BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

FY 2024

Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants Request for Proposal (RFP)

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WHAT IS NEW FOR FY24

- This RFP is applicable only to Projects & Practices Grants (including Drinking Water subgrant)
- Eligible applicants for Drinking Water subgrant now includes municipalities and public water systems
- Match changed to 10% from 25% in order to 1) be more consistent with other Clean Water Fund grant programs, 2) to make it more accessible for LGUs to apply for funding, and 3) acknowledge that LGUs need to pursue specific landowners in targeted areas where a project may have limited private value but greater public value.

PURPOSE

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants Program supports activities that restore, protect, and enhance water quality. This RFP includes:

Two grants:

- Projects and Practices
- Drinking Water

Two loans:

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Clean Water Partnership Loan
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture AgBMP Loan

The Clean Water Fund was established in Minnesota Statute 114D.50 to implement part of Article XI, Section 15, of the Minnesota Constitution, with the purpose of protecting, enhancing, and restoring water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams in addition to protecting ground water and drinking water sources from degradation. These funds must supplement traditional sources of funding and may not be used as a substitute to fund activities or programs.

TIMELINE

No late submissions or incomplete applications will be considered for funding. The application must be submitted by 4:30 PM. Late responses will not be considered. The grant applicant is responsible for proving timely submittal.

Grant Cycle	**Grant Cycle Dates**
Application period open	June 29, 2023
Application period close	August 24, 2023
BWSR Board authorizes grant awards	December 14, 2023
BWSR grant agreements sent to recipients	February 2024
Work plan submittal deadline	March 20, 2024
Grant execution deadline	April 17, 2024

GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIRMENTS

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

See the FY 2024 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Policy.

FUNDING AVAILABLE AND MATCH

Table 1 lists the Clean Water Fund (CWF) programs available to BWSR and other executive branch agencies. Final funding decisions will be dependent on the actual funds available.

All BWSR CWF competitive grants require a minimum non-state match. All BWSR grant programs have a match requirement that is up to 10% of the amount of Clean Water Funds requested or received. The match must be cash or in-kind cash value of goods, materials, and services directly attributed to project accomplishments.

Table 1: FY 2024 Competitive Clean Water Grant and Loan Funding Available[1]

Agency Fund	Funding Amount	Required Match
BWSR Projects and Practices Grant	Up to $6,960,800	10%
BWSR Drinking Water subgrant	Up to $1,740,200	10%
MDA AgBMP Loans	Up to $4,799,000	Not Required
MPCA Clean Water Partnership Loans	Up to $3,500,000	Not Required
Total	**Up to $17,000,000**	

[1] Amounts shown are estimates. Actual amounts will be determined prior to the end of the application period.

PREVAILING WAGE

It is the responsibility of the grant recipient or contractor to pay prevailing wages on construction projects to which state prevailing wage laws apply (Minn. Stat. 177.42 – 177.44). All laborers and mechanics employed by grant recipients and subcontractors funded in whole or in part with state funds included in this RFP shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on projects of a character similar in the locality. Additional information on prevailing wage requirements is available on the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) website https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/prevailing-wage-information. Questions about the application of prevailing wage rates should be directed to DOLI at 651-284-5091.

APPLYING FOR A GRANT

HOW TO SUBMIT A QUESTION

Questions regarding grant applications should be directed to your area Board Conservationist or Clean Water Specialist; a map of work areas and contact information is available at BWSR Maps and Apps Gallery. Questions may also be submitted

by email to cwfquestions@state.mn.us. Responses will be posted on the BWSR website as a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) document and updated weekly throughout the RFP. The final update will be posted on August 10, 2023.

Questions about the Restoration Evaluation Program can be directed to: Wade Johnson, wade.a.johnson@state.mn.us or 651-259-5057.

Questions about the MDA AgBMP Loan Program and requesting funds through this application can be answered by calling Richard Gruenes (651) 201-6609 or emailing AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us.

Questions regarding the MDA Groundwater Protection Rule and Township Testing can be answered by calling Larry Gunderson at 651-328-9034 or emailing larry.gunderson@state.mn.us.

Questions about the MPCA Clean Water Partnership Loan Program can be answered by calling Cindy Osborn at 651-757-2099 or emailing cynthia.osborn@state.mn.us.

For more information on who to contact at the Minnesota Department of Health in regards to questions about Drinking Water Supply Management Areas or Well Head Protection areas, visit: https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/swpstaffmap.pdf.

HOW TO APPLY USING ELINK

1. Set up your eLINK user account
   Proposals need to be submitted via eLINK. Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must register for an account at https://elink.bwsr.state.mn.us no later than seven days prior to the proposal deadline. For eLINK related questions, first visit the eLINK section of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page. If your question is not addressed here, please contact elinksupport@state.mn.us.

