

Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program: **Guidance Document**

Please note that this document will be updated on a regular basis, please check back to be sure you have the most up-to-date version as noted by the date in the header.

General

Who can apply for an Ecosystem Restoration Grant?

Vermont municipalities, regional organizations, non-profit associations, citizen groups, and state agencies are eligible to submit an application for Ecosystem Restoration Grants. Individuals, for-profit entities, and federal agencies are not eligible to receive funds directly, but may be a specified partner to collaborate in a proposed project.

An eligible applicant can apply for funds for a project on property owned by a non-eligible individual or for-profit agency, but the funds can only be used for the practice and cannot support the individual or for-profit business.

What projects are eligible for Ecosystem Restoration Grant funding?

Ecosystem Restoration Grants are supported by State of Vermont capital construction funds and, new for 2016, the Clean Water Fund. For capital funds, all projects must be eligible construction projects that target nonpoint sources of pollution that cause or contribute to the degradation of the State's surface waters (rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and wetlands). Capital-eligible projects can have only a minor, if any, emphasis on education and outreach, monitoring, and long-term maintenance. The Clean Water Fund provides additional state funds in addition to current allocation levels to complement, enhance and leverage existing resources. The use of Clean Water Fund dollars is to maximize opportunities for the restoration and protection of Vermont's waterways by prioritizing and targeting resources, allowing DEC to fund projects that are not capital eligible, such as outreach and education.

What are the priorities for the Ecosystem Restoration Grant funding?

For this fiscal year, the priority will be on implementation projects, though planning and design applications are still encouraged, especially if they move projects toward implementation.

Priority is also given to projects that have been identified in Tactical Basin Plans or other state-sanctioned plans.

Additional points will be given to applications that:

- provide match,
- projects that are the result of prior planning and design grants,
- projects that provide a stewardship commitment
- projects that incorporated green stormwater infrastructure

Certain types of projects including improvements to stream crossings, hard stabilization of streambanks and shorelands, land protection, and projects with alternative funding sources are still eligible but are considered a low priority for these funds.

How do I know what qualifies as a “green stormwater infrastructure” method?

Applicants are encouraged to review the [Proposed 2017 Vermont Stormwater Management Manual Rule for](#) examples as listed under the Tier 1 section, p. 2-8. This is not a complete list of green stormwater practices and others may be considered in an application.

What if my project is not mentioned specifically in a Tactical Basin Plan? Is it still eligible for funding?

Geographically explicit projects that are not specifically referenced in a Tactical Basin Plan are still eligible for an Ecosystem Restoration Grant. DEC encourages applicants to also look to other *State-sanctioned plans* for additional projects including River Corridor Plans or Stormwater Master Plans. Be sure to consult with the DEC Watershed Coordinator in your area to help in the assessment of your project’s eligibility and document the water quality problem and pollution source in your proposal.

Are there any priorities for new Clean Water Fund dollars?

There are several unranked priorities for Clean Water Fund dollars. The priorities and their description are provided in the table below.

Priority	Description
A. Sources of water pollution in impaired waters.	Restores surface water impairment through grants, contracts or loans, targeting sources of pollution that are contributing to the water quality impairment. Impaired waters (Part A, B and D) can be found at this web site: http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/map/assessment
B. Significant sources of water pollution.	Promotes cost effectiveness by targeting sources of pollution that are significant contributors to water quality degradation.
C. Riparian buffer restoration.	Purchases permanent conservation easements on lands adjacent to waterways (river corridors, wetlands, riparian areas) and establish minimum of 50 foot wide buffers with native vegetation.
D. Compliance with road permit.	Supports road-related stormwater runoff and erosion control practices that assist municipalities and VTrans in achieving compliance with State road general permit requirements.
E. Education, outreach.	Provides technical and educational support to municipal officials and road crews, farmers, loggers, homeowners and others about sources of water pollution, cost-effective solutions to mitigate impacts and implementation support.
F. Innovative technologies.	Supports technologies that enhance BMP implementation to reduce water pollution from farms, municipalities’ developed lands, logging areas and other sources.
G. Land acquisition.	Purchases land in order to take land out of practice when water quality remediation is not achievable.
H. Municipal assistance.	Aids municipalities in understanding critical sources of water pollution, identifying and implementing priority water pollution controls.
I. Geographic equity.	Adds to the set of priorities some consideration of location in the distribution of funds to support regional equity.

