Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - FY 2020 Clean Water Fund (CWF) Competitive Grant Request for Proposals (RFP)

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***Submit additional questions to: cwfquestions@state.mn.us**

August 20th FAQ update:
-Clarification to Q19
- Added question Q33

General Requirements, Policy, and Eligibility

Q1: Are tribes eligible for Clean Water Funds?

A: No. BWSR authorities for funding lie within Minnesota State Statute 103B.3369 which defines local governments eligible to receive funding. However, tribes can work in partnership with local governments who do qualify for Clean Water Funds.

Q2: Are MPCA Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy documents considered a State approved plan?

A: No. WRAPS documents are not "plans" per se and are not approved and adopted by local governments. The information, analysis, and recommendations contained within these documents can be referenced in your application and should be used in prioritizing and targeting objectives and action items in local water management plans.

Q3: The RFP states that prevailing wages apply. What are the grant applicant's responsibilities for compliance?

A: Prevailing wage requirements apply to all state funds used for "projects" that meet the definition identified in M.S 177.42 Subd. 2. As the RFP states, your first source of information for questions about the application of prevailing wage rates should be directed to the Department of Labor and Industry at 651-284-5070, or https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/prevailing-wage-information . However, the following information may help you better understand these requirements.

The responsibilities of a grant recipient are to: (1) be aware of prevailing wage and ensure their project's cost proposals address this requirement; (2) include prevailing wage information in their bid and contract documents; and (3) receive and maintain the payroll reports that contractors will furnish every two weeks. Prevailing wage does not apply to administrative activities of the grant recipient or construction activities directly conducted by a local government, i.e. if an SWCD uses its own staff to plant trees, prevailing wage would not apply, but if they contracted with Joe's Planting Service it would.

Q4: What can be used for in-kind cash value as match?

A: Match includes the services, materials, or cash contributed to the accomplishment of grant objectives. In-kind cash value has to be directly attributed to the project or activity accomplishments and account for the same as items charged directly to the grant. Use the following guidance when considering in-kind cash value:

Local staff and administrative costs in excess of the reporting and grant management, project development, or technical and engineering component of the grant funds received.

Conservation practice costs may not be increased beyond the actual costs of technical assistance, design, materials, and installation by the application of match. In no case may conservation practice costs exceed 100% of the actual cost of design, materials, and installation. Land value match may only be used to match structural or installed conservation practices and may only be applied where changes from current land use or land cover are implemented such that water resource protection becomes the new primary objective for the land under consideration.

Q5: Can loan or grant funds from other state programs be used as match?

A: Loan funds from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Clean Water Partnership (CWP) Program and Minnesota Department of Agriculture's AgBMP Program may be used as match. Loan funds from the Public Facilities Authority's water programs may be used as match but not grant funds.

BWSR Projects and Practices Grants (including the Drinking Water Sub-grant program)

Q6: Are MINNFARM pollution estimates based on the pollution problem at the existing feedlot today or the reduction of pollution after the fix has been implemented?

A: For the purposes of the application, the pollution reduction achieved from implementing the fix (<u>which is the difference between the pollution estimates pre and post project</u>) must be entered into eLINK during the work plan and reporting phases of the grant.

Q7: What should the required feasibility study for in-lake management practices contain?

The study must include:

a. Lake and watershed information (at minimum, include lake morphology and depth, summary of water quality information, and the assessment of aquatic invasive species);
b. Description of internal load vs. external load reductions;
c. History of projects completed in the watershed, as well as other in-lake treatments if applicable;

d. Cost benefit analysis of treatment options;
e. Projected effective life of the proposed treatment; and
f. For activities related to rough fish (example carp), the feasibility study must also include:
   i. Methods to estimate adult and juvenile carp populations;
   ii. Description of the interconnectedness of waterbodies (lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, etc.);
   iii. Identification of nursery areas;
   iv. Methods to track carp movement;
   v. Proposed actions to limit recruitment and movement; and
   vi. Proposed actions to reduce adult carp populations

BWSR Multipurpose Drainage Management Grants

Q8: Why is BWSR requiring a partnership between a Chapter 103E drainage authority and SWCD?
A: The objective for this requirement is to help integrate on-field and on-farm conservation practices with on-drainage system practices to achieve multiple water management purposes, including reduced drainage system maintenance, erosion control, peak flow reduction and water quality improvement for priority Chapter 103E drainage systems. An associated objective is to promote use of the authority in Section 103E.011, Subd. 5. *Use of external sources of funding*, and other applicable drainage law provisions, to integrate public and private funding for the multiple purposes outlined in the recently updated Section 103E.015, Subd. 1. Environmental, land use and multipurpose water management criteria.

Q9: Can BWSR explain what is meant by partnership in more detail?
A: BWSR is not specifying how the Drainage Authority / SWCD partnership would work, but presumably it would utilize the authorities and strengths of the partners to achieve the program purposes. Potential shared or coordinated partner roles, as applicable, could include, but are not limited to: grant project management; grant fiscal agent; project and conservation practice planning; landowner coordination; design and other technical assistance; manage drainage system proceeding(s) or actions, as appropriate; conservation practice layout and construction oversight; and financial match (cash or in-kind).

