State Natural Resources Conservation Council

NRCC Clean Water Projects Design and Implementation Grant Request for Applications

Introduction and Program Goals:

The State Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) has received $925,000 from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for a block grant to accelerate statewide implementation and design of selected priority water quality projects from the DEC Watershed Projects Database in order to achieve measurable improvements to Vermont's water quality.

The grant will be used towards water quality design and implementation projects statewide in collaboration with Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDs) and other partners. Through this implementation program, NRCDs and other partners will design and implement projects that have a primary purpose of reducing sediment and/or nutrient pollution through stormwater, rivers, lakes, and forestry projects. Additional benefits are encouraged, but all projects must have a *primary* benefit of reducing sediment/nutrient pollution. This program will be open to all Districts and will fund preliminary design, final design, and implementation projects.

Applicants must review the Resources and Guidance materials located in the NRCD programs shared folder/online at VACD.org to determine a potential project's eligibility prior to filling out an application. There are additional resources that may be helpful as you fill out your application. Applicants will use the Project Types Table document in the Resources folder/online to find details on eligible project types, their unique requirements (including reporting and outcomes) and other details. In addition, all projects must be eligible under the screening document attached to the application template, as well as be compliant with DEC's most recent Funding Guidelines (also included in the shared drive). Non-NRCD organizations are encouraged to contact the program manager, Holden Sparacino (holden.sparacino@vacd.org) before filling out an application.

A minimum of 50% of funding will be awarded for projects with a total cost of $20,000 or less, excluding match and administrative expenses. Due to this requirement, there will be more of these small-scale projects than larger-scale projects, and small-scale projects may be approved more rapidly than large-scale projects. Applicants may submit separate applications for design and implementation phases of projects in order to expedite application review. Large-scale projects will be more competitive, and applicants may choose to include additional match and/or demonstrate a larger sediment/nutrient reduction. Prioritization of projects will also be considered as applications are reviewed. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how a project is a high-priority and/or submit applications for projects that are prioritized in assessments or plans (Tactical Basin Plan etc.). All projects will be reviewed by NRCC's review committee and will receive a letter of determination indicating if the project is approved and will receive full funding, is approved with partial funding, or is not approved and will not be funded.

Project Guidelines:

- Applicants are advised to complete a separate application for each project. Projects may be bundled (for instance, final design/implementation), please see the application/eligibility form for details. If you are unsure if your project(s) should be submitted as combined or separate applications, reach out to the project manager.
- Projects must be in the watershed projects database prior to applying for this funding.
- Eligible project types include stormwater, rivers, lakes, and forestry projects. Please see the project types table for detailed descriptions of eligible project types.
- Applicants should demonstrate how the project is a high-priority and/or how the project has been identified/prioritized in existing assessments or plans.
- Applicants will complete the eligibility and natural resources screening documents as part of each application.
- Applicants will identify and consult with relevant DEC staff to review permitting needs, natural resource concerns, and obtain written approval of the project as part of the application process. Applicants will continue to consult with relevant DEC staff at each design/implementation phase of the project.
- Implementation projects will be required to include an Operation and Maintenance Agreement for the design life of the project, at least 10 years.
- All projects and all deliverables must be completed/submitted by **November 1, 2021**.

Ineligible projects include:
- Projects that don't comply with DEC Funding Guidelines (available in the shared drive);
- A project that solely addresses flooding problems, drainage, and/or flood mitigation without addressing nutrient/sediment pollution;
- A project whose primary benefit is aquatic organism passage (AOP);
- An assessment project, including stormwater master planning;
- A dam project;
- A road project (unless funding is not available through municipal grants-in-aid program or other source and the project meets eligibility as a stormwater project);
- A driveway project;
- A river corridor easement or project involving land acquisition;
- A riparian buffer project (unless part of a river corridor restoration or lake shoreland project);
- A project related to compliance with Minimum Control Measures under the MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) General Permit;
- A project for achieving compliance with a state permit or state order;
- General education and outreach;
- A project that includes new or expanded development that seeks funding for compliance with a state permit or state order to mitigate negative impacts;
- A project that causes long-term impact(s) (beyond construction time) and cannot be permitted; and
- A stormwater project to address 3-acre permit compliance either at a public K-12 school site or if the 3-acre permit is not in place prior to construction.

