The grant recipient shall have the capability to disseminate the results of small public water system technology and training programs.

(E) The projects that the grant recipient proposes to carry out under the grant are necessary and appropriate.

(F) The grant recipient has regional support beyond the host institution.

(5) Consortia of States

At least 2 of the grants under this subsection shall be made to consortia of States with low population densities.

(6) Authorization of appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated to make grants under this subsection \$2,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 1997 through 1999, and \$5,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2003.

(g) Environmental finance centers

(1) In general

The Administrator shall provide initial funding for one or more university-based environmental finance centers for activities that provide technical assistance to State and local officials in developing the capacity of public water systems. Any such funds shall be used only for activities that are directly related to this subchapter.

(2) National capacity development clearinghouse

The Administrator shall establish a national public water system capacity development clearinghouse to receive and disseminate information with respect to developing, improving, and maintaining financial and managerial capacity at public water systems. The Administrator shall ensure that the clearinghouse does not duplicate other federally supported clearinghouse activities.

(3) Capacity development techniques

The Administrator may request an environmental finance center funded under paragraph (1) to develop and test managerial, financial, and institutional techniques for capacity development. The techniques may include capacity assessment methodologies, manual and computer based public water system rate models and capital planning models, public water system consolidation procedures, and regionalization models.

(4) Authorization of appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subsection \$1,500,000 for each of the fiscal years 1997 through 2003.

(5) Limitation

No portion of any funds made available under this subsection may be used for lobbying expenses.

(July 1, 1944, ch. 373, title XIV, §1420, as added Pub. L. 104-182, title I, §119, Aug. 6, 1996, 110 Stat. 1647.)

PART C—PROTECTION OF UNDERGROUND SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER

§ 300h. Regulations for State programs

(a) Publication of proposed regulations; promulgation; amendments; public hearings; administrative consultations

(1) The Administrator shall publish proposed regulations for State underground injection control programs within 180 days after December 16, 1974. Within 180 days after publication of such proposed regulations, he shall promulgate such regulations with such modifications as he deems appropriate. Any regulation under this subsection may be amended from time to time.

(2) Any regulation under this section shall be proposed and promulgated in accordance with section 553 of title 5 (relating to rulemaking), except that the Administrator shall provide opportunity for public hearing prior to promulgation of such regulations. In proposing and promulgating regulations under this section the Administrator shall consult with the Secretary,