

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

(Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program, NYS DEC/EFC Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant Program and Climate Smart Communities)

Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program

Q. Is a feasibility study required for the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program?

A. Applicants applying for green infrastructure projects must complete a feasibility study for the proposed project and submit the study with the electronic application. A feasibility study is not required for other project types.

Q. If the goal is to centralize wastewater treatment, does the treatment have to be on public property?

A. To be eligible for a WQIP grant under the Wastewater Treatment Improvement category, the applicant must be a municipality and the project must be to upgrade municipal systems.

Q. Does each category have a different funding source?

A. No each WQIP category does not have a difference funding source. Most of the funding for the WQIP grant program is from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF).

Q. If the applicant for a WQIP grant is a not-for-profit organization, will the application be stronger if it is combined with a municipality?

A. The only category for which a not-for-profit organization can apply for funding is the Aquatic Habitat Restoration (AHR) category. For the AHR category, partnering with a municipality does not inherently strengthen that application. For all other categories, a not-for-profit organization is ineligible to apply for the grant. They could partner with a municipality to implement the project. In these cases, the municipality would have to apply for the grant and then work with the not-for-profit to implement the project.

Q. How are funds dispersed for projects?

A. WQIP is a reimbursement grant. Awardees must pay project costs and then submit a request to DEC for reimbursement. Requests for reimbursement can be made any time after the bill has been paid.

Q. Is there funding to update drinking water lines?

A. Updating drinking water lines is not an eligible activity under the WQIP Program. There is, however, funding for drinking water available through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund administered by the Environmental Facilities Corp (EFC). Check their website (efc.ny.gov) for more information.

Q. Are salt storage sheds eligible?

A. Salt storage facilities are eligible as a non-agricultural nonpoint source project if they address a water quality issue. Applicants must provide documentation that runoff from the salt pile is impacting surface waterbodies and/or that the salt is leaching into the groundwater. Documentation can include information in the PWL showing salt impacts, Department of Health data showing salt contamination in nearby wells and/or digital photos showing dead vegetation and other signs that salt is running off the pile and into a nearby waterbody.

Q. In regards to the WQIP Program, if you have a traditional install to replace on an onsite project, would that be a typical water grant?

A. Matt I have no idea what this question is asking. I can't remember the question either, sorry.

Q. Would a continuation of stream rehabilitation qualify for funding under WQIP?

A. The stream stabilization/restoration is an eligible activity under the non-agricultural nonpoint source category of the WQIP.

Q. Once you have been accepted into the Grants Gateway do you need to keep applying each year, or will it carry you all the way through your project?

A. Non-grant specific information (e.g., contact name, address) in the Grants Gateway does not need to be re-entered each time an applicant applies for a grant through the Gateway. Some information has a time limit and expires. Those items have to be renewed so that the Gateway only have current information.

Q. If we were denied once for the grant, can we reapply?

A. Projects that were not awarded funding in previous rounds may still receive funding in the current round. Being denied before does not affect the project's eligibility in the current round. Applicants need to submit a new application to be considered for funding.

Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant

Q. For the Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant, can we use the MHI of the hamlet as criteria?

A. Cities and Villages should use the 2013 American Community Survey Data.

Towns and Counties should use the 2013 American Community Survey Data for the area that is being served. In cases where the service area has not been established, provide an estimate for the envisioned service area. A summary of the United States Census, 2013 American Community Survey MHI data can be found on the NYSDEC/EFC Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant website. In addition, Directions have been developed to help applicants navigate to their census data.

Q. If there was an area of failing septics, what kind of system would be used and who would be responsible for it? Would it go to a decentralized system? What about one package plant for one hamlet?

A. The engineering report would help the municipality develop a plan for constructing a wastewater system that would eliminate failing septic systems. Determining which system would be used would be determined during the course of developing the engineering report.

Q. Could a municipality apply to fund updated septic tanks for private housing under the Engineering Planning Grant?

A. No, the Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant is designed to help municipalities pay for the initial planning of eligible Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) water quality projects. Proposed facilities need to be municipally owned to qualify for the CWSRF.