Funding Guidelines:

Applicants will complete the budget template found in the shared drive/online and include this with each application. In addition, applicants may include additional documentation including estimates from contractors etc. All eligible costs will be consistent with DEC's Funding Guidelines Document. No match is required, except for stormwater projects in MS4 districts. In those cases, 50% match is required. *Please report all match or cost sharing in your proposal.*

Applicants for projects costing greater than $20,000 excluding match and administrative fees may choose to provide additional match to make the large-scale application more competitive, and/or choose projects with greater sedimentation/nutrient reduction benefits.

All projects receiving funds will be allowed a 7% administrative fee in addition to the total award amount. This administrative fee covers awardee time towards grant reporting, invoicing, and managing subrecipient contracts. This amount may be included on invoices, but should not be included in the budget template.

Grantees may invoice for actual costs incurred throughout the project as necessary. To receive full project funds, the project must adhere to all project and funding guidelines and deliverables outlined in DEC's Funding Guidelines, the Project Types Table, and the Application/Screening documents.

Funding Restrictions:

All project funds must comply with DEC's Funding Guidelines (included in the shared drive/online). In addition, Project funds do *not* fund the following:
- Tools and/or equipment
- Office supplies such as, but not limited to, computers, cell phones, etc.
- Uniforms/staff apparel
- Food/beverage/event space costs (such as for a meeting)
- AmeriCorps host site or member costs
- Expenditures that occurred before the award date (unless granted a 90-day, pre-award approval from the State) or after the end date of the block grant agreement timeframe
- General outreach and/or education
- Political advocacy
- Fundraising

Deadlines:

Design or implementation projects will have an initial application deadline of **November 22, 2019**. NRCC is aiming to send letters of determination to all applicants in this initial round by December 20, 2019.

It is NRCC's intention to implement a rolling application schedule after these initial application deadlines. More details on future application schedules will be provided after this initial application round.

All final invoices, reports, and projects must be completed and submitted before **November 1, 2021**.

Award Notification, Grant Agreement, and Payment Schedule:

All applicants will receive written indication of NRCC's decision. An application may be declined, partially awarded, or fully awarded. NRCC will develop a grant agreement with each awardee. This agreement is subject to pre-approval by the Department of Environmental Conservation of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources before it is signed. Grantees must sign and return the grant agreement letter with original signatures. Pending the availability of grant funds, payments will be made as invoices are received, with at least 10% of project costs held until the final report and deliverables are submitted and approved by NRCC.

Submitting Your Application:

Templates and resources (including the project types table that details the requirements for individual project types) can be found in the shared folder/online. These should be reviewed prior to submitting an application. Direct any questions on the application process, projects eligibility, etc. to the program manager (contact information below).

NRCDs: To submit your application, please create a folder for this project (and/or your district) under the FY2019 Design/Implementation Block Grant applications folder. Include your district's name and current date as part of the folder name (i.e. WCNRCD-ProjectName-10.29.19) Upload all necessary documentation (see below) to the folder you create.

Non-NRCD organizations: You are encouraged to contact the project manager (information below) prior to submitting an application. To submit your application, please attach all necessary documentation (see below) in an email with your application and send via email to the program manager, with the subject "2019 NRCC Clean Water Design and Implementation Block Grant Application".

Please include the following as part of your application:
- Application and Eligibility Screening form;
- Project Locator Map;
- Documentation of written project approval by all relevant DEC programs found through DEC's project database/natural resource screening tools (email meets this requirement, with the language "approval to proceed with the project" OR "approval with conditions to proceed with the project");
- Completed budget template (located in the Resources folder for the grant);
- Project Design if applicable;
- Itemized quotes received from contractors if applicable; and
- Any additional materials that will help clarify/support the project, including photos, letters of support, maintenance agreements, and/or documentation of landowner/municipal permission.

Upload your application and all attachments to the shared drive.

Notify Holden (holden.sparacino@vacd.org) once your application is ready for review, and with any questions you have.