



# Department of Environmental Protection

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## Answers to Questions

### MassDEP's 2019-2020 MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant Program

Questions regarding MassDEP's 2019-2020 MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant Program that were received at the October 17, 2019 Bidders' Conference or via email submission are highlighted in **bold** font; MassDEP's answers are presented using *italic* font.

#### **Does a list of past MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant funded projects exist?**

*Over the past two calendar years (Fiscal Year (FY) 17-18 and FY 18-19), MassDEP's MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant Program has provided direct assistance to help 260 Massachusetts cities and towns meet the requirements of the 2003 and/or 2016 MS4 stormwater permit through the award of the following grants:*

- FY18: \$50,000 to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to develop an offsite mitigation manual for all 260 MS4 municipalities;*
- FY 19: \$25,000 to the Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition to prepare various Standard Operating Procedures and templates for the first year requirements of the MS4 permit;*
- FY 19: \$50,000 to the Southeastern Massachusetts Stormwater Coalition to present written Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) and Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) plan workshops for up to 40 MS4 cities and towns;*
- FY 19: \$54,625 to the Greenscapes/Salem Sound coalition to develop a statewide interactive map of Low Impact Development (LID) project locations, update the Greenscapes Guide that Towns use to meet MS4 public education requirements, and videos highlighting successful urban, suburban, and coastal LID projects;*

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- *FY 18 and FY19: \$370,375 in two awards to the Statewide Stormwater Coalition to develop “Think Blue”, a statewide video and social-marketing-based stormwater education and branding campaign; and*
- *FY18: \$50,000 to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to develop a regional approach toward meeting IDDE requirements.*

**How should applicants present Letters of Support for consideration in MassDEP’s evaluation process?**

*There are two ways that MassDEP will consider Letters of Support in its evaluation of proposals. The Grant Applicant can either provide the Letter(s) of Support as part of the Grant Program Application, or the Applicant can have the supporting party send the Letter(s) separately to MassDEP. However, all Applicants should note that, per the Grant Opportunity Summary Section F, the total page limit for the Grant Application (including any Letter(s) of Support) is 15 pages. In addition, per Section E of the Grant Opportunity Summary, all Grant Applications (including any Letter(s) of Support) are due by 5:00 PM on November 1, 2019. Any additional information from Applicants after the Application deadline will not be considered in the evaluation process.*

**If a stormwater coalition or group of municipalities is applying to the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants, are letters of commitment from the executive authorities of all participating towns required?**

*No. Formal letters of commitment are not required. See the Evaluation Criterion “Project Description” on page 4 of the Grant Program Opportunity document, which asks “(h)ow well does the applicant articulate that multiple municipalities will be helped by the proposal . . .”.*

**How will MassDEP consider applications for the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants regarding model stormwater bylaws with the Stormwater Handbook undergoing updates and it being uncertain when the Stormwater Handbook updates are complete?**

*MassDEP specifically included that topic as a clear example of an eligible project that would meet a specific requirement of the MS4 permit; MassDEP also acknowledges that the Stormwater Handbook updates are not yet complete. MassDEP included that specific example of an eligible project to reflect recent concerns expressed to MassDEP by Towns that their need to meet this specific MS4 requirement by June 30, 2020 may not be fully achieved through MassDEP’s Stormwater Handbook update process.*

**When do contracts for the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants start?**

*MassDEP anticipates that contract start dates will be December 20, 2019.*

**What is your level of confidence on being able to meet the estimated contract start date on December 20, 2019 for the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants?**

*The December 20, 2019 date is currently MassDEP's best estimate for contract award.*

**Can some of the work that is proposed under the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant start before the contract start date?**

*No. The Commonwealth will not reimburse any Grant Applicant for any work undertaken before the contracting process is completed, and a written Notice to Proceed letter is issued by MassDEP.*

**Can Mass Maritime Academy apply for this grant?**

*See part D of the Grant Opportunity Summary. Only "eligible entities" may apply for this grant. "Eligible entities" are limited to:*

- groups of two or more Massachusetts municipalities that are subject to the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit;*
- Regional Planning Agencies acting on behalf of two or more municipalities that are subject to the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit;*
- Massachusetts stormwater coalitions representing two or more municipalities that are subject to the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit; or*
- non-profit organizations acting on behalf of two or more municipalities that are subject to the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit.*

**If a project is proposed for the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants and a match is provided for the proposed project, will the proposed project receive a higher rating in the evaluation criteria?**

*While applicants are not required to provide matching funds, a match is preferred, and the evaluation criteria list includes taking matches into account when reviewing the grant applications. Please refer to section H of the Grant Opportunity Summary ("[w]hile applicants are not required to provide matching funds, a match is preferred."). In addition, applicants should note that the "Evaluation Criteria" on page 4 of the Grant Program Opportunity document expressly refer to consideration of matching funds in the "financial need" and "project budget" descriptions.*

**Is there any recommendation on what percentage of funding a match should cover?**

*No. See also MassDEP's prior answer regarding the evaluation of Grant proposals that include matching funds.*

**How different does a project need to be from previously completed projects in order to be eligible?**

*See Part C b. of the Grant Opportunity Summary, which states that the proposed project must “not duplicate work already done by any Massachusetts stormwater coalition.” A prudent applicant will demonstrate how their proposal is not duplicative. Applicants should also review the information provided above by MassDEP about previous MS4 grant contract awards.*

**The RFR for the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants mentions a \$50,000 floor for project budgets. Where does this threshold come from and how stringent is this requirement?**

*Based upon its experience, MassDEP has determined that, in general, the \$50,000 minimum for MS4 grant awards has produced robust and successful MS4 Grant proposals for this Program. However, Applicants should note that, in Section G “Funding Availability” in the Grant Program Summary on page 2 “[...] the MassDEP review committee reserves the right, in its discretion, to grant smaller awards of exceptional merit [...]”.*

**How many projects are expected to be funded?**

*See Part C, d., of the Grant Opportunity Summary, which states that MassDEP “estimates it will award up to 6 grants.”*

**Since other municipalities and coalitions will be applying, and since we do not want to prevent other coalitions and municipalities from receiving grants, should we set up our proposed project in such a way that gives MassDEP flexibility to select portions of a proposed project and allows other municipalities or stormwater coalitions a chance to win an award?**

*MassDEP encourages these groups of municipalities and/or stormwater coalitions to collaborate on submitting a proposal and/or to coordinate proposal submissions. Such discussions among potential applicants can also be used to develop lists of municipal support for each proposed project.*

**Will preference be given to projects that meet earlier deadlines of the permit, e.g. Year 4 requirements vs. Year 2 requirements?**

*The Grant Opportunity Summary does not differentiate between MS4 requirements due in different years.*

**In the grant description document, it mentions that awards can be used towards MS4 capital investments, including equipment. What are examples of capital investments and equipment that are eligible for funding through the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants?**

*One example would be partial funding of a vacuum truck to be shared by multiple towns.*