How do I find a copy of the Tactical Basin Plan for my area?

Visit the Tactical Basin Planning website and select your basin from the list:
(<http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/map/basin-planning>).

How do I find out who the DEC Watershed Coordinator is for my area?

Watershed Coordinators for each basin can be found on the Basin Planning website:
(<http://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wsm/mapp/docs/TBP%20Contacts%20Map.pdf>).

Is there a limit in the size of a grant request?

The project budget cap for individual applications is \$400,000. There is no cap on the partnership grants.

Has DEC pre-determined the amount of funds allocated to any one category in the RFP?

No, DEC has no set allocations for funding categories. Awards will be based on the water quality improvement value of the application and other criteria as indicated below.

Can an organization or municipality submit more than one grant applications? Can an organization combine two or more projects under one grant application?

An eligible applicant may submit up to three proposals. An application should include only one project. An application may include more than one project if:

- the projects are all in the same sub-watershed region. A sub-watershed is not formally defined and is left to the discretion of the applicant, but is expected to be of a small size (e.g. HUC 12 or smaller)
- the projects are of a similar project type (e.g. three riparian plantings or three stormwater master plans.) An exception to this is when two different project types are required to complete the primary project – e.g. the removal of a berm is required as part of river easement.

An organization or municipality may be a sub-applicant/partner/subcontractor in other proposals. This three-application limit does not apply to easement proposals because of the small number of organizations statewide involved in the development of easements.

Can you apply for an Ecosystem Restoration Grant if you are in an MS4 community?

Yes, all municipalities in the state, including Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) municipalities, are eligible to apply for Ecosystem Restoration Grant funds for nonpoint source pollution abatement projects. Stormwater management projects within the boundaries of an MS4 will be *required* to provide 50 percent of municipal-provided funding.

Applications for projects submitted by MS4 communities must provide match. What about a project within an MS4 that is submitted by another organization? What if the project is in a town that is partially in an MS4 community?

All projects within MS4 communities must provide 50% match. The delineation of an MS4 community is considered at this time to be the delineation on the [ANR Atlas](#). There may be future changes as DEC permit programs change next year.

Can an application request funds for projects on private roads?

Yes, DEC plans to have \$30,000 of funding available to support erosion/stormwater control projects on high priority private roads, however these applications will be considered a low priority.

Can an application request funds for projects that are required in state permits?

Yes with the exception of outreach funds to address the outreach requirements of MS4s.

Can a for-profit organization receive Ecosystem Restoration Grant funds?

Only Vermont municipalities, regional organizations, non-profit associations, citizen groups, and state agencies are eligible to submit an application for the Ecosystem Restoration Grants.

For-profit entities are not eligible to apply for funds but may act as a partner or subcontractor under an awarded grant.

If a project is being done on private land or on the property of a private business, can the landowner or business owner act as a subcontractor?

A landowner or the business owner can act as a subcontractor for a project on his/her property, however, applicants are encouraged to consider this as match for a grant and not an expense in the budget. Applications where *for-profit entities* will act as subcontractors will be lower priority.

Cover Page Questions

What are some examples for projects in each of the project categories?

Project Scoping could include river corridor planning, stormwater master planning, and stormwater mapping. Applicants may find that scoping projects are more appropriate for the Outreach and Education Partnership Proposal category. Any project scoping application must specifically indicate the area for scoping and the targeted audience (e.g. working with 10 landowners to develop riparian planting projects on this reach of a specific river).

Project Planning, Feasibility or Design may involve any preliminary tasks such as design work or feasibility analysis that is necessary prior to implementation.