2. Complete your funding request (proposal)
   See the "Completing a Funding Request in eLINK" under the "eLINK Training Videos" tab on the eLINK webpage to view a 11-minute online module describing how to complete a Funding Request within eLINK.

- As part of the proposal, eLINK will require applicants to map the location of the proposed project area.
- Answers to each question is limited to 2,000 characters. Due to differences in how programs are encoded, be aware that the character limit in eLINK is not the same as Microsoft Word or other text editors.
- Proposals may include only one image to be submitted within their eLINK application. Only .jpg, .tiff, or .png file types are allowed.

Applicants must provide answers to the following questions as part of their proposal submitted in eLINK. The questions are related to the ranking criteria categories, which determine how proposals are scored by reviewers. The ranking criteria can be found in the "Application Review" section of this RFP.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

- Proposals submitted under the BWSR Clean Water Fund Grant categories must request state funds that equal or exceed $30,000. Proposals submitted that do not fall within this dollar range will not be accepted.
- Proposals may receive partial funding based on eligibility or availability of funds. Prior to final selection, the Board may engage applicants to resolve questions or to discuss modifications to the project or funding request. Actual awards may be less than this minimum if proposals receive partial funding. Applications may receive partial funding for the following reasons: 1) an absence of or limited identification of specific project locations, 2) budgeted items that were

not discussed in the application or have no connection to the central purpose of the application were included by an applicant; 3) to address budget categories out of balance with the project scope; 4) application contains ineligible components; and 5) insufficient funds remaining in a grant category to fully fund a project. Prior to final selection, the Board may engage applicants to resolve questions or to discuss modifications to the project or funding request.

- Proposals that do not comply with all proposal requirements will not be considered for funding, as provided below:
    - Components of the proposal are incomplete or missing;
    - The match amount does not meet grant requirements; or
    - The minimum grant dollar amount is not met, or the maximum amount is exceeded.
- Proposals should clearly articulate what water resource is being targeted in the application. Proposals should demonstrate significant, measurable project outputs and outcomes targeted to critical pollution source areas that will help achieve water quality objectives for the water resource of concern; be consistent with a watershed management plan that has been state approved and locally adopted or an approved total maximum daily load study (TMDL), Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS), Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategy (GRAPS), surface water intake plan, or well head protection plan.
- Proposals should ensure they are citing the current, state approved and locally adopted plan for the project area. For example, once a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan is adopted for an area, the County Water Plan or SWCD Comprehensive Plan can no longer be referenced since it is no longer the applicable plan in the project area, even if it continues to be used elsewhere in the county where a CWMP has not yet been developed and adopted. Improper plan references will negatively affect the prioritization score.
- As appropriate, outputs should include scientifically credible estimates of pollutant reductions expected as a result of the project, as well as other measures such as acres of wetlands/forest, miles of riparian buffer or stream bank restored, acres treated by stormwater BMPs, or acres of specific agricultural conservation practices implemented including acres treated by the installation of the practice. ***Applications with unrealistic pollution reduction estimates will not be considered.***
- Proposals for projects meeting a waste load allocation and located on publicly owned land and exceeding $750,000 should first consult with the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority before applying for BWSR Clean Water Funds.
- Proposals must have plans for long-term maintenance and inspection monitoring for the duration of the life of a project as part of their project files. Work plans developed for funded applications will rely on this information for operation, maintenance and inspection requirements after the project is completed.
- Applicants should evaluate the impacts that climate change (such as fluctuating precipitation patterns and drought) may have on the ability of the proposed project to meet objectives and whether the proposed project increases landscape resiliency.
- For projects that are proposing to infiltrate stormwater, the following guidance should be taken into consideration: https://stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/images/3/3a/Evaluating_Proposed_Stormwater_Infiltration_Projects_in_Vulnerable_Wellhead_Protection_Areas.pdf
- Proposals from applicants that were previously awarded Clean Water Funds will be considered during the review process for applications submitted in response to this RFP. However, applicants that have expended less than 50% of previous award(s) at the time of this application will need to demonstrate organizational capacity to finalize current projects and to complete new projects concurrently.
- Proposals involving in-lake treatment and feedlot projects must include required attachments in eLINK at the time of application.

APPLICATION REVIEW

BWSR staff initially review all applications for eligibility. Eligible applications are further screened and forwarded to an interagency work team (BWSR, MPCA, MDA, MDH and DNR) that will review and rank the applications, in order, to make a funding recommendation to the BWSR Board. See Ranking Criteria for each grant in the sections below.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

State Grant Policy 08-01, (see https://mn.gov/admin/government/grants/policies-statutes-forms/) Conflict of Interest for State Grant-Making, also applies to BWSR grantees. Grantees' conflicts of interest are generally considered organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice due to competing duties or loyalties,
- A grantee's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties, or
- A grantee or potential grantee has an unfair competitive advantage through being furnished unauthorized proprietary information or source selection information that is not available to all competitors.

