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Five Steps to Prepare the Next Generation of Water Workers.

Much like investing in water infrastructure, the country often overlooks the pressing need to invest in a skilled workforce to manage these systems. Nearly [1.7 million “water workers”](#) construct, operate, and maintain water systems found in every region, whether employed in utilities, engineering firms, or other industries. And many water workers are in short supply due to a wave of retirements and a lack of younger talent, even though they earn more competitive wages, tend to only need a high school diploma or less, and [develop valuable skillsets](#) over time.

These workforce challenges are not unique to the water sector. [Multiple other infrastructure employers](#) are also struggling to hire, train, and retain more workers, especially those in the trades. If local water employers can design new ways to develop their workforce pipeline, the solutions could be replicated across the country and the broader infrastructure sector.

Developing these solutions, though, requires new techniques. In other words, local success depends on local innovation, ideally supported by broader regional collaborations and national investments. Building off a new “water workforce playbook” we developed through [conversations with water and workforce leaders](#) across the country, below are five steps that all types of localities can follow to accelerate their recruitment, training, and retention efforts:

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The Brookings Institute

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