Implementation involves construction, installation, application, or implementation of a project. Applications in this category must identify specific projects. Applications that request funds to plant trees on ten unidentified locations, for example, without commitments and specific locations will not be funded. Implementation grants must include a landowner commitment at the time of application.

Easements include easement scoping or implementation that accomplishes permanent protection where no existing protection or regulations exist.

What box should I check in #4 if my project crosses multiple categories (e.g. design and implementation)?

Most applications should only fit one category (design or implementation). A combination of design and implementation should only be submitted when the design is already completed to a

level where a firm budget and landowner commitments are included in the application. For example, a project that is at 60% design can go to 100% design and implementation in the same application. In that case, check the box for the higher category, in this case, implementation.

What if my project doesn't fit one of the project types listed?

Most applications should fit one of these project types. If yours does not, please check the most applicable one and explain the variation in your project scope.

Funding Categories

General Questions

Are funds available for lake shoreland restoration projects?

Yes. For all Lake Shoreland Restoration project proposals, the review process will favor those that specify use of contractors that have the [natural shoreline erosion control certification](#). For more information about the training program or for a list of certified contractors in your area, please contact Amy Picotte (802.490.6128 or amy.picotte@vermont.gov).

Are streambank stabilization projects considered eligible?

Projects that involve 1) stabilization of the banks of a stream at or near equilibrium with an emphasis on bio-engineering or 2) stabilization of stream banks resulting in a net water quality benefit are considered eligible for funding. For example, a stream that has departed from equilibrium because of a road encroachment and the road embankment needs to be stabilized due to stream erosion. If the project can include sufficient floodplain restoration and woody riparian vegetation (adding to channel resistance) to off-set the increased stream power caused by the road encroachment there would be a lowering of the over-all flood heights and velocities—and therefore an overall water quality benefit.

Note: riprap and armored streambank stabilization is not eligible for funding. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss projects with the local river scientist prior to submission. River scientists will be reviewing all proposals.

Are agricultural implementation projects considered eligible?

These projects will only be considered if other sources of funds are not available. Applicants must consider USDA NRCS and VT Agency of Agriculture funds prior to submission to the Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program. Applicants are encouraged to review the recently issued RFP from the Agency of Agriculture <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/node/1364>.

Can my project include monitoring, education and outreach, and long-term maintenance?

Yes. However, these elements must be clearly explained in the narrative of project scope and the budget components of the overall project and must be a minor part of the application.

One of the eligibility requirements is to provide a Stewardship Commitment to assure that the project will meet its functional life. Why does the proposal need to include a Stewardship Commitment?

An Ecosystem Restoration Grant-funded project should be planned, constructed, inspected and maintained based on its expected design life. A stewardship commitment is intended to provide assurances the project will continue to function over its design life.

What would be a Stewardship Commitment look like for a buffer planting project?

The Commitment should include an agreement between the Grantee and landowner(s) not to disturb or cut down the newly planted vegetation for an extended period of time. Unless the application can provide a suitable justification for something less, DEC expects stewardship commitments to be at least 10 years. Removal of plant protection devices, if installed at the time of planting, would be allowed when such devices are no longer deemed necessary.

What would be a Stewardship Commitment look like for a scoping or design project?

The Commitment should include how the project will be integrated into Tactical Basin Plans, and how it will lead to targeted implementation of priority projects.

The RFP indicates that bridge and culvert assessments are not a high priority in this grant round. What if they are included in a Phase 2 river corridor assessment that is supported by the Watershed Coordinators?

The implementation of stream crossing replacement projects are considered lower priority. River geomorphic assessments and corridor planning projects that include bridge and culvert assessment are considered priority projects.

Do I need to have landowner permission in order to submit a proposal?

DEC needs some demonstration that there is local support for the project, such as a letter to show a support from the municipality, landowner(s), and/or other relevant partner. A design project will be greatly strengthened by a letter of support from the landowner (individual or town). A project implementation proposal must have landowner commitment.

Work Crew Partnership Grants

What activities will be funded in this category?

