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MassDEP's Official Answers to Questions Regarding the September 26, 2023 MS4 Municipal Assistance 2023-2024 Grant Program Posted on October 24, 2023

On September 26, 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced the 2023-2024 Opportunity for the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant Program (Grant Program). On October 10, 2023, at 1 p.m., MassDEP held a virtual Bidders' Conference and accepted both verbal and written questions from potential applicants through the deadline noted in the Grant Program's Estimated Procurement Calendar.

Below are MassDEP's official Answers to all questions received by the 3 p.m. October 11, 2023, deadline. All questions are formatted in **bold font** and answers are posted below questions in *italicized font*.

1. **Do EJ communities need to be involved in the project, or does the project need to consider EJ communities?**

Answer 1 ("A1"): Direct involvement of an EJ Community in the proposed scope of the application is not required to be eligible for this grant opportunity, though involvement of an EJ Community will be considered when scoring the project. Eligible Projects will result in tools or strategies that will help multiple municipalities meet one or more requirement(s) of the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit. See Sections 1(C) of Grant Opportunity. Preference will be given to projects that directly assist the greatest number of municipalities, including environmental justice populations.

The Instructions for Applicant Submission in Section A notes that the review committee will evaluate and score the grant applications from Eligible Entities based, in part, upon the following criteria:

How does the proposal describe direct benefits to environmental justice communities?

- *How well does the project specifically benefit EJ populations?*
- *How are environmental justice communities involved in the Proposed Project?*
- *Which environmental justice communities or organizations are included in the Proposed Project?*
- *Are new partnerships being formed to benefit environmental justice communities?*

- Does the Proposed Project promote collaboration and inclusive information sharing among multiple communities, including maximizing compliance benefits in environmental justice communities (information on which communities are classified as environmental justice communities can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/environmental-justicecommunities-in-massachusetts>)?

2. Is the Grant Program for a 6-month project duration (January – June 2024)?

A2: All work completed for the Grant Program shall occur within the 2024 State Fiscal Year, which runs from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. The Grant Program is anticipated to be awarded December 22, 2023, but all eligible work completed during the 2024 State Fiscal year qualifies for reimbursement.

MassDEP reserves the right to extend the contract duration solely for the purposes of performance completion consistent with the terms of the Grant Award contract.

3. If an entity has an unfunded deliverable that work has already commenced, can these deliverables be incorporated into grant application as long as they're in the State Fiscal Year?

A3: Yes. Both existing and proposed projects are eligible for this Grant Program, so long as the work funded by this program is conducted during the program term (i.e., started on or after July 1, 2023, and completed on or before June 30, 2024).

4. We're planning to contribute a local match for an extension of the project beyond the end of the State Fiscal Year. Can we do that, as long as we're clear about the tasks and timeline?

A4: Yes. This Grant Program will support work activities for any phase(s) of a project, from initial project planning through project implementation, so long as the work funded by this program is conducted during the contract period (i.e., started on or after July 1, 2023, and completed on or before June 30, 2024). When demonstrating how the project will be completed, it is recommended that the Application clearly detail the expected timeline for each phase of the project, the funding source for each phase of the project, and how any additional funds will be secured. The Instructions for Applicant Submission Section A notes that the review committee will evaluate and score the grant applications from Eligible Entities based, in part, upon the following criteria:

Project Budget and Timeline

- *How well does the Applicant estimate and describe project costs?*
- *Does the Applicant demonstrate a realistic understanding of project costs by providing a budget with detailed and credible cost estimates?*
- *Does the Applicant identify and describe any match or other funding sources that will support the project?*
- *How well does the Applicant demonstrate a realistic understanding of the timeline for the proposed work?*

5. **Are there specific resources available on compliance, and what happens when you don't comply? Can the grant be used for projects that bring a community into compliance?**

A5: The links below can direct you to the tools and resources for compliance with the 2016 MS4 General Permit available from the EPA and MassDEP. Additional resources are available from a variety of watershed coalitions and municipal planning groups.

- [Massachusetts Small MS4 General Permit | US EPA](#)
- [Stormwater Permitting | Mass.gov](#)

Both the EPA and MassDEP try to work with applicants to achieve compliance prior to advancing into enforcement, however MassDEP reserves the right to pursue enforcement.

The Grant Program is intended to aid multiple municipalities with 2016 MS4 General Permit compliance through the development of tools or strategies that will help multiple municipalities meet one or more requirement(s) of the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit, including environmental justice communities. If there is a community need, and the project is not considered redundant (see questions 6-9) tools and resources developed for the Grant Program can address past reporting milestones of the 2016 General MS4 Permit. Thus, projects may help a non-compliant community achieve compliance, so long as the project benefits multiple communities (i.e., projects that only benefit a single community are not eligible under the Grant Program).

Note: A participant on the bid conference noted that due to the breadth of the 2016 MS4 permit requirements, understanding the specific non-compliance issue would better enable the group to respond with suggestions and ideas.

