

Department of Environmental Conservation

Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP)

Funding Questions

Q. How much funding is available through the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program?

A. The WQIP program has a total of up to \$79 million available for projects to improve water quality throughout New York State.

Q. Is there a maximum grant amount for the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program?

A. The WQIP program in general does not have a maximum grant amount. However, some project categories have a maximum grant amount. More detailed information on the WQIP program can be found in the [WQIP Round 15 Program Overview \(PDF, 910 KB\)](#).

Q. For the new wastewater treatment category of "Wastewater Treatment Facility Nitrogen Abatement Projects for Shellfishing Waters", what is the award/match fund split and maximum grant amount available?

A. This category is one of the high priority project types; there is a 75% grant to 25% match ratio. The maximum grant available per municipality is \$5 million.

Grant Program Questions

Q. Can the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program provide funding to multiple projects addressing the same property?

A. Yes, the WQIP program may fund multiple projects located on the same property. Separate Consolidated Funding Applications must be submitted for each of the proposed projects. Also, the applications should clearly state how the projects coordinate and do not duplicate each other.

Q. Can an eligible applicant submit more than one application to the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program?

A. Yes. Eligible applicants may submit more than one application for funding through the WQIP program, however, applicants may only submit one application per project. Applicants are limited to 5 applications per round. In addition, eligible applicants may receive more than one grant award.

Q. Can a municipality submit an application for both the DEC/EFC Wastewater Infrastructure Engineering Planning Grant (EPG) Program and the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program?

A. WQIP projects are supposed to be ready to be implemented (constructed). If a facility needs to have a preliminary engineering report completed under the EPG program, then the project is not ready to be built, and therefore not ready for WQIP funding. In addition, for wastewater treatment projects, an engineering report is required with the WQIP application.

Q. Is the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program funding available on a statewide basis or is the funding assigned to specific regions of the state?

A. The WQIP program is a statewide grant program.

Q. Is funding available through the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (Department) strictly limited to municipalities only?

A. No, the eligible applicants for the programs administered by the Department include: municipalities, municipal corporations, soil and water conservation districts and not-for-profit corporations.

Q. Are not-for-profits eligible for any Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) funding?

A. Yes, not-for-profits are eligible to apply for the Land Acquisition for Source Water Protection and Aquatic Habitat Restoration category for the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program. For more details, refer to the [WQIP Round 15 Program Overview \(PDF, 772 KB\)](#).

Q. Does the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program have a Median Household Income requirement?

A. No. The WQIP program does not have an income requirement.

Q. Can a municipality submit an application to obtain more funding for a project already awarded a grant in a previous round?

A. No. Applicants may only submit one application per project. However, applications for phases of a project may be allowed if the phases are separate activities.

Application/Contracting Questions

Q. Can applicants provide additional documentation with the WQIP application?

A. Applicants should only submit the supporting documentation that is required by the WQIP application for their particular type of project.

Q. Is a municipal resolution required with the submission of a Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program application?

A. No. A municipal resolution is not required to be submitted with applications for the WQIP program.

Q. If a municipality currently has an open WQIP grant, will that negatively affect their chances of getting awarded another grant in Round 15?

A. Municipalities with open WQIP grants may receive a grant award in Round 15. Applicants should keep in mind that a municipality's "Experience and Ability" are considered during the application review process; therefore, municipalities are encouraged to make sure the existing WQIP grant is up to date with the Department. The Selection Criteria are outlined in the [WQIP Round 15 Program Overview \(PDF, 910 KB\)](#).

Q. What are the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements for grants?

A. DEC has received new guidance that there is no EEO requirement for grants and therefore EEO quarterly workforce utilization reports are not required for any State Assistance Grants, including construction. Contract language will be adjusted accordingly to reflect this change.

Q. Is it necessary to pre-qualify in the Grants Gateway if an applicant has already been pre-qualified for another grant program?

A. No, if your organization has registered and been pre-qualified in the Grants Gateway system within the last three years it is not necessary to pre-qualify again.

Q. Is there a way to check if a pre-qualification status is still valid in the Grants Gateway?

A. Applicants can log in to their Grants Gateway account to check their current status. If they have any questions, they should email the Grants Gateway team to follow up at the email listed on their website.

Eligible Activities

Q. Is dredging an eligible activity for the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program.

A. Yes, in limited cases. Dredging is not eligible through the WQIP program if it is to "clean up" a spill or pollutants. Also, it is not eligible if it is considered a maintenance activity.