The purpose of this category is to support work crews that can assist in project implementation. Applicants in this category should submit a budget that includes the cost of training and coordinating a work crew that will be available to implement projects, either statewide or in a region of the state. The application *only* covers the cost of the crew and its administration and not implementation costs. The applicant is responsible for working with partners to find and develop projects, however the application does not have to request funds for any specific projects in this application. A successful applicant will be required to coordinate with partners (towns, watershed organizations, state agencies) to plan and implement high priority projects (e.g. top projects from complete road inventories, Stormwater master plans, river corridor plans). Projects will be approved by DEC to ensure high priority implementation.

Applicants in this category should address the following points in the grant application:

- Relationship to Tactical Basin Planning – how the applicant intends to use basin plans in identifying potential projects

- **Project Scope** – the applicant should describe their proposal including their experience and capacity to train and manage a work crew, their experience with and knowledge of the towns and partners in the region of work, their experience with and knowledge of the water quality project opportunities in the region of work (e.g. understanding of town road inventory priorities or river corridor priorities), the expected area of coverage, the number of individuals who will be working and the length of time available to conduct work.
- **Collaboration and support** – any partners in the application and any letters that support the applicants ability to successfully implement this project.
- **Measurable outcomes and milestones**– the applicant should choose the best project type for the application. For example, if the applicant will provide a crew that intends to implement riparian buffer restoration and roads, these project types and measures should be used. DEC is aware that quantitative values will be estimated and will be variable based on the projects implemented. Refer to the Performance Standards document for examples of milestones.

Note these work crews will only be doing projects in these project types:

- green stormwater infrastructure stormwater treatment practices
- rural and urban road projects
- riparian buffer restoration

Can an applicant for an Ecosystem Restoration Grant ask to use these work crews?

No. If an applicant is applying for implementation of a project, the application must include the plan for implementation of the project (either by doing the work themselves, hiring a crew, or some other source). No applicant should expect to receive work crew services. Work crews will be implementing projects *in addition to* other Ecosystem Restoration Grant applications.

Since the work crew project types may include town work, can a town road crew apply for a work crew partnership grant?

No, this category is to fund a work crew that will be available to conduct all types of project types on a large geographic basis.

How will applications in this category be prioritized?

Priority will be given to applications that:

- cover larger geographic areas
- demonstrate a capacity to hire, train and oversee work crews capable of completing all project types required
- demonstrate a knowledge of partners and an ability to coordinate partners to identify high priority projects for implementation.

What if some of the projects to be done by the work crew require heavy equipment?

It will be the responsibility of the administrator of the work crew to determine how a project will be implemented, including, if necessary, collaborating with a town road crew to provide assistance in project implementation.

Collaborative Project Partnership Proposal

What are examples of projects for this category?

This category is for projects that cross project types (riparian plantings, stormwater treatment) but not project category (scoping and design and implementation) due to the challenge of fairly ranking projects between categories. An exception to this is when two different project types are required to complete the primary project – e.g. the removal of a berm is required as part of river easement. In that case, the project would include both implementation and river corridor easement and this will be allowed.

An example application would be one that focuses on a specific river segment and addresses multiple water quality improvement needs, such as two riparian plantings, a town Stormwater project and a culvert stabilization project. All projects must be capital funded.

Can a Collaborative Project Partnership Proposal contain any funds for education or outreach?

An application may contain some funds for outreach but it must be a small part of the budget and must directly relate to the project implementation. For example, a meeting with the landowners who are involved in the project would be applicable for funding. A workshop to the general public about the importance of tree plantings for water quality would not be applicable.

What about partners in the partnership proposals who will act as subcontractors? Are we required to bid out this work?

Partners in a Partnership Proposal will act in the capacity of a subcontractor but do not need to follow subcontracting policies unless your organization requires it. The entity that applies for and receives the award for a grant will have a contractual agreement with each participating partner to perform work and receive payment but this contract does not need to be bid out unless the administrative entity itself requires that.

Outreach and Assistance Partnership Proposal

What are examples of projects for this category?

This category is also for projects that cross project types (riparian plantings, Stormwater treatment). Many scoping efforts will be appropriate for this proposal category. This category is not likely to include implementation projects.