PRIVACY NOTICE

Under Minnesota Statute 13.599, responses to an RFP are nonpublic until the application deadline is reached. At that time, the name and address of the grantee, and the amount requested becomes public. All other data is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee is completed. After the application evaluation process is completed, all data (except trade secret data) becomes public. Data created during the evaluation process is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee(s) is completed.

GRANT RECIPIENT INFORMATION

GRANT AGREEMENT AND PROJECT PERIOD

Notification of grant award will be in the form of an automated notification from the BWSR eLINK system or an email from BWSR Grants staff to the grantee. Notifications are sent to the Day-to-Day Contact(s) identified by the organization within the eLINK system. This notification includes instructions for further processing of the grant agreement and may also contain grant-specific information such as requirements for completing work plans, disbursement terms, or additional required documentation for processing the grant. Read these instructions carefully as requirements can vary by grant and fiscal year.

BWSR will use grant agreements, and an associated work plan, as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules, and established policies. BWSR reserves the right to require a work plan revision or grant agreement amendment for changes in scope. Willful or negligent disregard of relevant statutes, rules and policies may lead to imposition of financial penalties on the grant recipient. Upon receiving the notification of grant award, which indicates approval of an application, and prior to beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving grant funds, the applicant is required to do the following:

1. Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, and submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.

2. Sign a grant contract agreement indicating their intention to complete the project(s) contained in the application. The agreement also authorizes BWSR to monitor progress of the grant. The grant contract agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

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.

Grant contract agreement templates can be reviewed on the Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs website.

All grants must be completed by December 31, 2026. If a project receives federal funds, the period of the grant agreement may be extended to equal the length of time that the federal funds are available, subject to limitation. Applicants using federal funds are encouraged to contact BWSR soon after the award of funds to ensure the grant agreement can be developed appropriately.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Grant payments will be distributed in three installments to the grantee. The first payment of 50% of the grant amount will be paid after work plan approval and execution of the grant agreement provided the grant applicant is in compliance with all BWSR website and eLINK reporting requirements for previously awarded BWSR grants. The second payment of 40% of the grant amount will be paid once the grantee has provided BWSR with notification and BWSR has reviewed and approved the eLINK reporting, financial report, and possibly completes a grant reconciliation of the initial payment. The last 10% will be paid after all final reporting requirements are met, the grantee has provided BWSR with a final financial report, and BWSR has reconciled these expenditures.

REPORTING AND ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- All grantees must follow the FY2024 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Policy adopted by the BWSR, and the Grants Administration Manual (https://bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/)
- All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of Clean Water Fund grants. Outputs will serve as surrogates for outcomes and will be reported as estimated pollutant reductions and progress towards goals based on the best available information.
- All BWSR funded grants are managed through eLINK. All applications will be submitted electronically through eLINK. Successful applicants will be required to complete a work plan in eLINK. All required reporting will be completed through eLINK. For more information go to https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink.
- When practicable, grant recipients shall prominently display on their website the legacy logo. Grant recipients must display on their website either a link to their project from the Legislative Coordinating Commission Legacy Site (http://legacy.leg.mn) or a clean water project summary that includes a description of the grant activities, including expenditure of grant funds and measurable outcomes.
- When practicable, grant recipients must display a sign with the Legacy Logo at the project site or other public location identifying the project was built with assistance from Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. When practicable, grant recipients must display the Legacy Logo on printed and other media funded with money from the Clean Water Fund. The logo and specifications can be found at http://www.legacy.leg.mn/legacy-logo.
- Structural projects and practices must be of long-lasting public benefit. LGUs must provide assurances that the landowner or land occupier will keep the project in place for the effective life of the project.
- Effective life is defined in the https://bwsr.state.mn.us/grant-program-policies. Information defining effective life not provided in the application must be defined in the work plan. The effective life for in-lake or in-channel treatments such as alum treatments must be assessed and determined as part of the required feasibility study prior to applying for funding.

RESTORATION EVALUATION PROGRAM

All restoration projects with restoration benefits funded via the Clean Water Fund may be subject to an evaluation in accordance with Minn. Stat. 114D.50 Subd. 6. Primary goals of the restoration evaluation program are to evaluate the projects relative to the law, current science, and the stated goals and standards in the restoration plan and to improve future habitat restorations by creating a feedback loop from lessons learned in the field.

