

2026 Career Pathways Project — Grant Advertisement

The King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) is pleased to announce it is accepting applications for Partners in Water (PiW) collaboration grants to work with the division's Human Resources (HR) team. **Partners in Water** is a program that connects WTD work groups with community organizations to advance mutually beneficial goals related to WTD operations and services.

WTD's HR team is especially interested in partnering with organizations who have trusted relationships with historically and currently marginalized communities. Three \$25,000 grants (a total of \$75,000) are available to support the involvement of three organizations in year 2 of our Career Pathways Project.

Applications must be received by February 20, 2026, at partnersinwater@kingcounty.gov.

About the Career Pathways Project

The PiW Career Pathways Project is a collaboration between WTD and community-based organizations (CBOs) serving immigrant, refugee, and underrepresented communities. The project aims to expand equitable access to WTD career pathways by strengthening cross-sector partnerships, improving human resources systems and communications, and centering community voice in recruitment and hiring practices.

In our pilot year, the Career Pathways Project focused on three core goals: building strong partnerships, improving HR strategies and communications, and increasing equitable access to career opportunities for youth and community members. In 2026, or year 2, the project will expand to include representation from three local CBO grantees and focus on a range of identified opportunities, including working closely with WTD's HR project team to co-develop a plan for sharing WTD opportunities with a wide range of CBOs across King County, testing community-based career pathway focused programming, and supporting division-wide strategic workforce development planning.

Through this 2026 collaboration with CBO grantees, WTD's HR team aims to reach a diverse pool of candidates to ensure that job opportunities and career resources are accessible to all members of our community.

Who can apply for grants?

Organizations/collectives or community groups applying for a PiW collaboration grant **must**

- be located in and serve WTD's service area ([use this hyperlink to access an interactive service area map](#));
- have 501(c)3 nonprofit status, a fiscal sponsor with 501(c)3 nonprofit status, or be willing and able to secure a fiscal sponsor with 501(c)3 nonprofit status by January 31, 2026, if awarded a grant; and
- serve communities that face historic and current inequities and have limited resources and/or capacity; this includes Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants and refugees, people living with low incomes, women and gender non-conforming, LGBTQIA+ people, people who live and/or work outside, people with limited English skills, and people with disabilities.

Grantee Scope of Work

Community-based organization grantees will work closely with the WTD Human Resources project team to develop and implement initiatives that promote job opportunities, support job seekers in applying for positions, and educate community members about WTD and clean water careers. The scope of work for partnering CBO grantees may include, but is not limited to, the following four areas:

1. **Developing and testing community-based advertising and communications** to get the word out to community members that wouldn't otherwise hear about WTD job opportunities. This may include
 - developing an approach and resources that increase the ability to advertise jobs through a broader network of CBOs and partners and
 - co-creating and testing collaborative (WTD Comms and CBOs) social media posts.
2. **Continuing to refine and improve job posting templates** and other recruitment processes, such as
 - working with Human Resources to influence department-wide practices/ templates;
 - working with communities to refine and improve online application forms and process; and
 - helping create better WTD recruitment resources (for example, a WTD careers page).

3. **Developing and testing new collaborative strategies** for community engagement and learning, which may include
 - piloting new learning activities and clean water career focused programming for youth and community members in collaboration with WTD staff,
 - facilitating community-based career workshops and activities, and
 - organizing focus groups to engage directly with community members on related topics.
4. **Supporting WTD Workforce Development strategic planning** by advising a cross-division working group in external workforce development planning, which may include
 - meeting with internal working groups and
 - reviewing and providing feedback on internal planning documents.

These project objectives and plans will be refined in quarter 1 of the project year, and relevant activities/deliverables will continue to evolve throughout the project.

Grantee Expectations

All grantee applicants will have certain expectations built into their respective grant scopes, including the following:

- Submission of quarterly reporting narratives/financial reporting as a part of reimbursement.
- Creating, planning, and managing career development programs.
- Engaging and maintaining relationships with a diverse group of individuals from communities in person, at public events, social media platforms and digital marketing.
- Shared knowledge of best practices and strategies to meet the needs of communities.
- Supporting the pilot project by working adaptively and responsively.
- Maintaining collaborative relationships with project team members.

Application Process and Timeline

Interested parties are encouraged to apply using the application template (including a narrative section and a proposed budget). Alternative application formats, such as interviews, are available upon request. **Applications must be received by February 20, 2026, at partnersinwater@kingcounty.gov.**

Applications will be scored and reviewed by a selection committee comprised of a team of WTD staff who will be directly involved in the project. Applicants may be asked for additional information and/or an interview before finalists are chosen.

Project Launch Timeline	
Phase	Date
Grant Application Posted	2/2/26 (outreach and webpage update)
Grant Application Period	2/2–2/20/26
Informational Online Webinar	2/6 11am–noon
Application Review	2/23–2/26
Notification of Awardees	2/27
Contract Negotiation	3/2–3/6
Project Launch	March/April 2026 (tentative)
Project Period	March 2026–March 2027 (tentative)

Q&A Info Session Webinar

Join a virtual information session to learn more about the PiW Grant Program and qualities of a strong grant proposal. Registration for the event is required. The session will be recorded and posted on the PiW webpage.

- Date: February 6, 2026
- Time: 11am–noon
- **[Register here!](#)**

If you have additional questions, please contact Eli Weiss, Partners in Water Program Manager, at elweiss@kingcounty.gov or visit the [Partners in Water webpage](#).

Application

[Career Pathways Project Application](#)

2025 Pilot Project Summary

In 2025, Partners in Water launched the Career Pathways Pilot Project focusing on three core goals. This section summarizes the activities of and achievements toward these goals.

Strengthening Cross-Sector Collaboration

WTD and CBO partners launched the Career Pathways Project with an in-person retreat and sustained engagement through monthly in-person meetings. These sessions supported relationship-building, shared learning, and co-design of workforce strategies. Participants reported increased trust, stronger cross-sector understanding, and greater confidence collaborating across public and community-based systems. This foundation enabled CBO partners to explore future opportunities for collaboration, including proposals for 2026 WaterWorks grant projects focused on community access and workforce development.

Improving Human Resources Strategies and Communications

Community-based organization partners and community members played a central role in reviewing WTD recruitment materials, job postings, and application instructions. Feedback highlighted common barriers such as complex language, unclear job classifications, vague language requirements, and limited transparency about hiring steps. In response, WTD HR implemented targeted improvements to job postings, including clearer job type descriptions, reduced jargon, more functional language expectations, enhanced team context, and improved visibility into the hiring process. A quarter 4 community focus group validated these changes while identifying remaining challenges, reinforcing the importance of continued, iterative improvement.

Expanding Equitable Access to Career Pathways

The project supported youth engagement through participation in a Teen Career Fair held at South Treatment Plant and worked with CBOs to reduce barriers to the Clean Water Ambassadors teen internship application process. WTD HR increased communication with CBO partners by sharing job postings more frequently and incorporating more user-friendly language, creating a WTD resource library to support partners in developing education and workforce development activities. Partner feedback informed new outreach and recruitment strategies designed to better reach underrepresented communities.

Looking Ahead

The 2025 PiW Career Pathways Pilot Project refined a model for collaboration between WTD and partner CBOs, led to updated WTD HR recruitment materials and refined WTD job postings, as well as recommendations for ongoing collaboration to further refine internal recruitment practices and improve communication and advertising of future opportunities. In 2026, building upon the goals of the project's first year, PiW expects to realize continued success and shared understanding between WTD and its CBO partners, ultimately leading to more clean water careers for the diverse community it serves.