An example application might be one that conducts outreach to all the landowners on one priority area of a river where increased buffers are needed, with the goal of securing future implementation projects. All projects in this proposal must be designed to lead towards future implementation. Educational presentations to the general public would not be applicable but a workshop or meeting for the landowners who live in this area would be applicable.

Can an MS4 use funds in this category to meet their permit requirements?

Ecosystem Restoration funds cannot be used to cover the outreach requirements of MS4 permits.

Could the Collaborative Projects or Outreach and Assistance Partnership grants be partially funded?

Yes, if DEC determines that any projects within a multi-project proposal are not high priority, DEC reserves the right to offer partial funding.

Must the partnership grants include multiple project types (stormwater and trees and rivers)?

No, partnership proposal can focus only on one project type or multiple project types. This will not affect scoring of the application.

Will a partnership grant score higher than a single application?

No, choose the option that best fits your project. If you have one or two partners and are doing single project types (buffer plantings) in the same area, you may choose to submit a single application. If you have more than two partners and multiple project types, you should apply under the partnership grant opportunity.

Equipment Proposals

What types of equipment are eligible for Ecosystem Restoration Grant funds?

Equipment that enhances local Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation and maintenance, such as hydro-seeders or high efficiency vacuum street sweepers and vacuum (vactor) trucks or trailers are eligible for grant funds. Larger municipalities (>6,000 persons) will be considered for individual ownership. Smaller municipalities will be considered provided that the applicant involves a cooperative of at least four municipalities and equipment-sharing arrangements to improve utilization rates. All proposals for equipment will need to have in place acceptable: (1) a long term equipment maintenance plan, and (2) and a solid waste (sediment) disposal plan.

Can you apply for an Ecosystem Restoration Grant if the project is within a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) district?

Yes. A proposed stormwater management project within a CSO district is eligible for Ecosystem Restoration Grant funding, if the following two conditions are met:

- (1) project uses the principles of low impact development (LID), and its primary focus is to implement green stormwater infrastructure practices; and,
- (2) budget for the project includes a minimum of 25 percent local match (in-kind contributions, donations, or other resources.)

Application Questions

Relationship to Tactical Basin Planning

How do I know if my project is a high priority for funding?

Applicants must discuss their projects with the appropriate basin planner who can advise on the priority of the project. Applicants should also be able to articulate the value of the project in the project scope section of the application.

Project Scope/Collaboration and Support

Can I include supporting information related to the value of my project and the water quality concern my project addresses?

Yes, you can attach multiple documents to the application, for example a letter of support from the town indicating the value of the project, water quality monitoring data that supports the water quality issue at the location of your project.

While letters of support are not required (except letters of commitment from landowners in implementation applications), they are strongly encouraged.

What is the difference between a letter of support and a letter of commitment?

A letter of support indicates that the writer supports the project and encourages DEC to fund it (e.g. If a watershed organization is doing a Stormwater project, they might get a letter of support from the town).

A letter of commitment is from the specific landowner allowing the project to occur. (The landowner for a riparian planting project must submit a letter of commitment that he/she is allowing this project to take place).

How do I know what you want to see as criteria for funding?

Please use the link to the Performance Standards guidance document for further information. In the Performance Standards tab, you will see a column for criteria for funding. Applicants are strongly encouraged to address the criteria where listed for your particular project. For example, applications for riparian buffer plantings of 10' will not be considered for funding.

How are projects scored for funding?

Details about the review process and scoring criteria are below. However please note that each project is reviewed by the local DEC watershed coordinator, a technical expert (depending on the project type, e.g. River Management, Lakes) and by a review team. Applicants are *strongly* encouraged to discuss projects with their local DEC technical scientists prior to submission.

Measureable outcomes/milestones

How do I choose the right performance measures for my project?

