

Metro Area Watershed-Based Funding Implementation Program

The purpose of Watershed-based Implementation Funding is to supplement existing funding to accelerate clean water activities (practices, projects, and programs) toward advancing Minnesota’s water resources goals through prioritized and targeted cost-effective actions with measurable water quality results. In the Seven-county Metropolitan Area (Metro), only activities identified in the implementation section of a watershed management plan developed under Minnesota Statutes §103B.231, §103B.101, Subd. 14 or §103B.801, county groundwater plans authorized under §103B.255, or Metro soil and water conservation district annual work plans authorized under §103C.331 are eligible for funding. These plans are collectively referred to as “local plans” in this document.

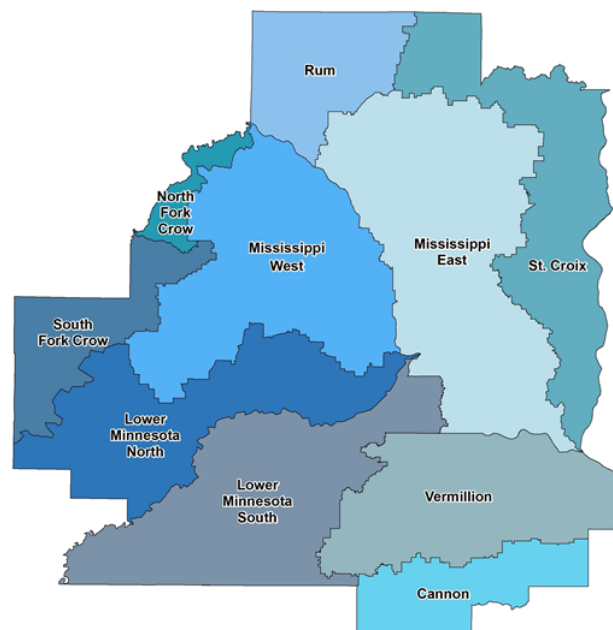
Distribution Process

For purposes of this document, the group of participants in each allocation area (see map) will be called a partnership (e.g. the Mississippi River West Watershed Implementation Partnership). Each partnership will include one representative (participant) from each watershed district, watershed management organization, soil and water conservation district, county with a county groundwater plan, and at least two municipalities within the allocation area.

The purpose of Watershed-based Implementation Funding is to supplement existing funding to ensure the most critical clean water activities are being accomplished - not to simply distribute funds among all participants. The partnership will coordinate to develop a Watershed-based Implementation Funding budget request (budget request) for submittal to BWSR that is **prioritized, targeted and measurable**.

To assist in the development of the budget request, BWSR staff will initiate and facilitate the meeting of the partnership in later winter/spring and may be available to facilitate subsequent meetings per partnership request. For the purposes of this document, these meetings are referred to as Convene Meetings. Each partnership must meet at a minimum

Twin Cities Metro Area Allocation Map for the Watershed-based Implementation Funding Program



of one time prior to submitting a budget request. The BWSR Board Conservationist and/or Clean Water Specialist must be included at each meeting.

Prerequisites for the Convene Meetings

Prior to the initial meeting, individual organizations must identify who will be their representative to the partnership in development of the budget request. Each watershed district, watershed management organization, soil and water conservation district, county with a county groundwater plan, and at least two municipalities within the allocation area will have one decision making representative. To help the representative prepare for the Convene Meetings (see below), organizations may also want to:

1. Discuss the organization's ability, policies, and procedures for committing to the required 10% match for these funds.
2. Review and discuss the Watershed-based Implementation Funding Policy and the local plan of the organization to determine if there are priorities or activities in the local plan, consistent with the policy, for the representative to emphasize at the Convene Meetings.
3. Review the FY20-21 Metro Watershed-based Implementation Funding Project Template (attached).

Convene Meetings

The initial meeting of the partnership and any subsequent meeting will be called a Convene Meeting. At these meeting(s), the partnership will jointly:

1. Agree on a method for making decisions (e.g. majority, super-majority, or consensus)
2. Establish criteria the partnership will use to select activities to include in the budget request. In selecting activities, participants of the partnership must consider how they will:
 - ***Prioritize*** surface water and groundwater resources and/or issues from individual local plans. At a minimum, each partnership should consider the high-level priorities of the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPPF; <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2019-01/180827%20FINAL%202018%20NPPF.pdf>):
 - Restore those waters that are closest to meeting state water quality standards
 - Protect those high-quality unimpaired waters at greatest risk of becoming impaired
 - Restore and protect water resources for public use and public health, including drinking water

The partnership should also consider overarching regional priorities within the watershed when establishing priorities.