Key recommendations that applicants should follow are:

1. **Improved Project Planning** - Thorough project planning will enable project managers to make informed decisions and improve capacity to achieve desired outcomes
2. **Improved Vegetation for Stream Projects** - Well established vegetation is critical for the long-term success of stream projects. Establishing native vegetation takes planning and diligent maintenance.
3. **Improved Project Teams** - Bringing more sets of expertise to the table will ideally: minimize instances of non-native plant use, identify plan components with high risk of limited success, help plan contingencies for potential challenges, and broaden project goals.
4. **Improved Documentation** - Documentation is critical for understanding, tracking, and achieving successful restorations.

For more information regarding the Restoration Evaluation Program visit the follow website:
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/legacy/restoration-evaluation.html

NATIVE VEGETATION

All projects that involve vegetation restoration or establishment are subject to BWSR's Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines found at: https://bwsr.state.mn.us/node/8806. Key requirements within the Guidelines include the use of native vegetation, providing pollinator habitat, and incorporating high diversity levels.

PERMITTING

The applicant is responsible for obtaining and complying with all permits necessary to execute the project. If applicable, successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation prior to work plan approval that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary federal, state and local permits and meets all water quality rules, including those that apply to the utilization of an existing water body as a water quality treatment device. ***Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the appropriate regulatory agencies early in the grant application development process to ensure potential projects can meet all applicable regulatory requirements.***

For information regarding MPCA storm water permitting requirements, please go to:

Construction stormwater permit overview
http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=7386

Common Plan of Development
http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=7396

Untreated Stormwater Runoff to Lakes, Streams, and Wetlands
http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=11864

BWSR CWF COMPETITIVE GRANTS

PROJECT AND PRACTICES GRANT

This grant makes an investment in on-the-ground projects and practices that will protect or restore water quality in lakes, rivers or streams, or will protect groundwater or drinking water. Examples include stormwater practices, agricultural conservation practices, feedlot related practices, lakeshore and stream bank stabilization, stream restoration, and SSTS upgrades.

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS – PROJECTS AND PRACTICES

- Through the Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan, the following three high-level state priorities have been established for Clean Water Fund nonpoint implementation:
    1. Restore those waters that are closest to meeting state water quality standards
    2. Protect those high-quality unimpaired waters at greatest risk of becoming impaired
    3. Restore and protect water resources for public use and public health, including drinking water.
- To meet the project assurances (see FY24 Policy) for streambank stabilization or stream restoration projects, applicants must commit to provide financial assurance from local sources for repairs and maintenance. Assurance (recommended at least 20 percent of total project cost) needs to be documented prior to work plan approval to ensure projects provide the proposed long-term clean water benefits.
- Proposals must include a measurable goal. For projects proposed to help meet a Total Maximum Daily Load, measurable goals need to be quantified as the needed annual pollution load reduction.
- SSTS project landowners must meet low-income thresholds. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use existing income guidelines from U.S. Rural Development as the basis for their definition of low income.
- Feedlot Applications:
    a. Practices must follow the MN NRCS practice docket, which is found on the NRCS website: https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/details
    b. Supplemental questions **must** be submitted in eLINK via attachment as part of any application that contain feedlot practices including practices to address stockpiles. Applications that do not have this attachment will be deemed ineligible.
    c. Funding will only be provided for those facilities listed on the supplemental questions sheet, which shall be incorporated into the grant work plan.
- In-lake management activities must have completed a feasibility study that is attached to the eLINK grant application. The study must include:
    a. Lake and watershed information based on data that has been collected within the last 10-years (at minimum, include lake morphology and depth, summary of water quality information, and the assessment of aquatic invasive species);
    b. Description of internal load vs. external load nutrient reductions needed to meet the state's water quality standard;
    c. History of projects completed in the lake's watershed (if none have been completed, that should be stated), as well as other in-lake activities, if applicable;
    d. Cost benefit analysis of all options considered, and reasons given for why you are choosing the proposed activities;
    e. Projected effective life of the proposed activities;

f. Expected water quality outcome of the proposed activity; and

g. Plan for monitoring water quality to assure the proposed activity's total phosphorus goal will be achieved during it's effective life (monitoring plans should include monitoring through the effective life), and

h. For activities related to rough fish (example carp), the feasibility study must also include:

   i. Methods used to estimate adult and juvenile carp populations;

   ii. Description of the known interconnectedness of waterbodies (lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, etc.);

   iii. Identified nursery areas;

   iv. Methods used to track carp movement;

   v. Proposed actions to limit recruitment and movement; and

   vi. Proposed actions to reduce adult carp populations

- Streambank and stream channel restoration project applicants will be more successful if they present sufficient data and information that demonstrates a detailed understanding of the channel and watershed conditions for the project, the proposed approach to channel design, and substantial early coordination efforts to ensure a successful project:

   a. Describe assessments of watershed, channel, and floodplain conditions that helped identify the root cause of the pollution issue being addressed by the proposed project (Question 3).

