

604(b) Water Quality
Management Planning
Grant Program

Pre-RFR Informational
Meeting

July 23, 2026

Overview

- Section 604(b) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) provides grants to determine the nature, extent, and causes of water quality issues and develop plans to restore or protect water quality pursuant to the CWA and Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards (SWQS)
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) 2022-2026

Grant Program Goals

- Development of Watershed-Based Plans (WBP)
 - Nine element (9e)-WBP to restore impaired waters (as listed in the [Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters](#)),
 - Alternative (a)-WBPs to guide watershed protection and management activities for healthy waters, and
 - 9e-WBPs for other waters without a listed impairment.
- National Water Quality Initiative ([NWQI](#)) HUC12 watershed
- A regional or state-wide NPS Coordinator
- Work within a Nitrogen Impacted Coastal Waters (NICW)

EPA Required WBP Elements

- A. Pollution Sources
- B. Load Reductions (water quality goals)
- C. Management Measures
- D. Financial & Technical Assistance
- E. Education & Outreach
- F. Schedule
- G. Milestones
- H. Criteria
- I. Monitoring

Eligible Activities*

- **Data Gap Analysis**
- **Data Gathering** – The determination of the nature, extent, and causes of water quality problems and determination of pollutant load reductions necessary to meet the MA SWQS.
 - Water Quality Monitoring, Sediment Monitoring
- **Assessment** – Watershed-wide BMP siting prioritization exercise (which results in definitive list of BMPs)
- **Modelling** - hydrologic and hydraulic, pollutant load reductions
- **BMP Design Development** – Implementation plans can range from conceptual designs to final plans (applicants are encouraged to have a handful of concepts and at least one final design) and engineering studies that will lead to remediation of water quality impairments and restoration of beneficial uses.
 - Implementation plans must include estimations of pollutant load reductions, construction costs, and future Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs.

* Not exhaustive

Eligibility

- Regional Planning Agencies
- Council of Governments
- Counties
- Conservation Districts
- Cities and Towns
- Federally recognized tribes
- Other substate public planning agencies and interstate agencies.
- Organizations with Statewide Agricultural Capacity Building Experience (purposes of NPS Ag Coordinator only – program fund)

Funding

- Approximately \$1,800,000
 - Award Years 2024 & 2025
- Match is not required but preferred
- Six good faith efforts (DBE)
- Approximately two-year duration all projects
 - NPS Coordinator Program – three-year duration
- Reimbursement basis
- 10% retainage is withheld at end of project

Procurement Schedule

- Request for Proposals Early August (planned)
 - Posted on COMMBUYS, MassDEP website, and email announcement
 - Once RFP is issued, no project specific communication allowed.
- Proposals will be due end of September 2026
- Selection process
- Applicants notified in Fall/Winter 2026
- Contract start date in Winter 2027

Evaluation Criteria

- Alignment with Program Goals (NWQI, NPS RC, NICW)
- Watershed-Based Plan Development
- Problem Definition
- Approach
- Project Benefit
- Active and Comprehensive Community Engagement
- Qualifications of Organization and Project Manager
- Quality and Responsiveness of the Proposal

General Application Advice

- **Understand the Problem**

- Clearly outline the problem (why, what, where)
- Identify and discuss the specific impairment from the 2022 Integrated List of Waters (e.g., bacteria, nutrients)
- Review past studies, data, etc. and provide a summary in your proposal (Assessment needs – DEP’s Watershed Assessment Reports)
- Locus map & detailed map of project area

- **Devising a Plan**

- Clearly outline the goals and approach (who, how, when)
- Clearly connect the “solution” to the “problem”
- Show rationale for location and BMP selection and /or sampling locations

More General Application Advice

- **Assume the reviewer is not familiar with the project**
- Pay attention to the **evaluation criteria**
- **Budget** – Salary (list staff and salary range), Subcontracts, Equipment/Supplies, Mileage Only (\$0.72 per mile) – no “Travel”
- **QAPPs required** for all Monitoring, Assessment, and Modeling work. Recommend checking with Lab to determine detection levels.
- **Six Good Faith Efforts** - Grantee must comply with DBE
- **Letters of support** from all contributing financial or in-kind match
- Ensure tasks are set up in a way that a project could be partially funded

Additional Resources

[Technical Memoranda](#): MassDEP water quality monitoring efforts are reflected in these technical memoranda.

[Water Quality Monitoring Data](#): Quality-assured water quality monitoring data and GIS coverages of sampling locations.

Watershed-Based Planning Tool

The WBP will guide a user to select a watershed and complete the nine elements necessary to comprise a watershed-based plan:

<http://prj.geosyntec.com/MassDEPWBP>

- WBP-tool Element Specific Guidance
- WBP-Tool [Provisional Review Checklist](#) and [Rating Scoresheet](#)
- Example [Completed WBPs](#)

[EPA's Quick Guide to Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect](#)

Additional Resources (continued)

Examples of Past Projects (Indicative Summaries)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality#s.-319-and-s.-604b-project-summaries->

The Clean Water Toolkit

A manual in electronic format that provides an overview of nonpoint source related issues, fact sheets and detailed information about best management practices to address nonpoint source problems: <http://prj.geosyntec.com/npsmanual/default.aspx>

Stormwater:

- *Funding Opportunities:* <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/available-funding-for-stormwater-projects-in-massachusetts>
- *University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center:* <http://www.unh.edu/unhsc/>
- *Stormwater Policy and General Publications:* <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/wastewater/stormwater.html>
- *Cornell Extreme Precipitation Analysis* - website, providing rainfall analysis calibrated to the present climate: <http://precip.eas.cornell.edu/>
- [MA Stormwater Handbook](#)
- [EPA Opti Tool](#) (Cost Information)
- MWC [BMP Cost Catalog](#)

[Supplier Diversity Office](#) – Provides a search engine for certified vendors

Questions?

MassDEP Grants Website:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality>

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