Q. Is stream daylighting an eligible activity through the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program?

A. Yes, stream daylighting is an eligible activity through the WQIP Program. For more detail on eligible WQIP activities please refer to the [WQIP Round 15 Program Overview \(PDF, 910 KB\)](#).

Q. Would a project to address contamination of drinking wells be eligible under WQIP?

A. No. Projects to remediate wells or find an alternate drinking water source would not be eligible under WQIP. Projects that would protect a public drinking water source may be eligible. For more detail on eligible WQIP activities, please refer to the [WQIP Round 15 Program Overview \(PDF, 910 KB\)](#).

Q. Are planning and design costs eligible under the Non-agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control, Land Acquisition for Source Water Protection, Salt Storage, or Aquatic Habitat Restoration categories?

A. For these categories, planning and design costs cannot exceed 20 percent of the project cost. If planning costs exceed 20 percent, the project will be ineligible to receive funding.

Q. Construction inspection is listed as an eligible activity but construction oversight is ineligible. Can you explain what the difference is between these two terms?

A. Construction inspection is the inspection of construction methods and materials typically performed by a licensed professional engineer. Construction oversight would include more administrative duties such as monitoring the schedule and budget, contract performance and quality control.

Scoring Questions

Q. Several categories include “Classification Points Factor” in the scoring; can you explain what this is?

A. Points are allotted to a project on the basis of the state-assigned classification of the receiving water at the point of discharge where appropriate. Where higher, the classification of downstream surface waters, the use of which is impaired by the existing discharge, may be used. For more information on the classification of waterbodies in NYS, please refer to the [DECinfo Locator](#) where you will find the Waterbody Inventory/Priority Waterbodies List Fact Sheets for each waterbody with additional information.

Q. Will the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (Department) provide additional points for applications submitted to the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program that are located within an Opportunity Zone?

A. No. Applications for the WQIP program are evaluated by the Department based on their impact to the environment.

Project Timeline Questions

Q. If my project is selected for funding through the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program, how long does the grant recipient have to complete the project?

A. Projects selected for funding through the WQIP program should expect to complete construction within 2-3 years of receiving the grant award. Some projects may extend to 5 years.

Q. Will there be future rounds of Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program funding next year or in the future if the 07/27/2018 deadline is missed?

A. Yes. The Department anticipates that there will be future rounds of the WQIP Program.

Wastewater Treatment

Q. What is the maximum amount that applicants can request for construction costs related to a wastewater treatment improvement project?

A. The maximum award for the wastewater project category ranges from \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000 for the construction costs of a wastewater treatment improvement.

Q. Can a municipality apply for funding through the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program for a pilot program assessing the effectiveness of alternative septic systems?

A. No, pilot or demonstration projects are not eligible activities through the WQIP program.

Q. If a municipal wastewater treatment plant (WWT) is part of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), how many Priority Waterbodies List (PWL) segments need to be included in an applicant's Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program application?

A. For WWT projects that are part of a TMDL, only the segment that the WWT discharges to needs to be identified and included in the WQIP CFA application.

Q. Is an Engineering Report required for the Wastewater Treatment category and, if so, what are the requirements for the Engineering Report?

A. Yes, an engineering report is a required submittal for the Wastewater Treatment category. The report can either be a full report or a preliminary report. Applicants can use the Engineering Report outline on the EFC website as a template, if they choose. The report does not need to be signed and stamped by a PE at the time of application.

Nonpoint Source

Q. Can a municipality apply for both the Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP) and the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) through the Consolidated Funding Application?

A. Yes. A municipality may apply for funding for both the WQIP and GIGP programs through the NYS Consolidated Funding Application provided they meet the eligibility requirements for both programs.

Q. Are projects on the Niagara River eligible for funding under the Great Lakes Nature-Based Shoreline Nonpoint Source category?

A. Yes, projects on the Niagara River are eligible for this category.

Land Acquisition for Source Water Protection

Q. Is pre-qualification for the Grants Gateway the same as registering for the New York State Conservation Partnership Program?

A. No, the Conservation Partnership Program has a different online system separate from the New York State Grants Gateway.

Q. Can an applicant bundle multiple properties or target multiple watersheds/drinking water supplies in one application?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there a map that identifies "public water supplies"?

A. Maps of aquifers and permitted water wells are available through the New York State GIS Clearinghouse. Applicants should contact the municipality to determine active public water supplies.

