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Organizing Water & Wastewater Industries to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century

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The capital intensive, monopolized, and largely government owned and operated water and wastewater industries of the U.S. are facing major challenges. In light of these financial and service quality pressures, designing an optimal organizational structure has taken on greater urgency. Local governments have a variety of options. Some form of public private partnership may be the most efficient organizational format. . As the United States economy developed and population increased and clustered in urban areas, the challenge of providing a safe and reliable water supply had to be addressed. Both private and public systems were built to access raw water sources, pipe water to treatment plants, and deliver clean water to the final users. A large and costly infrastructure was built and was largely owned and operated by government organizations, although a viable private sector coexisted. Amid rising costs of maintenance and accessing raw water and a greater emphasis on achieving clean water, a reexamination of the structure of water and wastewater systems is taking place. Hybrid organizational arrangements that utilize private producers have emerged amid a closer look at public structures that is being taken by many local governments. Efforts are being made to make water supply and wastewater treatment more efficient by restructuring and by attempting to inject competition into the marketplace.

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