   b. Describe geomorphic assessments, stream surveys, and other analysis that have been completed to assess channel and floodplain conditions (Question 8).

   c. Describe the proposed approach to channel design and the specific factors considered in the design including the restoration potential of the site given the channel, floodplain, and watershed conditions (Question 8).

   d. Describe the status of early coordination efforts with landowners, partners, and permitting agencies and level of concurrence on the assessment, design, and permitting for the proposed project (Question 9)

Projects and Practices Ranking Criteria	
Ranking Criteria	**Maximum Points Possible**
Project Abstract: The project abstract succinctly describes what results the applicant is trying to achieve and how they intend to achieve those results.	5
Prioritization (Relationship to Plans): The proposal is based on priority protection or restoration actions listed in or derived from the current state approved and locally adopted plan for the project area (see plans listed in 'Applicant Eligibility' of this RFP) and is linked to statewide Clean Water Fund priorities and public benefits.	20
Targeting: The proposed project addresses identified critical pollution sources or risks impacting the water resource(s).	25
Measurable Outcomes and Project Impact: The proposed project has a quantifiable reduction in pollution for restoration projects or measurable outputs for protection projects and directly addresses the water quality concern identified in the application.	20
Cost Effectiveness and Feasibility: The application identifies a cost effective and feasible solution to address the non-point pollution concern(s).	15
Project Readiness: The application has a set of specific activities that can be implemented soon after grant award.	15
Total Points Available	**100**

DRINKING WATER

This grant makes an investment in land treatment projects and practices that will protect or improve drinking water sources. Surface water (streams, rivers, and lakes) and groundwater (aquifers) can both serve as sources of drinking water.

1. Projects will be more competitive when located within Minnesota Department of Health Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMA), Level 1 or Level 2 areas identified by the Groundwater Protection Rule and/or townships showing high nitrate levels through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Township Testing Program, or well sealing located in a low sensitivity/vulnerability areas.
    - DWSMA, WHPA and vulnerability information can be found at: https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/mapviewer.html
    - Level 1 or Level 2 areas identified by the Ground Protection Rule can be found at: https://www.mda.state.mn.us/mitigation-level-determination
    - Townships showing high nitrate levels can be found at: https://www.mda.state.mn.us/township-testing-program
2. Attaching a map of the proposed project area in eLINK as part of the project applications is **required** to show why the area is targeted for drinking water protection. Data layers to consider are:
    i. Pollution Sensitivity of Near-Surface Materials showing expanded key (ex. High = coarse grain material)
    ii. DWSMAs with vulnerability ratings showing expanded key (High, Moderate, Low =)
    iii. Primary Aquifers by section
    iv. Township Testing Initial/Final Nitrate Results
    v. MDA Groundwater Protection Rule DWSMAs
    vi. Source Water DWSMAs, Priority Areas A & B
    vii. CWI Max Nitrate (mg/L) (shows maximum nitrate levels in drinking water wells)

*Note that these layers can be found online as part of the Watershed Health Assessment Framework. For ***guidance*** on how to make your required map, please review the document ***Discover Groundwater Information using the Watershed Health Assessment Framework Tool*** found on the Apply for BWSR Grants webpage https://bwsr.state.mn.us/apply. You will need to capture a screenshot from the WHAF tool (Alt + Print Screen for Windows computers), then save it as an image file (e.g. .jpg, .tif, or .png), and then upload this as your Application Image. It will be attached to your official application upon submittal.

For additional information and resources please go to https://bwsr.state.mn.us/groundwater-protection. On this page, you will also find the ***Groundwater/Drinking Water Protection Practices for Agricultural Lands*** guidance document that describes various groundwater protection practices.

3. **INELIGIBLE USE OF GRANT FUNDS – DRINKING WATER**

- Projects that are not primarily focused on protecting the drinking water source of concern or minimizing the contaminant sources/risks impacting the drinking water source of concern.
- Activities listed as ineligible under Project and Practices Grants.
- Streambank restoration and stabilization projects.