Q10: Can the required minimum 25% match be provided by a combination of drainage system share and/or landowner share?
A: Yes. For example, a priority Chapter 103E drainage system could provide all of the match for a storage and treatment wetland restoration on the drainage system; and/or the drainage system could provide half of the match for an eligible conservation practice on land within the benefited area of the drainage system and the landowner provide the other half of the match; and/or the landowner could provide all the required match for an eligible conservation practice outside the benefited area, but within the watershed of the drainage system. Note that Section 103E.011, Subd. 5 provides “notwithstanding” authority to use funds derived from drainage system assessments, in addition to external sources of funding, outside the benefited area but within the watershed of the drainage system for the purposes identified in Subd. 5. Sources of match must be non-state.

Q11: Can Multipurpose Drainage Management grant funds be used for the establishment of buffers?
A: Buffers that are required by law (statute, rule or ordinance), incremental buffer strips under Section 103E.021, Subd. 6., or buffer establishment for a saturated buffer are not eligible. However, Eligible Activity 5, *Storage and Treatment Wetland Restoration* allows grant funds to be used for required upland buffers.

Q12: If we apply for Drainage Water Management activities, could the landowner or operator leave subsurface drainage controls (e.g. weir boards) out in the fall and install them before spring runoff for spring flood control?
A: Yes. Although this grant program uses the NRCS Conservation Practice Standards we have been told by NRCS that the present standard allows flexibility for leaving the control boards out in the fall to address issues encountered in cold regions, such as preventing damage to the structures caused by freezing over the winter.

Q13: Is the total cost of a proposed repair project on, along, or in the watershed of a priority Chapter 103E drainage system limited to the total benefits defined by the most recent determination of benefits and damages for the drainage system?
A: No. Although the cost of a drainage system repair project is limited by the total amount of drainage system benefits “on the books”, Section 103E.011, Subd. 5. Use of External Sources of Funding, starts with ”notwithstanding other provisions of this chapter” and does not have a limit on the amount of external funds a drainage authority may accept for the purposes of wetland preservation or restoration, creation of water quality improvements, or flood control.

Q14: Using a wetland for storage to reduce flood problems requires drawdown capabilities. Is water level management allowed? What kind of drawdown time is allowed in the design?
A: The purpose of a storage and treatment wetland restoration is to store and treat water (peak flow reduction and water quality), with multi-purposes to include reduced downstream erosion and sedimentation, and a reasonable measure of habitat(s) in the associated flowage and conservation easement. Water level management to maintain a restored wetland, while providing for temporary detention/bounce is envisioned. The runoff event bounce drawdown time and potential seasonal normal water level drawdown plan will need to enable appropriate vegetation for water quality treatment and habitat, but are expected to be substantially dependent on site opportunities and constraints.

Q15: Could we fund a created wetland for storage and treatment of surface runoff water that could be used for sub-irrigation during dry periods?
A: No. This grant program will help fund only Storage and Treatment Wetland Restorations**.**

Q16: Does BWSR have a budget template that we can fill out and submit with our application as required?
A: Yes. That template is found on the Apply for Grants page on the BWSR website.

Q17: How do I attach the required Budget spreadsheet (Multipurpose Drainage Management Grants only)?

A: Within the *Attachments* tab of the application in eLINK, you may add your required budget worksheet as type "General Attachment". Please note that this attachment type is allowed only when required by the program. Do not add additional documents here, as they will not be seen by reviewers.

Q18: If a ditch repair is being completed at the same time as a MDM project, is the cost of the repair considered eligible for match towards the project if it meets the goals of the project. For example, a bank collapse is creating erosion and sediment delivery downstream.

A: Only to the extent that those costs are: 1) over and above repair costs that are the responsibility of the drainage system; 2) contribute to the accomplishment of the grant objectives for water quality improvement and multipurpose drainage system management within the project area, and; 3) are consistent with applicable BWSR CWF match policies. If further clarification is needed please contact your Clean Water Specialist.

eLINK

Q19: Can multiple photos be submitted for an application?

A: Only one application image file in one of the allowable formats may be submitted per application (jpeg, gif, tiff, bmp, png; file extension should be lower case). The application image file will be automatically scaled to fit on one page of the final application document. The composition of the application image is up to the applicant. Images are added through the "Upload Application Image" button on the Grant Request page. Images uploaded as General Attachments will not be seen by reviewers.

Q20: Can a design be submitted with an application?

A: Yes. If the design is saved as one of the acceptable application image file formats (jpeg, gif, tiff, bmp, png), it may be used as the one allowed application image. Images are added through the "Upload Application Image" button on the Grant Request page. Images uploaded as General Attachments will not be seen by reviewers.

Q21: What are the character limits for application questions?

