

FY26 Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Briefing/Bidder's Conference

Meeting Notes

April 16, 2025

Held via Zoom Meeting

DER Staff: Carrie Banks, Kirsten Currier, Holden Sparacino, Amber Carr, David Azinheira, Eli Velluti-Fry

Meeting started at 10:30am

Attendees: 56

Meeting Summary:

- **Welcome & Introductions:** Welcomed participants. Introduced DER staff. Provided meeting overview and reviewed meeting logistics.
- **FY26 Stream Continuity Grants Briefing Presentation:** Provided overview of Division of Ecological Restoration, Stream Continuity Program, Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program, and current FY26 grant opportunity. A copy of the slides has been provided on COMMBUYS.
- **Questions & Answers:**
 - **Question 1: Will these slides be available or is the meeting recorded, or will a copy of the slides be available?**
 - **Answer:** *The meeting was not recorded, however a summary (this document) will be provided in the next few days, as well as a copy of the slideshow presentation. These materials will be made available on the COMMBUYS procurement page as attachments.*
 - **Question 2: It appears that the amount of funding is not going to come close to actual needed funding to complete the requested work. When will funding for the construction phases be available?**
 - **Answer:** *Approximately \$2.2 million is anticipated to be available for this year's grant initiative. Historically, this grant has received more requests for funding than DER has been able to award based on funds allocated. This is a competitive grant program and DER does not anticipate that this initiative will support projects entirely. Applicants should carefully review the scoring criteria and all materials in the RFR when creating their proposal. This grant is for field data collection, design & engineering, permitting, and/or construction phase proposals. All phases are available for funding through this initiative. Please see Question 13 for previous successfully funded projects under this program, including construction projects.*
 - **Question 3: What suggestions do you have for providing evidence of high ecological value?**
 - **Answer:** *DER has provided a tool for applicants to understand how DER assesses areas for ecological value and habitat restoration potential, and for applicants to conduct these assessments as well. Please see "Attachment B: DER's Tools to Evaluate Environmental Benefits of Culvert Replacements" under the RFR File Attachments.*
 - **Question 4: Can you share a direct link to the online portal?**
 - **Answer:** *Here is a link to the COMMBUYS procurement page. All procurement materials and instructions to apply (the RFR, attachments, instructions to apply, and other notices) are all available through COMMBUYS and listed under "File Attachments":*
 - <https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-25-1046-DER-FWE01-114623&external=true&parentUrl=close>

- **Question 5: When I click on the application it takes me to the COMMBUYS website - how do I get to the actual application?**
 - **Answer:** Under 'File Attachments' on the [COMMBUYS page](#) select the first item (FY26 CRMA Stream Continuity RFR). Navigate to "Instructions for Submission" (Section 4.2) for all instructions and a link to the online form.
- **Question 6: Is there a provision for extending the deadline to complete all work by June 30, 2026? The timeline seems rather short give the need to design, plan, and permit projects.**
 - **Answer:** All proposed work must be completed by June 30, 2026. Applicants may propose limited phases of work (e.g. field data collection and preliminary design) in order to meet this restriction.
- **Question 7: If we previously removed a crossing due to failure, can we use this program for the installation of a pedestrian crossing in its place?**
 - **Answer:** Due to state procurement law DER cannot give feedback on specific projects once the RFR has been issued. All applicants should carefully review the specifics of Eligible Projects (Section 1.8) and Evaluation (Section 4) in the RFR materials.
- **Question 8: Are projects with more culvert replacements involved beyond the 3 maximum, but focusing on three key initial culverts, competitive or eligible for this opportunity? Can context on additional culverts beyond the 3 maximum be included in the project information, even if they are not included in the funding request?**
 - **Answer:** Each application may include a request for financial support for up to three structures. DER also reviews factors such as capacity building and transferability, leveraged funds or external/existing work that amplifies benefits, project summary and background, and overall benefits of projects when making decisions. Additional work occurring outside the site(s) that may have an impact on outcomes (e.g., increased stream connectivity benefits) can be described in the application using the sections listed above.
- **Question 9: What is the best way to get an accurate cost estimate for each step in a culvert replacement project?**
 - **Answer:** DER has provided tools to assess cost estimates, including Attachment C: Proposed Work Checklist to the RFR and a Culvert BID Request Template to assist in cost estimates:
 - <https://www.mass.gov/doc/culvert-bid-request-template/download>
- **Question 10: If Preliminary Design is complete; what submittals will be required to DER for review prior to a Chapter 85 Review submission?**
 - **Answer:** For all applications, regardless of current project step, DER encourages applicants to attach any relevant supporting project documents to their submission, which may include but is not limited to field data and/or summary technical reports, design plan sheets, opinion of probable costs, design or construction bids, etc.
- **Question 11: Is there a possibility to include contingency funding to cover any increases in costs that may occur?**
 - **Answer:** All applicants should carefully review the budget table and tools to assess cost estimates (see Question 9 above) to inform their budget requests and review eligible cost categories.

- **Question 12: Will final construction billing for work in June 2026 be allowed to be submitted after June 2026**
 - **Answer:** *Funding is intended for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026), and applicants should only apply for funding for the portion(s) of the project that can be completed by June 30, 2026. Work must be invoiced no later than July 31, 2026. Please see Performance and Contract Specifications (Section 3) in the RFR for more details.*
- **Question 13: Do you have examples of a completed application that was approved?**
 - **Answer:** *Yes, DER has a projects map of all successful projects funded through the Stream Continuity Program between Fiscal Year 2018-2025. Below the map, brief descriptions of projects are provided in the relevant press releases:*
 - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/der-culvert-replacement-awards-projects>
- **Wrap-up and Reminders:** Reminded participants about the following resources:
 - DER website where links to COMMBUYS, FAQs, and other resources are provided:
 - <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/culvert-replacement-municipal-assistance-grant-program>
 - Direct link to the FY26 CRMA Request for Response where all RFR materials are available (listed under 'File Attachments') including instructions for the online submission form:
 - <https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-25-1046-DER-FWE01-114623&external=true&parentUrl=close>
 - Stream Continuity's Frequently Asked Questions page:
 - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/crma-grant-program-frequently-asked-questions>
 - Link to the Q&A form for all additional questions (must be submitted via this form by April 18 at 4pm):
 - <https://forms.monday.com/forms/78342d6696d08219f93ab278ece94106?r=use1>
 - Link to the Stream Crossing Standards:
 - <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/08/23/Stream%20Crossings%20booklet%20Web.pdf>

Meeting ended at 11:20am.