



Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation Program

Q: Can we apply for administrative costs of setting up a stormwater utility?

A: Funding is available through Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Conservation's Ecosystem Restoration Grant program. Please see here for more information: [http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/cwi/grants#Ecosystem Restoration](http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/cwi/grants#Ecosystem%20Restoration)

They anticipate having funding available during the next Ecosystem Restoration grant round, mid-Sept-mid October.

Q: Will this be an annual program, or will there be another chance to apply in the spring for this funding?

A: VTrans has committed to funding this program this year and next. There will be another opportunity to apply in the summer of 2018.

Q: Are equipment purchases eligible?

A: Equipment purchases are potentially eligible with this program, but the applicant must demonstrate that the equipment will prevent or abate water pollution. To date conversations with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have included high efficiency street sweepers and vector trucks. Regular street sweepers are not considered eligible.

Buy America requirements for steel and iron products does apply and may require a waiver. Waivers for Buy America receive heightened scrutiny and must be approved by Federal Highway Administration's central office in Washington DC. This process is time intensive.

Q: Can municipalities apply for projects for which conceptual plans have already been created by consultants selected through a competitive RFP?

A: Yes, but:

1. Any work completed prior to execution of the grant agreement is not eligible.
2. The consultant must have been procured according to all federal regulations if they are to be reimbursed for any work once the grant agreement is executed.



Q: Can we apply for construction funds only?

A: Yes, but all design work still has to comply with federal regulations. This includes NEPA, ROW acquisitions, permitting requirements and bidding the project through a low bid, sealed bid process.

Q: It says items like Phosphorus Control Plans (PCP) are eligible projects, but without a finalized requirement it is kind of unclear what the PCP requirements will be. How should we handle that in an application?

A: If you apply for a PCP you may create any plan that lays out a phosphorus reduction/control strategy within your town or for a specific project. It is anticipated that the requirements of PCP's for MS4 municipalities will be released in draft form in December 2017. Further discussions with FHWA may be required for these types of planning studies depending on a municipalities proposal.

Q: Deadline for when funds have to be spent/ If a grant is awarded what is the timing for completion?

A: Municipalities will be required to progress the project as expeditiously as possible. Grant terms will be two years for scoping/planning/equipment purchase projects and four years for construction projects.

Q: I was reviewing the proposal for the grant opportunity to address water quality issues and I was wondering about the required 20% match. Can any of that be in-kind labor, equipment?

A: Generally federally funded projects are matched with local funds. Because the project is federally funded it requires a low bid sealed bid process and force account work (work completed by Town forces) is not typically allowed.

Q: Would there be a way to have a street sweeper purchase, for example, be considered under only the \$1 Mil in state funding that is available, to avoid the Buy America requirements, or are those funds set aside solely for use in closing the gap created when using fed funding (as its applicability is limited to the portion of the project treating highway system runoff)?

A: No. FHWA funds are only eligible to be used to treat the proportionate amount of stormwater being conveyed from the public highway system. However most stormwater projects treat comingled highway and non-highway runoff. The state funds are available to combine with the federal funds so that non-highway runoff can be treated. The amount of federal and state funds may be allocated to a project proportionally based on the estimated runoff from each source. The legislature appropriated the state funds for this specific use.



Q: Is there any project cost limit for salt sheds? I ask because the Transportation Alternatives (TA) grant program used to have a \$50,000 limit.

A: No, there is not a cap. The TA program no longer has a cap either.

Q: Would all proposed sand/salt sheds be eligible for funding?

A: Unless it can be demonstrated that the current location where sand and/or salt is being stored is causing a water quality issue, the general rule of thumb is that the existing facility must be within close proximity (50-100') of a waterbody.

Q: May the Municipal Highway & Stormwater Funding be used to design a stream-crossing culvert replacement?

A: It is VTTrans standard policy not to award design only projects within our federal grant programs. Design (engineering) costs are eligible as long as the project proposal is for both design and construction. Generally a stream crossing culvert replacement would be eligible so as long as the applicant can demonstrate that it meets the eligibility requirements detailed in the application and demonstrating the water quality benefit.

Q: I see there is no cap, but what do you expect will be the typical project cost range?

A: General rule of thumb that we have used in the past is that it becomes economically beneficial when projects reach the \$250k threshold to use federal funds. There are obviously exceptions to this, especially in the case of equipment purchases.

Q: Seems like it is very similar to regular Municipal Assistance Bureau programs where all projects must adhere to FHWA process including NEPA, Buy America, etc, is that interpretation correct?

A: That is correct, these projects will be required to follow the federal aid design process.

Q: Can we combine multiple smaller projects or would you like to see one larger project?

A: You can combine smaller projects into one larger project but please keep in mind that the projects will need to meet all the requirements of federal funding. Small \$20k-\$50k ditch work, slope stabilization projects, drainage projects likely don't fit that mold very well and are unlikely to receive funding. Those types of projects are much better suited for Better Roads or other grant opportunities through Agency of Natural Resources. The intent of this program is for larger scale projects \$250k+ that require a fully engineered design as they will have to be bid out for construction.



Q: We have a town who is interested in replacing a perennial stream crossing. Is that eligible? We wanted to check since the MRGP assessments don't include perennial stream structures.

A: Possibly, but it would be on the onus of the applicant to demonstrate that it fits the eligibility language within the program announcement as well as to demonstrate the projects value with respect to the questions within the application. Eligibility of this program is not tied to the MRGP.

Q: We have a project that was identified under our Flow Restoration Plan as a priority project. It is for the retrofit of two stormwater ponds located on one property. We have done some preliminary engineering work. Would design and environmental analysis qualify as an eligible project under this grant or would the project have to go through construction?

A: It is VTrans standard policy not to award design only projects within our federal grant programs. Design (engineering) costs are eligible as long as the project proposal is for both design and construction.