- ***Target*** implementation activities that will be most effective for addressing prioritized resources and issues. At a minimum, each partnership should consider incorporating the following NPPF criteria into their decision-making process for projects:
 - *Measurable effects*
 - *Cost-effectiveness*
 - *Multiple benefits*
 - *Longevity of proposed activity*

- *Organization Capacity to deliver*
- *Project readiness and urgency*

The partnership may also want to consider additional criteria such as land use, soils, surface water types, demographics when targeting. For programs (soil health, outreach, etc.) and pre-implementation site investigations and assessments (e.g. subwatershed analyses, feasibility studies, etc.), the partnership may want to use different criteria than those used for projects or practices.

- **Measure** the benefit of planned implementation activities on water resource goals. Actions must have estimated measurable outcomes associated with them.
3. Review and decide on the highest priority, targeted, and measurable practices, projects and programs to be submitted to BWSR as a budget request (see submittal process below). BWSR has developed a project template for participants to consistently describe individual practices, projects and/or programs from their local plans and to facilitate consideration of these activities by the partnership. All practices, projects and programs must be eligible.

To determine eligibility of proposed projects, see the Watershed-based Implementation Funding Policy (https://bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2019-10/190925_Final_Watershed_Based_Funding_Policy.pdf). If there are questions regarding eligibility, BWSR field staff should be consulted as early as possible.

4. Identify whether the budget request will be implemented through a single fiscal agent and one grant agreement in the allocation area or through multiple fiscal agents and grant agreements. Note: Unlike the pilot program, no backup projects, programs, or practices will be allowed to be submitted with the budget request. If an activity is unable to be completed within the grant period, BWSR will work with the grantee as outlined in the Grants Administration Manual (<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/gam>), which may include returning the funds to the state.

The goal of the initial Convene Meeting will be to complete items 1 and 2 above. Depending on the criteria the partnership selects for deciding on activities to include in the budget request, items 3 and 4 above may need additional time for partners to review their plans and hold subsequent meetings to finalize the budget request.

Submittal of the Budget Request

Once the highest priority, targeted, and measurable practices, projects and programs have been agreed upon by the partnership (step 3 above), each partnership will submit the corresponding templates to BWSR. The entities or single fiscal agent for each partnership (step 4 above) will then be responsible for submitting an eLINK budget request to BWSR. Once the eLINK budget request is approved by BWSR, entities or a single fiscal agent will be responsible for completing an eLINK Work Plan, which is approved by the Board Conservationist, no later than March 30, 2021. More detailed guidance regarding the budget request submittal will be provided.

Timeline

- Winter/spring 2020: Convene meetings initiated.

- July 1, 2020: Metro Watershed-based Implementation Fund become available.
- January 2021: Budget requests recommended to be completed no later than this time in order to provide enough time to develop eLINK Work Plan by deadline.
- March 30, 2021: Deadline for completing eLINK Work Plan.
- December 31, 2023: Grant agreement expiration date.

Additional Information

Table 1 below provides the allocations from BWSR to the watershed areas for the 2020-2021 biennium.

Table 1: Allocation Amounts per Watershed Area, 2020-2021 Biennium

Watershed	Allocation
Rum	\$366,982
Lower St. Croix	\$793,461
Mississippi (East)	\$1,085,485
Mississippi (West)	\$874,153
Vermillion	\$650,684
Cannon	\$305,293
Lower Minnesota (North)	\$673,699
Lower Minnesota (South)	\$829,075
South Fork Crow	\$330,063
North Fork Crow	\$91,105

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Projects identified in Metropolitan Groundwater plans are considered eligible. How will these projects be compared to surface water projects?

A: Prioritization between groundwater and surface water will be decided by the local partnership. Funding is intended to be holistic and flexible so priorities and projects for each can be included in the budget request if the partners agree on prioritizing both.

Q2: Are cities and townships within the 7-County Metro Area eligible for this funding?

A: Cities and townships with approved local water plans under Minn. Stat. 103B.235 are eligible to receive funds. However, eligible activities must be identified in the implementation section of a state approved, locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan developed under Minnesota statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14 or §103B.801, watershed management plan required under §103B.231, county groundwater plan authorized under §103B.255, or Metro soil and water conservation district annual work plan authorized under §103C.331 and the activity must have a primary benefit towards water quality.

Q3: Can cities and townships, or Joint Powers Watershed Management Organizations (JPA WMOs) representing those cities and townships, participate in metro convene meetings?

A: As identified in Section 1 of the Watershed-based Implementation Funding Policy, participants, including one representative from each watershed district, watershed management organization, soil and water conservation district¹, county with a county groundwater plan, and at least two municipalities, must coordinate within the designated watershed-based funding boundaries to develop a watershed-based funding budget request that is prioritized, targeted and measurable.

Q4. Are activities identified in a City Water Plan considered eligible?

A: The policy requires eligible activities to be identified in the state approved, locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan developed under Minnesota statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14 or §103B.801, watershed management plan required under §103B.231, county groundwater plan authorized under §103B.255 or Metro soil and water conservation district annual work plans authorized under §103C.331 and have a primary benefit towards water quality. If the activity in a City Water Plan is also identified in the plans listed in section 3 of the policy, it is eligible.