6. **Can we apply to expand on a previous grant? We did a series of webinars for last year's grant award, and feedback was received requesting in-person programs.**

A6: Yes, previously funded grants can be expanded and/or improved upon. Eligible Projects must not duplicate work already done by any Massachusetts stormwater coalition or apply a previously funded project delivery to another region. See response to Question 8 for a listing of past previously funded projects. An Application for a project expansion and/ or improvement should clearly explain the material difference(s) about the substance and/ or core purpose of the project. In this case, the Application should detail how the program is sufficiently different from prior programs. It is suggested that further training programs, whether remote, hybrid, or in-person, cover new topics not addressed previously, and/ or provide significantly more detail on previously covered topics.

7. **Statewide stormwater coalition: In the past, we have done the ThinkBlue campaign. We ran the campaign for a few years in a row, and then stopped for a few years. Can we apply for this again, or is this redundant?**

A7: This would be acceptable, so long as the campaign includes new material, and/ or covers topics previously not addressed. Eligible Projects must not duplicate work already done by any Massachusetts stormwater coalition or apply a previously funded project delivery to another region. For example, simply re-running materials created under a previous grant, absent new

and/or expanded material, would be redundant and, therefore, ineligible. See also the response to question 6 (A6).

8. What are the past funded projects?

A8: Table 1 below identifies previously funded projects between Fiscal Years 2017 and 2023 (i.e., the first year of this grant program through the present). Deliverables received from past funded projects can be viewed under Resources and Tools for MS4 Compliance at: [Stormwater Permitting / Mass.gov](https://stormwaterpermitting.mass.gov)

Table 1

Award years	Amount	Applicant	Title
2017-2018	\$50,000	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	A regional approach toward meeting Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination (IDDE) requirements
2017-2018	\$170,375	MA Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition	Development of the Think Blue Massachusetts campaign
2017-2018	\$50,000	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission	Development of offsite mitigation manual for redevelopment projects
2018-2019	\$25,000	Central MA Regional Stormwater Coalition	Development of MS4-permit Standard Operating Procedures and templates for SWMP
2018-2019	\$205,300	MA Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition	Expansion of the Think Blue Massachusetts campaign
2018-2019	\$64,645	The Greenscapes Coalition with Salem Sound	Three tools for MS4 Communities
2018-2019	\$50,000	Southeastern Regional Stormwater Coalition	Training workshops on Stormwater Management Programs and Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination programs
2019-2020	\$107,795	MA Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition	Think Blue Phase 3
2019-2020	\$28,000	Central MA Regional Stormwater Coalition	IDDE Training
2019-2020	\$55,000	Southeastern Regional Stormwater Coalition	SWPPP Preparation
2019-2020	\$62,504	Northern Middlesex Council of Governments	Northern Middlesex Capacity Building for Local Oversight of Development and Redevelopment Projects
2019-2020	\$46,700	Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Buzzards Bay Stormwater Collaborative	IDDE Trailer and Training
2020-2021	\$75,354	MA Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition	Think Blue IV
2020-2021	\$66,776	Neponset Stormwater Partnership + Connecticut River Stormwater Collaborative	Nitrogen and Phosphorus Source Identification Report Development Project
2020-2021	\$45,000	Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative	Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Retrofits and Modification Reports for the Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative Communities
2020-2021	\$59,771	Charles River Stormwater Collaborative + Central MA Regional Stormwater Coalition	Model Phosphorous Control Plan Development and Implementation Planning
2020-2021	\$ 47,000	Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Buzzards Bay Stormwater	The Buzzards Bay Stormwater Collaborative Illicit Discharge Investigation and MS4 Support
2021-2022	\$75,000	MA Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition	Think Blue Massachusetts – Phase IV
2021-2022	\$65,000	Merrimack Valley Planning Commission	Code Review to Decrease Impervious Area Creation and Encourage Use of Low Impact Development
2021-2022	\$49,470	Charles River Watershed Association	Continued Phosphorous Control Planning and Initiation of Implementation
2021-2022	\$69,000	Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Buzzards Bay Stormwater Collaborative	Train the Trainers in Practical Illicit Discharge Investigation
2021-2022	\$31,100	Mystic River Watershed Association	Mystic River Watershed Adopt-a-Drain Program
2022-2023	\$70,500	Merrimack Valley Planning Commission	Greenscapes Model Bylaw Toolkit
2022-2023	\$56,800	Metropolitan Area Council	Equitable Green Infrastructure Tool
2022-2023	\$61,970	Charles River Watershed Association	Land Use Cover Data for the Charles River Watershed
2022-2023	\$83,895	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission	A series of virtual training sessions were held to educate the development community on stormwater management

9. What does it mean to not duplicate past work?

A9: Eligible Projects must not duplicate work already done by any Massachusetts stormwater coalition or apply a previously funded project delivery to another region. However, expanding upon past work is acceptable (see response to Question 6). .

10. What if my town doesn't have an EJ community?

A10: Direct involvement of an EJ Community in the proposed scope of the application is not required to be eligible for this grant opportunity, though involvement of an EJ Community will be considered when scoring the project. Eligible Entities are 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; and/or non-profit organizations acting on behalf of two or more municipalities that are subject to the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit, and Eligible Projects will result in tools or strategies that will help multiple municipalities meet one or more requirement(s) of the 2016 Small MS4 General Permit. See Sections 1(C) and 1(D) of Grant Opportunity. Preference will be given to projects that directly assist the greatest number of municipalities, including environmental justice populations. Information on which communities are classified as environmental justice populations can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/environmental-justice-populations-in-massachusetts>. See also, Response to Question 1 (A1).