



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

# Department of Environmental Protection

One Winter Street Boston, MA 02108 • 617-292-5500

Charles D. Baker  
Governor

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## Questions and Answers from FY 2021 MS4 Bidders' Conference September 1, 2020 at 1pm.

All questions will be formatted in **bold font** and answers will be posted below questions in normal font.

### **Is it appropriate for watershed associations to partner with municipalities?**

Yes, if the proposed project benefits and involves more than one municipality and its deliverables are shareable, watershed associations can apply in conjunction with or on behalf of municipalities. See Eligible Entities in the RFR (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>).

### **The deadline for the changes in local ordinance to meet MS4 permit modifications have been pushed back to 2021 as part of the EPA permit modification, are projects related to this pushed back deadline still eligible for funding?**

Yes, since this is still a permit requirement that must be met by towns, projects that deal with ordinances or bylaws are eligible.

**How many projects does MassDEP anticipate to award this year?** Last year we awarded 5 projects that totaled \$300k although we got 10 applications that requested \$650K. It depends on how much the projects cost. We have \$300K to award again for FY2021.

### **If budgets are formulated with a line item that could be deleted, could this help us meet funding requests?**

Yes, if the proposal scores highly based on the Project Evaluation Criteria outlined on page 4 of the RFR (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>), and is on the cusp of being funded due to receiving high scores but the total requested funding amount is not available, it is possible MassDEP will ask the applicant to remove individual tasks or budget line items to meet budgetary constraints.

### **How much weight do you assign to how many municipalities are benefitted by a project? For example, a model ordinance versus helping a number of municipalities work on their individual ordinances.**

This information is available in alternate format. Contact Michelle Waters-Ekanem, Director of Diversity/Civil Rights at 617-292-5751.  
TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370  
MassDEP Website: [www.mass.gov/dep](http://www.mass.gov/dep)

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MassDEP has two areas in our Evaluation Criteria, page 4 in the RFR (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>) that describe how projects are rated based on benefitting municipalities: 1) Project Description, worth 20 points, and 2) Project Benefit, also worth 20 points. Total available points for proposal evaluations is 100 points. Note that NepWRA has already developed a model ordinance as well as an ordinance check list. Resources are available here: [Model Stormwater Bylaw](#) (May 2019), [Model Stormwater Regulations](#) (May 2019), [Checklist for Evaluating Your Municipal Stormwater Bylaw under the 2016 MS4 Permit](#) (Updated May 2019). Northern Middlesex Council of Governments and the Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative have also developed a checklist under the FY 2020 MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants.

**Trainings have been done under previously funded projects, but this is definitely something our MS4 communities are interested in doing - do we need to avoid specifically what trainings have been done before?**

In person and virtual IDDE trainings have been funded through MassDEP MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants. The recording of a virtual training will be posted on the MassDEP Stormwater website as a resource that all communities can use for future annual trainings. Unless the requested funding incorporates something that is not covered in the virtual training, proposed projects that fund IDDE trainings that mirror already existing virtual trainings will not be considered for funding.

**We don't have a stormwater coalition in Berkshire County. A previous survey indicated some interest, but it would probably be a loosely formulated coalition - would that still be eligible?**

Yes, formations of new stormwater coalitions are eligible projects under the program. See Eligible Projects in the Grant Description (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>)

**Can you advise about the application form - I didn't see it on the website just a Cover Sheet?**

Applicants are required to submit the application cover sheet (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-2021-ms4-assistance-grant-application-cover-sheet-attachment-a/download>) along with a full application that is not to exceed 15 pages. The application template (Section 3: Application Structure) for applicants to follow is in the Grant Description (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>), starting on page 8. There is no additional application form.

**Is there any chance that the funding will be increased in the future?**

Last year we awarded 5 projects that totaled \$300k although we got 10 applications that requested \$650K. During our capital funding request for FY 21 for the program we indicated this increase in demand and were given 300K to award again for FY2021. Our ability to increase funding in the future is dependent on a variety of factors outside of DEP's direct control which includes the availability of funds and the demonstrated need for funding of this and other state grant programs.

**How confident are you in the Notification of Award and Estimated Contract Start Dates? There have been some delays in the past which can limit scope.**

We have worked hard to move up the issuance of the RFR and moved up the application due date in an attempt to expand the period during which projects can be carried out prior to the FY 21 deadline of

June 30, 2021. Once we receive all applications we work as efficiently as possible to review and recommend funding to agency administrators. Beyond this, the recommendations for funding have to pass several additional approvals, which can take time and are out of our control.

**Would it be possible, for reference, to get information on previous MS4 grants, if any, relating to the Stockbridge Bowl watershed?**

In FY 2018, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission received \$50,000 for a project titled “A regional approach toward meeting Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination (IDDE) requirements”. In addition, products from grants that have been awarded to the Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition have been made accessible to all member communities. These grants have allowed for the development and expansion of the Think Blue Massachusetts education campaign.