Q5: Three watersheds span metro and non-metro boundaries (ex. Cannon River, Lower St. Croix River and Rum River). Does funding from a metro allocation area that is a part of this type of watershed only go to practices, projects, or programs within the metro area, or can it be spent outside the metro allocation border by a participating partner within the non-metro allocation area of the watershed?

A: The Watershed-based funding policy requires that eligible activities be identified in the state approved, locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan developed under Minnesota

¹ Including Hennepin and Ramsey Counties if they have an annual work plan authorized under Minn. Statute 103C.331.

statutes §103B.101, Subd. 14 or §103B.801, watershed management plan required under §103B.231, or county groundwater plan authorized under §103B.255 or Metro soil and water conservation district annual work plans authorized under §103C.331 but does not specify that the activity must occur within the 7 County Metro.

If a comprehensive watershed management plan has been approved by BWSR, locally adopted and an implementation agreement is in place, metro allocation dollars may be spent outside of the metro boundary if there is agreement amongst the metro partnership.

Q6. If a WMO or WD has a current plan that is expired, is the local government able to receive funding?

A: No.

Q7. How are the different plans defined as current?

A: Watershed management organizations and metro watershed districts plans are not current if the management plan is more than 10 years beyond the BWSR plan approval date unless the plan states a lesser period of time.

Q8. Can Watershed-based implementation funding pay for staff time?

A: Yes. Eligible activities can consist of structural practices and projects; non-structural practices and measures, program and project support, and grant management and reporting.

Q9. When does a feasibility study have to be completed if implementing an in-lake management project with Watershed-based funds?

A: A feasibility study must be completed, reviewed and approved by BWSR staff prior to funds being spent on the in-lake management activities.

Q10. What happens if the partnership decides to do multiple grant agreements and one local government is not able to use the funds allocated to them?

A: It depends. If the grantee has an additional project(s) that is similar in nature or has been included in the collaborative work request, the work plan could be revised, or the grant agreement amended. Please refer to the "[Grant Agreement Amendments and Work Plan Revisions](#)" section of the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

If a local government has no additional projects, then the funds would need to be returned to BWSR and will be redistributed through the Watershed-based Implementation Funding program.

Q11. What documentation is required by BWSR to determine who the local government representative should be at the convene meetings.?

A: Due to local matching requirement involved, a local government having a representative as part of the convene process should follow their own procedures and policies regarding receiving state grant funding.

This may include a board resolution or motion acknowledging the intent to move forward with identified representative, projects and providing necessary match.

Q12. Is the budget request from an individual entity or submitted by the partnership.?

A: This will depend on if the partnership decides on individual grant agreements/fiscal agents for each entity or if the partnership has decided to have one grantee/fiscal agent for all entities.

Q13. What was the overall allocation approach statewide for the program.?

A: Non-metro is a \$250,000 minimum + 90% private (non-federal, non-state, non-tribal) lands and 10% public waters (lakes, streams, wetlands, ditches). .

Metro has no minimum. The formula is 90% private (non-federal, non-state, non-tribal) lands and 10% public waters (lakes, streams, wetlands, ditches).

Q14. What is the deadline for having an approved plan (if in the process of a plan update) or an amendment to a plan?

A: It is in the best interest of each local government to have an approved plan prior to the start of the convene meetings. However, it is up to the partnership if it wishes to entertain projects identified in a draft plan awaiting approval. However, a plan must be approved and locally adopted prior to the submittal of the budget request and if a work plan is not approved by March 30, 2021, the funds will no longer be available.

Q15. Can a feasibility study and project both be completed in one grant period?

A: BWSR recommends completely a feasibility study in one grant period and implementing the project in a different grant period. In some cases, it may be reasonable to do both depending on the length of the feasibility study and the scope of the project.

Q16. Can you verify what is mean by at least 2 municipalities must participate in the convene process?

A: BWSRs interpretation of this policy is that 2 municipalities will participate as decision making representatives of the partnership. These 2 representatives will be self-selected by the municipalities in each watershed allocation area. If additional municipalities wish to attend the convene meetings they can but they will not be part of the decision making process.

Q17. Who will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating the convene process?

A: BWSR staff is committed to coordinating and facilitating the convene process for each watershed allocation area.

FY20-21 Metro Watershed-based Implementation Funding Activity* Template

Entity Requesting Funding:	
Name of Project	
Funding Request	
Water Resource	
Resource or Issue Goal	
Anticipated Outcome(s) of project.	
Progress project will make toward resource or issue goal	
Plan Reference	
Description/Abstract	<i>Include the resource or issue project is addressing and a short description of the project itself.</i>

How will you measure success?	
Would this project still happen without Watershed-based Implementation funding?	

Note: if activity* (*practice, program or project*) is selected for funding, will need to clearly articulate how the funding is supplemental.