A: Most of the questions within the application have a 2,000 **character** limit (approximately 300 words), including spaces. If you choose to develop your responses outside of eLINK, e.g. in Word, note that programs may count the characters differently due to differences in how the characters are encoded.

Q22: The character limit for answering most application questions in eLINK is 2000 characters. Does that include spaces?

A: Yes. A space is considered a character in eLINK.

Q23: Why did I get an error message saying one of the application fields was empty after I entered the required data and then tried to submit the application?

A: You must save the information to the application before submitting. It may be necessary to scroll to the top or bottom of the page in order to bring the "Save" button into view. If you save while one of narrative questions is blank, the placeholder text

"Not Entered" will be inserted; this will need to be replaced prior to submitting the application.

Q24: My map was the last thing I created in my application. When I submitted the application, I didn't receive an email notification that my application was submitted. What happened?

A: The map creation function may take several seconds to finish processing. If you try and submit the application before the map creation is done, the eLINK system considers the application incomplete and does not send out a notification. When the map creation function is complete, you will see a popup window indicating the map has been successfully saved. At that time, you may submit the application and should receive the proper notification.

Q25: Why am I having trouble creating my map?

A1: eLINK is optimized for use with Microsoft (MS) Internet Explorer 9 or newer or use Mozilla Firefox. Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, and any other browsers are not officially supported, and users may encounter difficulties with features such as mapping.

A2: If you select too many HUCs for your map, it slows down the map processing considerably and currently there is no hour glass or other symbol to alert you to this. Please consider making a smaller, more targeted HUC selection or be incredibly patient.

Q26: Help! I lost some of the narrative portion of my application after I saved the information!

A: Each of the narrative questions within the application has a 2,000 character limit. The user interface will not allow you to enter more than 2,000 characters, and it will trim any pasted content to 2,000 characters. If you plan to develop narrative responses to the application questions in Word as a backup, be aware the character count in eLINK may be different, and your narrative may be automatically trimmed to fit the eLINK character limit. The application must be submitted through eLINK.

Q27*:* Can I make changes to a submitted application during the RFP open period?

A: Yes. You will need to change the submitted status to "in process", make changes, and change the status back to "Submit". The status change triggers generating the report, which is added to the Attachments tab and seen by reviewers. Please note that failure to change the status back to "Submitted" will not capture any changes for review team, and applications not in "Submitted" status at the time the RFP closes will not be considered for funding.

Q28: Can I access my earlier grant applications even if they were not funded?

A: Yes, you can access them by logging into eLINK and from the homepage under the "Grants" module, click on the "Include closed grants" box, enter the appropriate fiscal year's allocation, and click "Go".

Q29: Can consultants submit grant applications in eLINK on behalf of LGUs?

A: Yes, there are two ways to accomplish this. One way is for the LGU to start an application and add a consultant to the "team membership". The consultant must have an active eLINK user account in order to be added to the team membership. The second way is for a consultant to request an eLINK user account from the eLINK homepage and indicate the LGU(s) for which they are applying. The LGUs should be aware of this request.

eLINK user accounts should not be shared by multiple individuals; a separate user account should be requested by each individual needing access. It is not necessary to create multiple eLINK user accounts for one individual if access is needed for multiple organizations. To request access to additional LGUs contact elinksupport@state.mn.us.

Q30: I have entered proposed indicators within the Application Activities. Why do I also need to provide a narrative summary of "proposed Measurable Outcomes"?

A: BWSR is required to report proposed and actual outcomes on the Legislative Coordinating Commission's Legacy website. While grantees report proposed and actual outcomes in eLINK at the activity detail level, the LCC requires this data to be bundled into a 250 character summary for the entire grant.

Q31: When attempting to submit my application, I get a message stating, "*For each activity, you must either check the box verifying that there are no pollution reduction estimates associated with the Activity, or enter proposed indicators.*" What do I need to do?

A: Within the Application Budget tab, you will either need to ensure that the "Check here if this activity does not include proposed pollution reduction estimates" is checked within the Edit Application Activity" screen (pencil icon), or enter proposed indicators within the "Edit Indicators" screen (orange diamond icon). If your project will include on the ground practices resulting in pollution reductions, indicators must be entered.

Q32: When is an additional Attachment allowed?

A: Items should uploaded under the Attachments tab, except where specifically required. For FY20, the following programs and/or project types require the specified attachments:

- Multipurpose Drainage Management: Budget Worksheet
- Projects & Practices: In-Lake Treatment Feasibility Study
- Projects & Practices: Livestock Waste Management Practices Assurances

If additional attachments beyond those described above are added, they will not be accessible to Reviewers. See Q19 and Q20 for more details on adding an application image.

Q33: There is no specific question in eLINK for the Water Resource of concern for the MDM application. However, this question shows up in the RFP list of questions. How should applicants address this?

A: Question 2a does ask about the Priority System and the water quality concern. Applicants should highlight a specific water resource as part of their answer to this question.