

Central Falls, RI



CHALLENGE

The City of Central Falls, Rhode Island’s smallest and most densely populated city, owns and operates a wastewater and stormwater collection system built in the 1860s. Years of deferred planning and maintenance has resulted in frequent leakage, backups, and combined sewer overflows (CSOs). In 2023, Central Falls was authorized for a Rhode Island Clean Water State Revolving Fund (RI CWSRF) loan to fund the development of a comprehensive sewer facility plan. Staff turnover and capacity constraints challenged the City’s ability to navigate the required steps to access the awarded funds, putting their funding at risk.



Central Falls Landing, Blackstone River. Image: Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.

ABOUT NEWIN

The New England Water Infrastructure Network (NEWIN) provides free technical, financial, and managerial assistance to achieve safe, affordable, and resilient drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems. We help municipalities, water utilities, and tribes develop projects and secure funding from Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) and other sources.

PROJECT DETAILS

Location: Central Falls, RI

Timeline: Jan 2024 - May 2025

Partners:

- City of Central Falls
- Moonshot Missions
- New England Environmental Finance Center
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
- Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank (RIIB)

Funding details:

- RI CWSRF
- \$250,000 loan
- 100% principal forgiveness

OUR APPROACH

FUNDING APPLICATION SUPPORT

NEWIN helped Central Falls coordinate with RIDEM to obtain a Certificate of Approval for the project and collaborate RIIB to complete the Facility Plan loan application.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

NEWIN collaborated with City leadership, RIDEM, and RIIB to develop a project scope for the Sewer Facility Plan, prepare a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) package for a consultant, and review submissions.

MAINTENANCE & FINANCIAL PLANNING

NEWIN provided recommendations for ongoing O&M and long-term sewer system financing, including guidance on establishing a Sewer Fund and contracting with a third-party O&M provider.

OUTCOMES

- Guided the City through the RI CWSRF process – from securing the Certificate of Approval (i.e., project scope, costs, procurement) from RIDEM to submitting a complete loan application (i.e., authority to borrow, financials) from RIIB – all the way to final loan approval and funds distribution.
- Helped the City procure a consultant to prepare the Sewer Facility Plan.
- Delivered a technical memorandum outlining options for long-term O&M and financing.

PROJECT CONTACT

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“This \$250,000 grant will allow us to map out a comprehensive plan to modernize our sewer system and to qualify for future financing to implement the plan’s recommendations.”

- Maria Rivera, Central Falls Mayor



Narragansett Bay Commission's Bucklin Point Wastewater Treatment Facility, where Central Falls' wastewater and stormwater is treated. Image: DOC

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Clear communication with City and State partners was critical for ensuring all CWSRF application requirements and deadlines are met.
- Early definition of budget constraints and scope limitations ensured the Sewer Facility Plan remained feasible.
- Technical Assistance played a pivotal role in building local capacity and advancing much-needed infrastructure improvements in a resource-limited city.
- Engaged City staff were crucial in moving the project forward.

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