RANKING CRITERIA – DRINKING WATER

Table 1: Drinking Water Ranking Criteria	
Ranking Criteria	**Maximum Points Possible**
Project Abstract: The project abstract succinctly describes what results the applicant is trying to achieve and how they intend to achieve those results.	5
Prioritization: The proposal is based on priority actions from a current state approved and locally adopted plan (see plans listed in 'Applicant Eligibility' of this RFP), or a state approved Minnesota Department of Health approved source water (drinking water) protection plan such as a wellhead protection plan, wellhead protection action plan or surface water intake plan.	20
Targeting: The proposed project addresses contaminant sources or risks directly impacting drinking water sources. The project is either in an area designated as a Drinking Water Supply Management Area, vulnerable to groundwater contamination, high groundwater sensitivity, or in an area with elevated levels of contamination that pose a risk to human health such as Level 1 or Level 2 areas identified by the Groundwater Protection Rule and/or townships showing high nitrate level through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture township testing. Project fits with complementary work and multiple strategies aimed at drinking water protection.	35
Project Impact: The proposed project reduces an identified contaminant source posing the greatest risk to drinking water sources. Project will have measurable outputs, justifiable costs, and may have secondary benefits.	30
Project Readiness: The application has a set of specific activities that can be implemented soon after grant award. Community and/or citizen engagement will occur to share project information with the local community.	10
Total Points Available	**100**

AG BMP LOANS

The AgBMP Loan Program is established in all areas of the state providing loan funds since 1996. Requests from watershed organizations, drainage authorities, cities, townships, and other RFP applicants will be coordinated through existing contracts with the local AgBMP administrator. Local AgBMP administrators can be found at https://app.gisdata.mn.gov/mda-agbmploan/.

The AgBMP Loan Program provides low interest loans to landowners to solve virtually any water quality problem. The program encourages implementation of best management practices that prevent, reduce, or eliminate pollution. Examples include runoff from feedlots; farm nutrient management and conservation tillage equipment; erosion, drainage, and buffers; noncompliant septic systems and wells; and many other practices. For more information on program eligibilities, please contact Richard Gruenes (mailto:AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us or 651-201-6618) or go to the MDA website at: www.mda.state.mn.us/agbmploans.

NEW THIS YEAR

The AgBMP Loan Program was awarded $4,799,000 in CWF funding for FY24.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

There is $4.799M in new CWFs available this year; along with another $2.5 million in currently available funding statewide through existing governments. The AgBMP Loan funds can be coordinated with requested grant funds to fully finance proposed projects. Please contact the AgBMP Loan Program staff or local AgBMP administrators (https://app.gisdata.mn.gov/mda-agbmploan/) to determine availability.

AgBMP loans can be issued to rural landowners, farmers, and farm supply businesses; however, in some cases, urban landowners may also be eligible; please contact the program to verify borrower eligibility for AgBMP loans.

The maximum loan amount for an individual PERSON receiving a loan is $200,000. Terms include 3% interest and a maximum maturity of 10 years. Please contact the program to verify limits if the proposed project involves multiple individuals.

AgBMP Loan awards are ONLY for implementation of proven BMPs. Education, research, and demonstration projects are not eligible components of an AgBMP Loan request.

AgBMP Loans can be considered MATCH funds provided by the landowner for all state and federal grant programs.

MPCA CLEAN WATER PARTNERSHIP LOANS

The Clean Water Partnership (CWP) program offers loans up to $750,000 per loan (1.5% interest) to local units of government for addressing nonpoint-source pollution to improve water quality. The funds are available to fund urban green infrastructure, including pervious pavers, rain gardens, inflow and infiltration or a suite of rural best management practices including buffers, septic tank upgrades/replacements. In addition to funding implementation, LGUs can use these funds for technical assistance, equipment purchases such as street sweepers or seeder equipment, feedlot upgrades/fixes, and any other nonpoint source best management practice. For more information, please contact Cindy Osborn at cynthia.osborn@state.mn.us or 651-757-2099.

BWSR and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) have agreed to coordinate the Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Program and the Clean Water Partnership Loan Program application process. Approved Clean Water Partnership Loans for nonpoint source pollution projects could be used as cash match for BWSR Clean Water Fund grants. An applicant for the CWF Competitive Grant Program does not have to submit a separate application to the MPCA. Applications approved by BWSR and the interagency work team will be submitted to the commissioner of the MPCA for final approval.

The applicant will work with the MPCA to complete the loan documents. Applications are accepted at any time throughout the year. Applicants to BWSR's Competitive Grants do not need to submit a separate application, but for more information, or to apply at any time, please visit the webpage at https://www.pca.state.mn.us/grants-and-loans/clean-water-partnership-loans.

FY 2024 PROJECTS AND PRACTICES QUESTIONS

FY 2024 CWF Projects & Practices Application Questions

(Answers to each question are limited to 2000 characters.)

Note that the following questions need to be answered in eLINK and the character limit in eLINK is NOT the same as Microsoft Word.