Q. Does the applicant have to have a RME?

A. Matt I have no idea what this question is asking. I can't remember the question either, sorry.

Q. Are planning projects eligible for grants under this program?

A. Yes, the grant is meant to be used to fund engineering services for planning to determine the scope of water quality issues, evaluate alternatives and propose a capital improvement project.

Q. How are funds dispersed for projects?

A. Municipalities who receive an award under the Engineering Planning Grant will be provided 50% of the grant award as advanced payment once the grant agreement is executed and the other 50% once the engineering report is complete and has been approved by both EFC and DEC.

Q. Once you have been accepted into the Grants Gateway do you need to keep applying each year, or will it carry you all the way through your project?

A. The Engineering Planning Grant does not require use of the Grants Gateway.

Q. If we were denied once for the grant, can we reapply?

A. Projects that were not awarded funding in previous rounds may still receive funding in the current round. Being denied before does not affect the project's eligibility in the current round. Applicants need to submit a new application to be considered for funding.

Q. Would a continuation of stream rehabilitation qualify for funding under the Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant?

A. No, stream stabilization/restoration is not an eligible project under the Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant.

Climate Smart Communities Program

Q. Regarding the Urban Forestry Grant on the website, is that through Climate Smart Communities or is it a separate grant?

A. The Urban Forestry Grants and the Climate Smart Communities Grants are separate programs. The Urban Forestry Grants are offered through NYSDEC's Division of Lands and Forests. Information on the program is available on the NYSDEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5285.html>.

Q. Is there a way to allow more than \$10M for this program?

A. The New York State Legislature has the opportunity to provide funding annually for the Climate Smart Communities Grant Program, which is part of the Environmental Protection Fund as a new Title 15 in Article 54 of Environmental Conservation Law.

Q. If an applicant won an award last year, does it have a negative impact on potentially being awarded this year?

A. The Climate Smart Communities Grant Program is new in 2016, so there have not yet been any funding recipients. There is no negative impact in terms of scoring associated with previously receiving other New York State funding, although New York State funding is not eligible for use as a local cost share.

Q. What is eligible vs. ineligible for the Climate Smart Communities Program?

A. All counties, cities, towns and villages of the State of New York are eligible to apply for a Climate Smart Communities grant. In the 2016 round, there are a series of eligible project types described in the Request for Applications (RFA) on pages two through four. The RFA is available here: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/cscgrants.pdf. The RFA also describes eligible and ineligible costs on pages four and five.

Q. Do we receive credit for existing actions to address climate issues?

A. Projects in the Implementation category that have been informed by prior climate planning initiatives have the opportunity to receive additional points, and additional points are available in this category to both Certified and registered Climate Smart Communities. Projects submitted by registered Climate Smart Communities in the Certification category receive additional points, and may also be awarded additional points if at least five of the thirteen CSC Priority Actions (see <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/96532.html>) were previously documented

as completed. The selection criteria that will be used to score applications for Climate Smart Communities Grants are found in the RFA on pages eight through fifteen.

Q. For climate smart communities, is there a monetary value assigned to a community?

A. The only monetary value that is associated with an applicant to the Climate Smart Communities Grant Program is the 2014 Median Household Income (MHI) value provided by the U.S. Census. Applicants that have a 2014 MHI less than the 2014 Statewide MHI receive five additional points as a “hardship community.”

Q. Can the climate mitigation easement be cost-shared?

A. If the purchase of a conservation easement for access to or protection of a project site is a component of the overall project budget, the value of the easement could be used as part of the applicant’s cost share (but could not be supported with grant funds). That easement could serve as the climate mitigation easement required under Environmental Conservation Law, Article 54 (EPF), Title 15 (Climate Smart Communities). The reference to the climate change mitigation easements is found at 54-1513.

Q. Are planning projects eligible for grants under this program?

A. Projects in the Implementation category may use no more than 15% of the total grant request for design and engineering costs. The Certification category provides funding for specific planning and assessment activities, described in the RFA on page four.

Q. Does “clean transportation” include trails?

A. The Clean Transportation category includes construction of both on- and off-road facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized transportation. Facilities eligible for consideration in the clean transportation category must connect activity centers for use by people accessing daily needs. Projects that are solely for recreational purposes are not eligible.