**Can you share who will be on the review committee?**

MassDEP has not made a practice of identifying the selection committee, ahead of the proposal review and ranking process. Identifying the selection committee ahead of the final selections would create the opportunity for applicants to reach out to the committee members for inappropriate communications while the process is still underway. Consequently, the Department has not identified members until after selection.

**Is the reference to EJ communities new?**

Yes, this is a new criterion that MassDEP has started requiring as part of a response to work towards solving issues related to racial and social injustice. As part of the MS4 Grant program, MassDEP is asking applicants to identify the number of EJ communities and to specify how the proposed project is inclusive of EJ populations. This requirement is reflected in an evaluation criterion “Environmental Justice” and makes up 5% of the evaluation criteria.

**What is the anticipated start date of the contract - if our proposal is funded?**

Based on the estimated schedule that MassDEP has issued (page 6 of RFR; <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>), we anticipated that the contract start date would be Friday, November 20, 2020. However, we cannot guarantee this timeline. Regardless of the contract start date, all projects must be completed by June 30, 2021, which marks the end of the Massachusetts fiscal year. Because these are capital funds, they cannot roll over to the next state fiscal year.

**Do you aim to ensure that projects are fairly well distributed across the state?**

We evaluate proposals based on the Evaluation Criteria on page 4 of the RFR (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>). The highest scoring proposals will be selected for funding, while the program amount available determines the number of awards made.

**Is there a way to find out what a town has applied for across state government?**

A list of some previously funded projects in the Watershed Management programs can be accessed here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality>. Also,

grant program administrators for each grant program can help communities determine which grants that community has applied for in the past.

**Are BMPs Structural and Non-Structural considered as eligible project ideas for MS4 grants?**

Yes. Planning and/or implementation of structural and non-structural controls for stormwater management is a requirement of the MS4 during Year 4 and required under certain TMDLs.

**Could a town whose MS4 discharges to sensitive site, has poor stormwater management and new development planned apply for this grant?**

As long as the applicant meets the eligibility requirements (page 1 of RFR; <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>) and meets MS4 requirements, a proposal will be considered.

**Are ordinances still considered as proposed projects?**

NepWRA has already developed a model ordinance as well as a ordinance check list. Resources are available here: [Model Stormwater Bylaw](#) (May 2019), [Model Stormwater Regulations](#) (May 2019), [Checklist for Evaluating Your Municipal Stormwater Bylaw under the 2016 MS4 Permit](#) (Updated May 2019). Northern Middlesex Council of Governments and the Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative have also developed a checklist under the FY 2020 MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants. Therefore, additional checklists and model bylaws will not be considered, however, if applicants want to work with municipalities directly, projects will be considered.

**If a project benefits a watershed, but also herring substrate, would this be considered?**

As long as the applicant meets the eligibility requirements (page 1 of RFR; <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>) and meets MS4 requirements, a proposal will be considered. Having multiple environmental benefits will be viewed positively in the review process.

**Does this overlap with the MVP at all?**

No, the MVP grant program and the MS4 Municipal assistance grant program are separate programs. MVP focuses on resilience planning and implementation, whereas the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant Program focuses on assistance to meet MS4 permit requirements. Both, MVP and MS4 grant programs allow for collaborative efforts among communities. More information on the MVP program can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-mvp-program>

**How many years has this grant program been running?**

This program is in its 4<sup>th</sup> year now.

**Has the Taunton River Watershed Alliance previously applied for or been awarded a grant?**

The Taunton River Watershed Alliance has not applied for or won a grant in the past, to our knowledge. However, communities in the Southeastern Regional Services Group's South Eastern Regional Stormwater Coalition have received two grants in the past. In FY 2019, the group won \$50,000 on a project titled "Training workshops on Stormwater Management Programs and Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination programs" and in FY 2020 the group won \$55,000 for the workshops that helped communities develop Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs).

**Have any communities within the Taunton Watershed applied for or been awarded a grant in the past?**

The Taunton River Watershed Alliance has not applied for or won a grant in the past, to our knowledge. However, communities in the Southeastern Regional Services Group's South Eastern Regional Stormwater Coalition have received two grants in the past. In FY 2019, the group won \$50,000 on a project titled "Training workshops on Stormwater Management Programs and Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination programs" and in FY 2020 the group won \$55,000 for the workshops that helped communities develop Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs).

**I understand and appreciate the advantages of a Coalition, I think it would be valuable to talk to one or more people that have gone through the actual process of forming a coalition. Do you have any recommendations as to specific people you would recommend I reach out to – maybe someone who was in on the ground for the Central MA SW Coalition formation?**

Leadership at the Central MA coalition would be a great resource to reach out to. Whether they were involved in the formation of the coalition or not, they can point out the folks that were involved.

**How tightly bound to current, specific MS4 requirements must a proposal be.**

Proposed projects must be set up to meet at least one MS4 permit requirement, preferably by calling out the permit requirement(s) specifically by section.

**Can you confirm if a state university that is a non-traditional MS4 would be eligible to apply if collaborating with one other municipality?**

State universities as well as other non-traditional MS4s are eligible to apply for this grant program as long as they partner with 2 or more municipalities and meet the eligibility requirements (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>)