Project Summary
Project Abstract (5 points): Succinctly describe what you are trying to achieve and how you intend to achieve those results, including the type and quantity of projects and/or practices included in the application budget and anticipated outcomes.
Does your organization have any active CWF competitive grants? If so, specify FY and percentage spent. Also, explain your organization's capacity (including available FTEs or contracted resources) to effectively implement additional Clean Water Fund grant dollars.
Water Resource: Identify the water resource the application is targeting for water quality protection or restoration.
Proposed Measurable Outcomes: Succinctly describe the proposed measurable outcomes of this grant application.
Prioritization (Relationship to Plan) – 20
Question 1. (18 points): (A) Describe why the water resource was identified in the plan as a priority resource, identify the specific water management plan reference by plan organization (if different from the applicant), plan title, section, and page number. (B) In addition to the plan citation, provide a brief narrative description that explains whether this application fully or partially accomplishes the referenced activity. (C) Provide weblinks to all referenced plans.
Question 2. (2 points): (A) Describe how the resource of concern aligns with at least one of the statewide priorities referenced in the *Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan* (also referenced in the "Projects and Practices" section of the RFP). (B) Describe the public benefits resulting from this proposal from both a local and state perspective.
Targeting - 25
Question 3. (15 points): Describe the methods used to identify, inventory, and target the root cause (most critical pollution source(s) or threat(s)). Describe any related additional targeting efforts that will be completed prior to installing the projects or practices identified in this proposal.
Question 4. (10 points): How does this proposal fit with complementary work that you and your partners are implementing to achieve the goal(s) for the priority water resource(s) of concern? Describe the comprehensive management approach to this water resource(s) with examples such as: other financial assistance or incentive programs, easements, regulatory enforcement, or community engagement activities that are directly or indirectly related to this proposal.

Measurable Outcomes and Project Impact - 20
Question 5. (5 points): (A) What is the primary pollutant(s) this application specifically addresses? (B) Has a pollutant reduction goal been set (via TMDL or other study) in relation to the pollutant(s) or the water resource that is the subject of this application? If so, please state that goal (as both an annual pollution reduction AND overall percentage reduction, not as an in-stream or in-lake concentration number). (C) If no pollutant reduction goal has been set, describe the water quality trends or risks associated with the water resource or other management goals that have been established. (D) For protection projects, indicate measurable outputs such as acres of protected land, number of potential contaminant sources removed or managed, etc.
Question 6. (10 points): (A) What portion of the water quality goal will be achieved through this application? Where applicable, identify the annual reduction in pollutant(s) that will be achieved or avoided for the water resource if this project is completed. (B) Describe the effects this application will have on the root cause of the issue it will address (most critical pollution source(s) or threat(s)).
Question 7. (5 points): If the project will have secondary benefits, specifically describe, (quantify if possible), those benefits. Examples: hydrologic benefits, climate resiliency, enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species, groundwater protection, enhancement of pollinator populations, or protection of rare and/or native species.
Cost Effectiveness and Feasibility - 15
Question 8. (15 points): (A) Describe why the proposed project(s) in this application are considered to be the most cost effective and feasible means to attain water quality improvement or protection benefits to achieve or maintain water quality goals. Has any analysis been conducted to help substantiate this determination? Discuss why alternative practices were not selected. Factors to consider include, but are not limited to: BMP effectiveness, timing, site feasibility, practicality, and public acceptance. (B) If your application is proposing to use incentives above and beyond payments for practice costs, please describe rates, duration of payments and the rationale for the incentives' cost effectiveness. **Note**: For in-lake projects such as alum treatments or carp management, please refer to the feasibility study or series of studies that accompanies the grant application to assess alternatives and relative cost effectiveness. Please attach feasibility study to your application in eLINK.
Project Readiness -15
Question 9. (10 points): a) What steps have been taken or are expected to ensure that project implementation can begin soon after the grant award? b) Describe general environmental review and permitting needs required by the project (list if needed). c) Also, describe any discussions with landowners, status of agreements/contracts, contingency plans, and other elements essential to project implementation. d) What activities, if any proposed, will accompany your project(s) that will communicate the need, benefits, and long-term impacts to your local community? This should go above and beyond the standard newsletters, signs and press releases.
Question 10. (5 points): Describe how the budget categories support the activities in your application. Please provide adequate Activity Category detail in your budget table to support your application and show project readiness (see eLINK Activity Categories).
Stream Restoration Projects Only
The Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation Report recommends early coordination and comprehensive planning for stream projects. Describe the expertise of your team (i.e., geomorphology, hydrology, plant and animal ecology, construction site management, and engineering) and early coordination efforts you have been part of to ensure project success.
Describe how your organization will provide financial assurance that operations and maintenance funds are available if needed.
The Constitutional Amendment requires that Amendment funding must not substitute traditional state funding. Briefly describe how this project will provide water quality benefits to the State of Minnesota without substituting existing funding.

FY 2023 DRINKING WATER PROJECTS AND PRACTICES QUESTIONS

FY 2023 CWF Projects & Practices Drinking Water Quality Application Questions

(Answers to each question are limited to 2000 characters.)

