



# Department of Environmental Protection

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## MassDEP's Official Responses to Questions Regarding the September 2, 2021 MS4 2021-2022 Municipal Assistance Grant Program Posted on September 13, 2021

On September 2, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced the 2021-2022 Opportunity for the MS4 Municipal Assistance Grant Program (MS4 program). On September 9, 2021 at 1 p.m., MassDEP held a virtual Bidders' Conference and accepted both verbal and written questions from potential applicants through the 3 p.m. deadline for questions as posted in the MS4 procurement grant calendar.

Below are MassDEP's official Responses to all questions received by the September 9, 2021 deadline. All questions are formatted in **bold font** and answers are posted below questions in normal font.

### **So far it looks like only coalitions have received grants. It makes sense in that several towns can benefit. Do many individual municipalities apply? Have any received grants?**

Individual municipalities are not eligible to apply for the MS4 program grant. Only groups of municipalities or groups of MS4 permittees are eligible. Groups of MS4 permittees can be represented by regional planning agencies, watershed associations, stormwater coalitions, or similar groups of entities. See the Eligible Entities listed at page 2 of the MS4 program Grant Opportunity (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-2022-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>)

### **Are there any changes in evaluation criteria, how we are thinking about the grant, from the last round? If yes, can you please flag those?**

MassDEP has made a few changes to this year's 2021-2022 MS4 grant program. The MS4 grant program changes for 2021-2022 are as follows:

- Evaluation criteria points: for the description of the qualifications of the organization and the project manager this evaluation criteria was given 5 additional points, for a total of 10 points. To keep the total number of evaluation points at 100, the evaluation criteria for promoting regional collaboration was reduced from 20 points to 15 points.

This information is available in alternate format. Contact Michelle Waters-Ekanem, Director of Diversity/Civil Rights at 617-292-5751.

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- The list of Eligible Projects was adjusted to reflect the MS4 Year 4 permit requirements. See pp. 1-2 of the MS4 program Grant Opportunity.

**Can an applicant be part of more than one application?**

Normally, a Municipality should only be included on one application, to ensure that there is fairness in the evaluation and funding of all eligible MS4 grant applications, given that applications typically exceed available MS4 grant funds. MassDEP evaluates proposals based on the Evaluation Criteria on pages 4-5 of the MS4 program Grant Opportunity (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-2022-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>). The highest scoring proposals will be selected for funding, while the overall program funding amount available determines the number of awards that can be made. In the past, MassDEP has exercised its discretion to allow a municipality to benefit from both a Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition grant (that includes all municipalities that belong to a stormwater coalition in Massachusetts) while also receiving grant funding for a second smaller project that is more focused upon a select collaborative effort. However, given the limited funding for the MS4 program, MassDEP reserves the right to limit the number of grant awards to municipalities that submit two (or more) grant applications for discrete, separate MS4 projects, particularly if the applications do not include a “Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition” project.

**Are last year's projects published somewhere so we can be sure not to overlap on work already completed? Has the website been updated with the reports from last year?**

Yes, MassDEP’s stormwater website has been updated to reflect last year’s MS4 projects that were awarded, and also lists all prior MS4 grant projects that have received funding through this grant program. This list can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stormwater#resources-and-tools-for-ms4-compliance->

**Certain grant programs, like the 319 program, preclude pilot projects for innovative stormwater management technologies. Would implementing and evaluating new technologies be considered under this program?**

As long as the applicant shows that the proposal meets the eligible project criteria of the program, for example that multiple municipalities must benefit from the project through cost sharing and that a project meets at least one MS4 permit requirement, preferably by calling out the permit requirement(s) specifically by section, a proposal of this type can be evaluated for funding. Exact eligibility requirements are outlined in the MS4 program Grant Opportunity (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-2022-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>).

**Is a project eligible if a proposed project develops a tool or process for municipalities in a specific region but that can be applied to other municipalities as well?**

Yes, if the proposed project benefits and involves more than one municipality and its deliverables are shareable, watershed associations, Regional Planning Agencies, or stormwater coalitions can apply in conjunction with or on behalf of municipalities. See Eligible Entities in the MS4 program Grant Opportunity (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-2022-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>).

**The timeline for releasing the RFR and providing Notification of Award for funded parties has improved. 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.**

In order to provide awarded grant projects with an expanded timeline for project completion prior to the FY2022 June 30 deadline, MassDEP’s grant procurement calendar has been updated to provide an expedited timeline for this grant program to facilitate the review, evaluation and award of MS4 grants for this year. Once MassDEP receives all applications, the grant team will review, evaluate and recommend grant projects

for funding to agency administrators. However, applicants should note that all grant award recommendations must obtain multiple agency approvals in order to be finalized for the MS4 grant awards, which may extend the timeline beyond the dates reflected in the MS4 grant procurement calendar.

**I did not see where the RFR was posted, can you provide the link?**

The MS4 Program Grant Opportunity and the Notice of the Grant Program can both be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality#stormwater-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program->

**Many communities in the region struggle to stay in compliance or are late on completing requirements. Would helping them to get up to date and be more proactive be considered by building a new stormwater coalition?**

The formations of new stormwater coalitions are eligible projects under the program. See Eligible Projects in the Grant Description (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fy2021-2022-ms4-municipal-assistance-grant-program-description/download>). While MassDEP cannot directly assist applicants with issues regarding the formation of new stormwater coalitions, it should be noted that, during the Bidders' Conference, multiple other regional stormwater coalition coordinators offered to provide further insight on how to manage a stormwater coalition.

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

Last year, MassDEP awarded 5 projects that totaled just under \$300,000; however, the MS4 grant program received a total of 9 applications that requested funding in excess of \$650,000. While MassDEP is cognizant of the popularity of its annual MS4 grant program, the funding for this program, and all other MassDEP grant programs, is directly contingent upon the availability of funding, which has resulted in MassDEP's determination to provide a total of \$300,000 in grant funding for the MS4 grant program for FY2022.