

Water and Wastewater Management: Evolution and Challenges

Federal drinking water standards are always changing and evolving, which creates a recurring problem in the water industry, specifically for local governments. Local water service operators are increasingly finding it difficult to meet these ever-evolving regulations.

Also, the need for water infrastructure improvement is not confined to complying with federal standards. Water and wastewater services are already one of the largest expenditures in local government budgets, according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors¹. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently estimated the nation's 76,000 drinking water systems will require \$150 billion in investments over the next 20 years!²

Today's water and wastewater sectors, big and small, face these challenges that can make or break the functionality of the communities they serve. To address these immense challenges effectively, water service operators need to evaluate their available technical and financial resources. There are various factors to consider when taking a step away from publicly run waterworks and transitioning into a partnership with a private company or a partner like PeopleService. It's also important to understand where "control" truly lies when this type of change occurs.

The Difference Between Publicly Owned, Privatized and Contracted Services

Historically, water utilities have been owned and operated as public utilities. This means local water systems are usually non-profit entities managed by local or state governments, and rates are set by a governing board. A problem that often arises here is that when infrastructure requires rehabilitation or regulations require additional monetary and technical upgrades, prices increase and can become a burden to the local citizens or are voted down. Unfortunately, the price increases – to pay for critical updates – are exactly what are needed.

When a water system is privatized, it transforms into a for-profit system managed by investors or shareholders. The private entities can help with the financial load and other upgrades through the raising of capital, but with that goes the transfer of control from the people of the community to an outside, privately held company. This is often not a solution that cities and villages opt for.

PeopleService and Contract Operations is the Viable Solution

Alternatively, a water system can be *outsourced*, which doesn't require a transfer of control or decision making. In fact, with PeopleService, contracts are signed creating a partnership between community stakeholders and the knowledgeable experts at PeopleService. Community governments reap multiple benefits when agreeing to outsource water and wastewater management. Perhaps the greatest benefit is actually *more control* in this changing world. Other benefits include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. A hands-on, relationship-based partnership.
2. The resources, knowledge and manpower of a large, private entity but without any transfer of control and decision making.
3. Insight into large-scale innovations and emerging standards that can be implemented on a small scale.
4. Higher attention to detail, safety and execution because water and wastewater is their only focus.
5. A partnership between PeopleService and community leaders to restore and rehabilitate structures and systems already in place, so there's no "starting over."
6. Expert staff working side-by-side with you to get things done and work as a team.
7. Lots of face time – including regular check-ins and information sessions and presentations when requested.

Community Benefits

Contracts Operations contracts can produce other important benefits for the community. The people hired to manage contract operations in your community are residents of the community and/or surrounding area. They are raising their children there and want the best for all citizens. PeopleService truly cares about the communities we serve, often becoming active in important community events, charities, celebrations and more.

Tackling Negative Perceptions About Outsourcing

Let's face it. Outsourcing in our industry has historically been a "naughty" word. But actually, the negative perceptions of outsourcing are simply not true. One is **surrendering managerial control**, which most governing boards really don't want to do. With PeopleService, we accept full responsibility and accountability for all your water and wastewater issues, **but we never take control**. We answer questions, take care of problems and maintain system functionality and standards, but final decisions and monetary implications are still in your hands.

Another concern is **confidentiality**. For example, contracted with a small, rural community, we are at your facility every single day, which means we're inevitably exposed to delicate or even confidential information. The good news is you can trust our people because we take confidentiality very seriously. We take pride in establishing strong trust in our relationships with representatives from communities we serve (and live in), and we understand the value and sanctity of private information.

A third concern that often arises with outside contractors is **dependency on another company's success**. Committing to a contract with PeopleService means the service we provide to you can only be provided as long as we're financially able to provide it. This is where our solid legacy of strength and dependability comes in. City governments and community leaders have trusted the power of PeopleService for nearly 30 years. We have a long history of success with an ever-growing client base. We always put our partners first and that commitment to customer service makes us a reliable, secure water and wastewater partner for you.

Why Choose PeopleService

Local water service operators, who are more often than not already facing financial limitations and unmet capital needs, understand that safe drinking water and effective wastewater services for citizens are necessary but costly and risky endeavors. Simply staying apprised of the latest science and regulations takes considerable resources. Implementing changes as needed to provide quality drinking water and appropriately treated wastewater requires significant investment, manpower and expertise. Some facilities must be rehabilitated to be more economical and efficient. In other cities, plants and pipes are so out-of-date that they require constant maintenance and repair.

With so many facilities in need of attention, many governing officials want to maximize efficiency of their water and wastewater operations. Cities strive to cope with these challenges through a variety of means including contract operations outsourcing. A long-term contract with a company like PeopleService can create an effective, proven solution to water infrastructure threats, it can ensure standards meet those of federal and state governments and can provide a community with a long-term partnership that best serves the needs of the citizen and economic development goals.

PeopleService takes care of the management, operations and maintenance of water and wastewater. Working together with you we embrace the collective goal to provide safe, quality water and efficient, effective wastewater systems for your community...systems that protect the environment for generations to come.

Our legacy of dedication to our partners is demonstrated by the number of awards our partners and we have earned from state, regional and national regulatory groups including the EPA.

Find out about becoming one of our community partners and take advantage of our entire spectrum of services. Contact [Chris Gutschow](#) today at 877-774-4311.

ENDNOTES

1. John Holusha, "In Latest Cost-cutting Trend, Cities Turn to Private Sector for Wastewater Treatment," The New York Times, May 5, 1996, p. A14.
2. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey, 2001, www.epa.gov/safewater/needs.htm.