Please use the link to the Performance Standards guidance document. In that document, the tab for Performance Reporting provides a drop down menu of project types. When you choose your application project type (e.g. riparian planting – implementation), you are given a list of required performance measures (in this case, acres of buffer and linear feet of buffer). You are required to use these to answer the first part of Question 4 in the grant application and to provide the appropriate quantification (# of acres and # of linear feet). If there is only one required measure, you can add a second that appears appropriate for your project or leave it blank.

If you do not know the exact quantification, provide an estimate.

If your exact project type is not listed in the drop down, please provide appropriate measures and quantifications or choose the project that most closely aligns to your project.

Why do you require such detailed and laborious tracking of performance measures?

As part of our mandatory requirements to the EPA and to the State, we must track our progress in water quality improvement with specific performance measures. We also are committed to

providing as detailed and transparent a process for the taxpayers of Vermont to know how their tax dollars are spent and the value for this expenditure.

How do I know what to use for milestones?

The RFP includes require milestones (press release, photos, outreach forms, interim report and final report. These must be listed in the table of milestones.

In addition, other example milestones are listed in the Performance Standards document. The tab for Performance Standards lists example milestones and deliverables. The Example Milestones Table shows an example table.

How do I fill out a milestones table for a partnership grant?

For partnership grants that include multiple projects, a milestone table must include all required milestones plus milestones for each project (e.g planting plan, signed stewardship agreement for riparian plantings, plus request for proposals developed, contractor selected, 30% design complete for Stormwater construction projects). Please keep project-related milestones together in the table. The Example Milestones Table shows an example table.

Project readiness

What if my project can't start in six months because the contract is signed in the middle of winter?

DEC understands that there may be limitations to project initiation due to time of year. However, parts of the project that can start sooner should be undertaken.

Budget

How do I calculate project match?

Project match is calculated by dividing the total matching funds by the total project costs (requested grant funds plus the matching funds). For example: If you have a project that costs \$15,000 and are requesting \$10,000 of grant funds while providing \$5,000 in matching funds, your match is 33%.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Total match/total project costs} &= \text{percent match} \\ \$5,000/\$15,000 &= 0.33 = 33\% \end{aligned}$$

What are examples of match? Can time by members of my organization count as match?

Examples of match include direct cash (from other funding sources), in-kind costs (e.g. your time or the time spent by others in your organization that directly relate to this project), organizational costs directly related to the project (e.g. transportation costs).

If the project is being done on private land or land owned by a for-profit business, can the landowner or business owner act as a subcontractor? (e.g to do excavation work on a riparian restoration project or at a

Applications where a private landowner is a subcontractor are allowed.

Applications where the for-profit business that owns the property is listed as a subcontractor will be considered a lower priority.

Can the value of the time spent scoping the project prior to this application count as match?

No. Only match contributed after the contract signing is allowed.

What if I don't know the cost of my project until I put it out for bid? How do I account for those costs in the RFP? What happens if the costs are greater than what we estimated?

DEC strongly encourages project proponents to make every effort to secure best estimates for the proposal's budget. The State will require accurate budgets, based on costs obtained via the organization's procurement procedure before execution of the final grant agreement. An application involving implementation should have an accurate budget since this is also necessary for the required landowner commitment.

Are there any guidelines for costing out a project?

DEC encourages project proponents to work with contractors in securing quotes or bids during the project proposal development process. Below is an evaluation of budgets associated with projects that were funded in prior years. This information may help you gauge expected costs associated with your project idea:

- Riparian buffers: \$2,500 - \$4,500 per acre.
- Stormwater designs: \$10,000 - \$12,000 per design.
- River Corridor Planning/Phase II Stream Geomorphic Assessment: approximately \$2,400 per river mile.

Can the cost associated with implementing the Stewardship Commitment be included in the project's budget?

Yes, as long as the costs associated with the stewardship commitment represent a minor amount of the project's overall cost.

Can the cost of food at workshops be covered by the grant?

No, only expenses directly related to the project can be covered by Ecosystem Restoration grant funds.

After Project award

What additional information will applicants need to submit prior to entering into a grant agreement with the State?

