

FY22-23 Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) General FAQs

rev. 11/19/21

Q1: For watershed allocations that are approved and funded by the BWSR Board, when can work begin under those grants?

A: Work cannot begin on any BWSR Clean Water Fund grant until the date when the grant is officially executed by BWSR. The project period starts when the grant agreement is “executed,” meaning all required signatures have been obtained. Work that occurs before this date is not eligible for reimbursement with grant funds and cannot be used as match.

For Watershed-based Implementation Funding, a budget request and a work plan must be completed by the grantee and approved by BWSR staff before the grant agreement can be signed by BWSR. The work plan is incorporated into the grant agreement by reference.

Q2: In the BWSR grant payment schedule, does the first 50% of the funds need to be spent or encumbered to receive the next 40% payment?

A: Yes, the first 50% of the funds must be expended before requesting or receiving the next payment. For information regarding the payment schedule, please see the BWSR Grants Manual: [http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/#/Grant Reimbursement/43/top](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/#/Grant_Reimbursement/43/top)

Q3: Is there a spending limit for administration cost or technical costs?

A: No, there are no specific spending limits per grant budget category. However, costs must be reasonable, direct, and necessary. The grant agreement includes a clause that requires grantees to minimize administration costs. Grantees should ensure costs are allocated to the appropriate budget category.

Q4: What are the terms of the grant; when do the dollars need to be spent?

A: The grants are 3-year agreements. The grant end date is included in the grant agreement.

Q5: Prevailing wages apply to the use of state funds. 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 651-284-5091,
or <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/prevaling-wage-faqs>

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.

Q6: What can be used for in-kind cash value as match?

A: In-kind cash value has to be directly attributed to the project or activity accomplishments.

Use the following guidance when determining in-kind cash value:

1. Local staff and administrative costs in excess of the reporting and grant management, project development or technical and engineering component of the CWF grant funds received.
2. 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.

Q7: Is snow and ice equipment used in efforts to reduce chloride loading eligible?

A: Yes, this type of equipment is eligible.

Q8: What should the required feasibility study for in-lake management practices contain?

A: The feasibility study could be the result of a number of studies over several years, but consolidated into a document that can be readily uploaded to eLINK to accompany the submitted work plan. Feasibility studies should assess the effectiveness of an in-lake treatment versus implementing additional watershed treatment practices at this time. The feasibility study must include:

1. Lake and watershed information (at minimum, include lake morphology and depth, summary of water quality information, and the assessment of aquatic invasive species);
2. Description of internal load vs. external load nutrient reductions;

3. History of projects completed in the watershed, as well as other in-lake activities if applicable;
4. Cost benefit analysis of options considered;
5. Projected effective life of the proposed activities;
6. Expected water quality outcome;
7. Plan for monitoring surface water quality to assure the project's total phosphorous goal will be achieved during the project's effective life.

Q9: Is carp removal to improve water quality an eligible activity?

A: Carp removal is an in-lake management activity. The items identified in Q8 are required for all in-lake management practices. In addition, carp management must include the following information:

1. Methods used to estimate adult and juvenile carp populations;
2. Description of the known interconnectedness of waterbodies (lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, etc.);
3. Identified nursery areas;
4. Methods used to track carp movement;
5. Proposed actions to limit recruitment and movement; and
6. Proposed actions to reduce adult carp populations.

Q10: Are non-structural BMPs, such as reduced tillage, eligible for funding?

A: Non-structural BMPs including those related to changes in tillage practices are eligible. All practices must meet the minimum effective life requirements identified in the appropriate technical standard. SWCDs may use an existing approved Non-structural Land Management Policy to guide the use of watershed-based implementation funds.

Q11: 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: Both. For the purposes of measurability, BWSR needs to know the MINNFARM pollution data (index and loading numbers) from the existing feedlot that is currently a pollution problem. For funded projects, the pollution reduction achieved from implementing the fix must be entered into eLINK during the work plan and reporting phases of the grant.

Q12: For underground manure storage structures, are the slats that are placed on top of the storage structure eligible for funding?

A: No. Slat are considered a part of the barn or production facility, and are not considered part of the manure storage structure, and are not eligible for funding.

Q13: Can SSTS systems be replaced on commercial property?

A: No. Imminent Threats to Public Health Systems (ITPHS) or SSTS that are not protective of ground water must be located on residential property.

Q14: Are flood control projects eligible for funding?

A: The primary purpose of activities funded through this program is to implement projects and programs that protect, enhance, and restore surface and ground water quality. Projects that provide multiple benefits beyond water quality are eligible and encouraged.

Q15: How are WBIF dollars allocated?

A: WBIF dollars were allocated statewide using a formula of 90% private (non-federal, non-state, non-tribal) lands and 10% public waters (lakes, streams, wetlands, ditches). Note that watershed areas outside the 7-County Twin Cities Metro Area also included a \$250,000 minimum and areas in the Metro included a \$75,000 minimum.

Funds have been allocated into separate fiscal years of FY2022 or FY2023 based on plan approval timing and other factors. FY23 funds will not be available until July 1, 2022 and some recipients may not receive funds until after this date. However, BWSR retains the right to redistribute the timing of funding availability based on the timing of plan approval, readiness to proceed, commitment of nonstate match, or expenditure of previously awarded Watershed-based Implementation Funds.

Q16: Does BWSR require project assurances for WBIF activities and if so, what is required?

A: Yes, BWSR requires assurances including Operation and Maintenance Plans that ensure the installed practices and projects meet the purposes of the grant program, ensure access for regular inspections, will remain in place for the lifespan expected, and will provide the water quality benefits for which they were designed. Factors such as grant program requirements, partners, landownership, type of practices, and cost influence what type of and when certain assurances are required or used. For more information, please refer to the WBIF Policy and the Project and Practice Assurance section of BWSR's [Grants Administration Manual](#). While all structural practices require assurances, it is important to note that streambank stabilization, stream restoration, and in-lake management projects (e.g. alum treatment and roughfish management) will require BWSR review of project and/or financial assurance agreements.

Q17: When does a feasibility study have to be completed if an entity proposes to implement in-lake treatment practices (e.g. alum treatment, roughfish management) with WBIF funds?



A: A feasibility study must be completed, reviewed and approved by BWSR staff prior to submitting a budget request for in-lake implementation activities. The feasibility study must include the items required by the WBIF Policy.

Q18: Can a feasibility study and project for in-lake treatment practices both be completed in one grant period?

A: BWSR strongly recommends completing a study in one grant period and implementing the project in the following grant period. In some cases, it may be acceptable to do both depending on the information needed for the study and the scope of the project.