Note that the following questions need to be answered in eLINK and the character limit in eLINK is NOT the same as Microsoft Word.

Project Summary
Project Abstract (5 points) Succinctly describe what you are trying to achieve and how you intend to achieve those results, including the type and quantity of projects and/or practices included in the application budget and anticipated outcomes.
Does your organization have any active CWF competitive grants? If so, specify FY and percentage spent. Also, explain your organization's capacity (including available FTEs or contracted resources) to effectively implement additional Clean Water Fund grant dollars.
Drinking Water Source Identify the specific drinking water source the application is targeting for water quality.
Proposed Measurable Outcomes Succinctly describe the proposed measurable outcomes of this grant application.
Prioritization (Relationship to Plan)
Question 1. (20 points) A) For the proposed drinking water project, list the specific water management plan(s) that identifies this drinking water issue, including a comprehensive watershed management plan, county comprehensive local water management plan, soil and water conservation district comprehensive plan, metropolitan local water plan or metropolitan groundwater plan AND/OR the MN Department of Health (MDH) approved source water /wellhead protection plan with a designated Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA). (B) What prioritized activities from the plan (referred to above) does this application address?

Targeting *(Public Water Supplies and Private Wells)*

Question 2. (25 points)

A) Describe the methods/assessments used to identify, inventory, and target the contaminant sources or risks impacting the drinking water source of concern and why this specific area poses a high risk to drinking water.

B) What are the risks, land uses, or potential contaminant sources that may be impacting the drinking water source? Are the proposed activities appropriate for the geology, sensitivity, and/or DWSMA vulnerability? If the project involves well sealing, provide information about the well(s), aquifer(s), and pollution sensitivity. If the project involves well sealing, provide information about the well(s), aquifer(s), and pollution sensitivity. If the project falls in a DWSMA, identify the vulnerability (ex: high, low).

Attaching a map in eLINK as part of the project proposal is REQUIRED to show why the area is targeted for drinking water protection. For guidance on how to make your required map, please review the document Discover Groundwater Information using the Watershed Health Assessment Framework Tool found on the Apply for BWSR Grants webpage https://bwsr.state.mn.us/apply. For additional information and resources regarding your specific project area please go to https://bwsr.state.mn.us/groundwater-protection.

Question 3. (10 points): How does this proposal fit with complementary work that you and your partners are implementing to achieve the goal(s) for the priority drinking water source(s) of concern? Describe the comprehensive management approach to this drinking water source(s) with examples such as: other financial assistance or incentive programs, easements, regulatory enforcement, or community engagement activities that are directly or indirectly related to this proposal.

Project Impact

Question 4. (10 points):

Question 4. A) Describe the supporting information for the contaminant(s) subject to this application (such as nitrate clinic, MDA Township Testing Program, Ambient Water Quality Monitoring, TMDL, GRAPS or WRAPS) and its results. If there is trend data and analysis, please describe that information here as well.

B) What is the drinking water standard (via Maximum Contaminant Level, Health Risk Limit, or Health Based Value) for the contaminant(s) that is the subject of this application? If no drinking water standard has been set, describe the health risks associated with the drinking water contaminant.

Question 5. (17 points): (A) Indicate the measurable outputs such as acres of protected land, quantity of potential contaminant sources removed or managed, changes in land use, employing multiple strategies or practices for drinking water protection, etc. (B) Demonstrate the impact that this project will have on the drinking water source. Where applicable, identify the progress toward the plan(s) goal that is achieved for the drinking water source after this project is completed. (C) Why is this the most cost-effective project compared to alternatives? Discuss why alternative practices were not selected.

Question 6. (3 points): If the project will have secondary benefits, specifically describe, (quantify if possible) those benefits. Examples: hydrologic benefits, improved water quality for nearby private wells, enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species, climate resiliency, enhancement of pollinator populations, or protection of rare and/or native species.

Project Readiness

Question 7. (8 points): What steps have been taken or do you expect to take to ensure that project implementation can begin soon after the grant award? Describe general environmental review and permitting needs required by the project (list if needed). Also, describe any discussions with landowners, status of agreements/contracts, contingency plans, and other elements essential to project implementation.

Question 8. (2 points): What activities, if any proposed, will accompany your project(s) that will communicate the need, benefits, and long-term impacts to your local community? This should go above and beyond the standard newsletters, signs and press releases.
Map: To be eligible each application to the Drinking Water Projects and Practices Grant Program must include a map as described in the RFP. Have you attached your map?
The Constitutional Amendment requires that Amendment funding must not substitute traditional state funding. Briefly describe how this project will provide water quality benefits to the State of Minnesota without substituting existing funding.