



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

# Department of Environmental Protection

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January 24, 2024

## *COMING SOON*

### **Cybersecurity Improvements Grant Program for Public Water Suppliers**

Dear Public Water Supplier,

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Drinking Water Program (DWP) is actively working to improve the cybersecurity and resilience of public water systems (PWS). MassDEP prioritizes PWS and public health protection by requiring PWS to address cybersecurity in their Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) per 310 CMR 22.04(13), inspecting PWS cybersecurity assessments, programs, and plans during sanitary surveys, and providing helpful resources such as through the biweekly electronic newsletter called "In The Main". To continue supporting PWS cybersecurity programs, MassDEP/DWP is increasing its efforts to address potential cybersecurity risks by developing a grant program.

MassDEP/DWP is pleased to inform you of an **upcoming grant opportunity** to support cybersecurity improvements in PWS throughout Massachusetts. This program will offer eligible PWS the opportunity to be granted up to \$50,000 per system<sup>[1]</sup> to improve their cybersecurity defense, mitigate the risks of cyber-attacks, and to enhance overall resiliency and compliance. This grant program will be funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust.

**MassDEP plans to accept grant applications as soon as the solicitation is announced and will stop accepting applications by June 1, 2024. Applications or any submissions for this grant program will not include any security sensitive information.** Due to the sensitive nature of the information, MassDEP will not accept actual cybersecurity program information (e.g., Emergency Response Plans, cybersecurity assessments, etc.) from applicants.

**To ensure your PWS is ready to apply for this program as soon as it is officially announced, MassDEP/DWP encourages you to make sure your PWS meets all the requirements by familiarizing yourself with the grant program's prerequisites listed below.**

**PWS Eligibility for the grant will include the following:**

1. All PWS that are a **small system** (serving a population under 10,000) or a PWS that serves a population over 10,000 that also serves a **disadvantaged community**. To see if your system serves a disadvantaged community, see: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/the-disadvantaged-community-program>.
2. PWS must also meet the following two conditions:
  - a. **Operation Technology (OT) Conditions:** PWS must have OT equipment with a cybersecurity risk. OT equipment is defined as hardware and software that detects or causes a change to water

This information is available in alternate format. Please contact Melixza Esenyie at 617-626-1282.

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treatment and/or distribution processes through the direct monitoring or control of physical devices, processes, and events in the enterprise. OT equipment presenting a cybersecurity risk include equipment that is or may occasionally be connected after initial installation:

- to a computer (for any reason including alarm reporting and patching)
- to a network (local, wide area or internet), or
- is remotely accessible (either for control or monitoring)

**AND**

- b. **Cybersecurity Assessment:** PWS must have completed a cybersecurity assessment/evaluation program and have completed a cybersecurity assessment performed by either the PWS or a qualified entity such as EPA's free Cybersecurity Assessment or Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) assessment. Cybersecurity assessments must have been completed recently, but not later than two years prior to the grant application submittal date.

**Eligible Projects may include:**

- Upgrading, replacing, or removing unsupported and end-of-life hardware, software, and operating systems;
- Employee training programs and incident response planning;
- Network segmentation;
- Improving remote access security;
- Encryption implementation;
- Penetration testing (only if all assessment findings have been addressed) and
- Other OT cybersecurity improvement projects to proactively mitigate vulnerability to cyberattacks and strengthen the PWS's overall cybersecurity posture identified in the PWS assessment report.

**Note:** Grants funds may not be used to reimburse for previously completed projects or any cybersecurity activity undertaken prior to the application date.

**ACTIONS REQUESTED:**

**PWS PLEASE GET READY FOR THIS GRANT OPPORTUNITY!**

- If your PWS is a small system or serves a disadvantaged community, and all of the OT requirements listed above are met, **get a cybersecurity assessment performed if you have not already**. This is a necessary step before applying for the grant. The findings of the cybersecurity report or mitigation plan will serve as the foundation for your grant application. To get an assessment, PWS have three options;
  1. Apply for a free EPA assessment using the link below: <https://www.epa.gov/waterresilience/forms/epas-water-sector-cybersecurity-evaluation-program>.
  2. Request a CISA free in-person cybersecurity assessment. PWS may contact the MassDEP/DWP about the CISA program at [program.director-dwp@mass.gov](mailto:program.director-dwp@mass.gov).
  3. Conduct a free self-assessment using USEPA's Water Cybersecurity Assessment Tool: [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-03/EPA%20Water%20Cybersecurity%20Assessment%20Tool%201.0\\_0.xlsx](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-03/EPA%20Water%20Cybersecurity%20Assessment%20Tool%201.0_0.xlsx).
- **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI):** A UEI is required to apply for this grant. If you do not have one, apply for a UEI at their earliest convenience. The UEI application and FAQ's can be found on the SAM.gov website, linked here: <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>

**Stay tuned for the official program launch, and we hope you will participate in this important initiative.**

If you have any questions on this information, or need cybersecurity technical assistance you may contact MassDEP Drinking Water Program at [program.director-dwp@mass.gov](mailto:program.director-dwp@mass.gov), Subject: Cybersecurity, or 617-292-5770.

**Please remember: Do not send any sensitive information over email.**

Sincerely,

***Yvette DePeiza***

Program Director

MassDEP Drinking Water Program

[1] Grant amounts will vary from \$15,000 to \$50,000 per PWS and will depend on factors such as PWS type, size, and findings in cyber assessment report. MassDEP will determine the grant awards solely at its discretion.