

## **FY24-25 Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) FAQs**

rev. August 2023

**Q1: For WBIF 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 agreement 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 (WBIF), 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.

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

A: The first 50% of the funds must be expended before requesting the next payment. For information regarding the payment schedule, please see the BWSR Grants Manual: <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/requesting-reimbursement-or-payment>

**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.

**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/prevailing-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.

**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.

**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: Watershed areas outside the 7-County Twin Cities Metro Area also included a \$250,000 base and areas in the Metro included a \$100,000 base. WBIF dollars are allocated statewide using a formula of 90% private (non-federal, non-state, non-tribal) lands and 10% public waters (lakes, streams, wetlands, ditches).

Funds have been allocated into separate fiscal years of FY2024 or FY2025 based on plan approval timing and other factors. FY25 funds will not be available until July 1, 2024 and some recipients may not receive funds until after this date. However, BWSR retains the right to redistribute the timing and availability of funding based on the timing of plan approval, readiness to proceed, partner coordination, 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](#).

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

A: A feasibility study must be completed, reviewed and approved by BWSR staff prior to these activities being proposed in a grant work plan 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: It is acceptable to do both depending on the information needed for the study and the scope of the project. In this case, the LGU would need to request a revision to their work plan in order to do the recommended activities from on the completed feasibility study.

**Q19: What is BWSR's expectations for grants related to street sweeping?**

A: BWSR funds should be used for targeted street sweeping that can provide more effective pollutant removal compared to basic street sweeping. There have been recent advances in mapping and pollutant reduction estimate methodologies by Minnesota researchers and practitioners that help local governments create “enhanced street sweeping plans”. These plans identify critical urban areas (e.g. roads, parking lots, etc.) for street sweeping, the best times of year, sweeping frequency, and potentially the type of equipment that will most effectively capture pollutants for priority water resources. If grantees are requesting to purchase a street sweeper, as with any capital equipment purchased with Clean Water Funds, applicants should detail the future use that will maximize pollutant reductions. Please refer to the [MN Stormwater Manual](#) and the [University of MN Water Resources Center](#) for more information.

### **Seven-County Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (TCMA) FAQs\***

*\*Note that the General FAQs above also apply to WBIF used in the TCMA, but the following FAQs relate only to Metro WBIF dollars.*

**Q21: What is the deadline for having an approved Metro WMO or WD watershed management plan or Metropolitan groundwater plan (if it is 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 metro convene meetings. However, it is up to each Metro partnership if it wishes to entertain projects identified in a draft plan or plan amendment awaiting approval. However, a plan must be approved and locally adopted prior to the submittal of the budget request to BWSR.

**Q22: Can you verify what is meant by “up to two municipalities” must participate in the convene process?**

A: BWSR’s interpretation of the WBIF Policy is that up to two municipalities will participate as decision-making representatives in metro convene meetings for each Metro partnership. These two representatives will be self-selected by the municipalities in each metro 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.

**Q23: Are cities and townships within the TCMA eligible for this funding?**

A: Cities and townships with approved local water plans under MINN. STAT. 103B.235 are eligible to receive funds. Eligible activities (as defined by WBIF Policy) must be identified in the implementation section of a state approved, locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan developed under MINN. STAT. §103B.801, watershed management plan required under §103B.231, metropolitan groundwater plan authorized under §103B.255, or metro soil and water conservation district enhanced

plan identified in the “Metro SWCD Enhanced Comprehensive Plan Options Guidance Document” and authorized under §103C.331.

**Q:** The policy states that “Eligible activities must be identified in the implementation section of a state approved, locally adopted comprehensive watershed management plan, county groundwater plan, or a Metro soil and water conservation district enhanced plan.” Metro groundwater plans don’t typically contain an implementation section, so where must activities be identified?

**A:** Activities must related to the stated the goals, objectives, scope, and priorities of groundwater protection in the county groundwater plan.

**Q25: Some watersheds (e.g., Cannon River Watershed) span areas within the TCMA and non-metro areas. Can WBIF funding from a metro allocation area be spent outside the TCMA?**

**A:** Yes, metro allocation area dollars may be spent outside of the TCMA as long as those activities are identified in a comprehensive watershed management plan developed under MINN. STAT. §103B.801 and there is agreement amongst the Metro partnership to spend all or a portion of this funding in this manner through the metro convene process. Note that participants in Metro partnerships are defined by WBIF Policy.

**Q26: Should the budget request for WBIF be submitted to BWSR by the Metro partnership or each local government proposed to receive funding?**

**A:** A budget request must be submitted by each local government that will hold a grant agreement with BWSR. Add? Upon completion of the convene process, if there are multiple grantees, a list including grant amounts shall be submitted to BWSR for review.

**Q27: What happens if local governments in a Metro partnership decide to enter into separate grant agreements with BWSR and one local government is not able to use the funds granted to them?**

**A:** It depends. If the grantee has an additional project(s) that is similar in nature (e.g. comparable pollution reductions to the same water resource), the work plan could be revised and the grant agreement could be amended. If a local government has no similar projects, then the funds would need to be returned to BWSR and the funds would be redistributed through the WBIF Program. Please contact BWSR staff and refer to the Grant Agreement Amendments and Work Plan Revisions section of BWSR’s [Grants Administration Manual](#).

**Q28: For metro areas with approved Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans (Lower St. Croix, Cannon, Rum) developed through the One Watershed, One Plan program, how can allocated (metro WBIF?) funds be used?**

**A:** Similar to previous allocations decision-making representatives that form Metro partnerships through the convene meeting process will be able to decide to use all or a portion of their funding on activities in



Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans or eligible Metro water plans (see FY24-25 WBIF Policy) to provide the most flexibility to local decision-makers.

**Q29: Can metro partnerships pool their WBIF dollars from more than one allocation area for larger-scale or regional activities?**

A: Similar to previous years, decision-making representatives that form metro partnerships through the convene meeting process will be able to decide to pool their WBIF from more than one allocation area if those activities are in the implementation section of eligible plans (see FY24-25 WBIF Policy). This decision must be a joint decision in each metro watershed planning area, and it must be communicated to the BC in writing prior to submitting a budget request.

**Q31: What process should partnerships use to select activities for funding?**

A: Partnerships can use the examples provided in the *“Metro Convene Process Guidance for FY24-25”* document to select activities or they must consult with BWSR field staff prior to budget request submittal. Early communication with BWSR staff on potential ideas is recommended.

**Acronyms:**

BWSR – Board of Water and Soil Resources

TCMA – 7-County Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

WBIF – Watershed-based Implementation Funding

WD – Watershed District

WMO – Watershed Management Organization BC – Board Conservationist