

Drinking Water Assistance Fund

Disadvantaged Community Loan Program

Proposed Criteria for Program Year 2025

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) section 1452(d) requires states to develop disadvantaged community program criteria to determine what systems or districts qualify for additional financial subsidy (i.e., principal forgiveness, reduced loan rates). Public water systems eligible for the DWAF program, with the exception of some privately owned systems¹, that meet the criteria qualify for the disadvantaged community loan program.

With the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in November 2021, USEPA encouraged states to evaluate the disadvantaged community program criteria and make adjustments, where appropriate. Ohio EPA reviewed and carefully considered the disadvantaged community loan program and made adjustments for Program Year 2023. No additional revisions are proposed for Program Year 2025. The 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates is the most recently available census data and is reflected in the program values listed below.

For PY 2025, a disadvantaged community candidate is a Public Water System (PWS) with a service population below 10,000, a nominated project with demonstrated health-related factors, **and** that meets any three of the four socio-economic benchmarks identified below.

General Criteria	Program Value
Service Area Population	Less than 10,000
Documented human health-related factors	Presence of indicators
Socio-Economic Benchmarks	Program Value
Median Household Income (MHI) less than or equal to statewide average	≤ \$66,990
Individuals with income below 200% of poverty level greater than or equal to statewide average	≥ 29.6%
Unemployment Rate (civilian) greater than or equal to statewide average	≥ 5.01%
Water and sewer rates compared to MHI greater than or equal to statewide benchmark	≥ 1.44%

For program year 2025 Emerging Contaminant (EC) and Lead Service Line (LSL) funding, a disadvantaged community candidate is a Public Water System (PWS) with a nominated project remediating health-related factors (LSL or emerging contaminants) and that meets **any three of the four** socio-economic benchmarks identified above. Service Area Population is not an eligibility factor for EC and LSL projects.

¹ Privately owned systems must be regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), a system considered a political subdivision as defined by ORC 6119.011 or a non-profit public water system.

Data Sources:

Service Area Population is taken from USEPA's Safe Drinking Water System Information System (SDWIS)².

For socio-economic benchmarks, the most recent American Community Survey 5-year Estimates data is used for MHI, poverty rate and unemployment rate. The information below indicates the data table(s) used along with any calculations for a percentage. The description of each item below is noted as follows: table number, table title, ACS dataset.

MHI

B19013, Median Household Income in the Past 12 months, 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

Statewide Average MHI = \$66,990

Poverty Rate

S1701, Poverty Status in the Past 12 months, 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

Individuals with Income Below 200% of Poverty Level

$(S1701_C01_042E / S1701_C01_001E) * 100\%$

*Statewide Average = $(3,393,638 / 11,472,644) * 100$*

Statewide Average = 29.58%

Unemployment Rate

B23025, Employment Status for the Population 16 Years and Over, 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

Unemployed Population 16 Years and Over in Civilian Labor Force

$(B23025_005E / B23025_003E) * 100\%$

*Statewide Average = $(300,192 / 5,987,111) * 100$*

Statewide Average = 5.01%

2025 Water and Sewer Rates as a percent of MHI

In the 2022 Sewer and Water Rate Survey³, the average sewer and water usage was determined to be 4,000 gallons per household per month. Cost per month and usage cost as a percentage of MHI is based on a usage of 4,000 gallons per household per month.

Statewide Average:

Sewer: $\$489.95 / \$66,990 = 0.7314\%$

Water: $\$476.93 / \$66,990 = 0.7119\%$

Combined: $\$966.88 / \$66,990 = 1.4433\%$

² [Safe Drinking Water Information System \(SDWIS\) Federal Reporting Services | US EPA](#); For projects where the service area is currently unserved, the population is from the B01003, Total Population, 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates.

³ [Sewer and Water Rate Survey | Ohio Environmental Protection Agency](#)