Q. Is public access allowed on acquired properties or easements?

A. Public access will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The applicant must provide documentation that public access would not have an impact to the drinking water supply.

Q. Once the land is acquired, can it be turned over to the local municipality? And can that happen within the three-year grant term or would it need to happen after the term is completed?

A. It is possible for a land trust to transfer a property to another entity, however, in accordance with the statute it would require express authority of an act of the legislature. There are no time constraints on when that transfer has to happen.

Q. Is there an upper limit for funding for an application?

A. The maximum grant award amount is \$3 million.

Q. Are private water supplies eligible?

A. No, only public water supplies are eligible for funding.

Q. Are lands adjacent to tributaries to a waterbody used as a drinking water supply eligible?

A. Yes, lands adjacent to tributaries are a secondary priority. Lands directly adjacent to surface waterbodies used as a drinking water supply will be given top priority.

Q. Is placement of funds into a stewardship account, which will be used outside of the three-year contract period, an eligible cost for this grant?

A. Yes, as long as placement of funds in the stewardship account occurs within the contract term.

Q. Does the land have to be closed on and the acquisition completed within the 3-year grant term? What happens if the process takes longer than 3 years?

A. Costs incurred outside the start and end dates of the contract are ineligible, so if the closing took place outside the typical three-year grant term, those costs would not be reimbursable. An extension of the three-year term can be requested in rare cases where it is needed. However, there is no guarantee that the request would be approved.

Q. In the scoring criteria, there is reference made to "parcels specifically identified or located in watersheds prioritized in the NYS Open Space Plan (OSP) for drinking water protection". Is there any additional guidance on where in the OSP priority parcel or area info can be found?

A. Starting on page 80 of the Open Space Plan, the Regional Priority Conservation Projects list either specific parcels or target watersheds identified for drinking water protection. If the watershed or parcels are not listed specifically for drinking water protection, they are not eligible to receive priority scoring under the Open Space Plan criterion.

Q. Does a land trust need to notify and receive approval from a municipality for each proposed parcel?

A. Municipal approval is required for each individual parcel. Municipalities have 90 days to object by resolution to the land acquisition of each parcel. However, the notification does not need to be completed prior to application.

Q. Does an applicant have to wait until after closing but right before a reimbursement for DEC to review the deed, survey, etc.?

A. The easement and corresponding review of related documents has to occur prior to reimbursement, but DEC would encourage applicants to submit easement language for review early in the transaction process in order to correct any issues.

Q. Do you have a conservation easement template that applicants can use?

A. No, there are too many possible variations so it is not feasible to provide a template. However, DEC can review standard easement templates up front to make sure they are acceptable.

Q. Are appraisals needed at the time of application?

A. Appraisals are not needed at the time of application, but are required prior to reimbursement. Appraisals must be completed by a state licensed or state certified appraiser following the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP).

Q. Will review of surveys and titles be required?

A. Yes, review of surveys, baseline documentation report, titles, etc. will be completed prior to reimbursement and will be completed by Division of Water staff in consultation with the Real Property Office.

Salt Storage

Q. Is a salt storage facility eligible for funding under WQIP?

A. Yes, salt storage facilities are eligible under a separate category in this Round. Please note, scoring criteria for this category have significantly changed; applicants are encouraged to read the [WQIP Round 15 Program Overview \(PDF, 910 KB\)](#) for additional information.

Q. Would "deconstruction" of an old shed be an eligible cost under the salt storage category? What about security measures such as security cameras?

A. Neither deconstruction costs nor security measures would be eligible costs.

Q. Where can I find the OGS Salt Storage Specs?

A. A copy of the [OGS Salt Storage Specs \(PDF, 119KB\)](#) is available for download.

Q. What is the definition of a public water system?

A. The definition of a public water system is: A water system that provides water to the public for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances, if such system has at least five service connections or regularly serves an average of at least 25 individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year.

Aquatic Habitat Restoration

Q. Who is eligible for the Aquatic Habitat Restoration program?

A. Eligible applicants under the Aquatic Habitat Restoration category are municipalities, soil and water conservation districts and not-for-profit corporations.

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4)

Q. Can a municipality purchase equipment under the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) category?

A. Yes. Please refer to the [WQIP Round 15 Program Overview \(PDF, 910 KB\)](#) for more detail on the MS4 category.