Prior to executing a grant agreement, grant recipients will be required to provide the following documents within 45 days of grant award notification:

1. A copy of its procurement procedures (a model document is available on the State website); and,
2. A certificate of insurance to show that the minimum coverage is in effect. Grant recipients shall name the State of Vermont and its officers and employees as an additional insured:
 - a. Workers Compensation (In accordance with the laws of the State of Vermont);
 - b. General Liability and Property Damage (\$1,000,000 per occurrence);
 - c. Automotive Liability (\$1,000,000 combined single limit).

3. Comply with the Conflict of Interest policy (Section 22 of Attachment C – attached).
4. A completed DEC Risk Assessment Questionnaire (submitted with the application).

DEC reserves the right to rescind grant award if required documents noted above have not been provided within 45 day period.

What is a single audit? Is this the same as an independent audit?

A single audit, also known as an OMB A-133 audit, is the required examination of an organization's financial records if the organization receives more than \$750,000 in Federal funds (grants or contracts) annually. This is not the same as an independent audit.

What if my organization doesn't have an accounting system? Can I still apply for a grant?

Organizations that don't have an accounting system that can track receipt and disbursement of funds for a single agreement or account for 100% of each employee's time, are still eligible to apply for a grant. However, an organization that doesn't have an accounting system or whose accounting system doesn't meet these requirements will be considered high risk. In order to receive a grant through the State, an organization will be subject to close monitoring and additional requirements at the time of the grant award. DEC recommends that such organizations work to upgrade their accounting systems and processes to meet these requirements, or partner with an organization that does meet these standards.

Does the State require funds to be withheld until the final deliverable is completed?

The final deliverable must be at least 5% of the total award amount. Please develop your Table of Performance Measures accordingly.

When will grantees hear if their proposals will be funded?

DEC anticipates announcing this round of FY2017 grant awards by December, 2016, however this is subject to change. Please note that some proposals may be partially funded, wait listed, or could be funded at a later date, depending on the availability of funds.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the RFP or the application?

Persons having questions about this request for proposals or the application can contact Marli Rupe with the CWIP by dialing 802-490-6171 or by email at marli.rupe@vermont.gov

Application Review Process and Scoring Criteria

The evaluation and ranking of the Ecosystem Restoration grant applications are based on the seven criteria listed in Section C of the application. The Grant Review Committee will evaluate the applications using the scoring criteria outlined below.

Each Grant Review Committee member will evaluate and score each grant application. The proposal’s final evaluation is an averaging of those scores. A standard deviation of the will also be calculated for each application. The Grant Review Committee will meet to discuss the scoring, project proposals with significant standard deviation, and make final award determinations. The Grant Review Committee’s goal is to fund those project proposals that score a minimum of 60 points, subject to the availability and source of funds.

The scoring criteria for each of the questions are listed below. The points show a minimum amount of points associated with the corresponding category:

1. PROJECT CONSISTENT WITH TACTICAL BASIN PLAN (15 points) (RFP section D.1)

Points	Category
15 [High]	<u>Specified in Tactical Plan</u> : The proposed geographically explicit project is specifically mentioned as a top priority in a Tactical Basin Plan (TBP) or other State-sanctioned plan. Applicant provides detail on where within tactical plan and how project aligns. Basin Planner and Technical Staff agree that the project is high priority.
10 [Medium-High]	An activity or action considered as a high priority in a TBP or other State-sanctioned plan.
5 [Medium]	An activity or action considered as a medium priority.
0	An activity or action considered as a low priority since it has no relation to applicable TBP.

Any projects that fall under the following categories should receive no points for this section, they are still eligible for funding, but should not be scored above zero.

Points	Category
0	<u>Improvements to Stream Crossings</u> : The Vermont stream alteration permit now requires the sizing of structures based on river equilibrium (or natural stability) conditions.
0	<u>Hard Stabilization of Streambanks and Shorelands</u> : An action that seeks to stabilize an eroding streambed or bank using standard structural channelization practices (rather than the non-structural approaches that use native vegetation).

- 0 Land Protection: A project that principally involves land conservation that does not involve a river corridor or stormwater easement.
- 0 Alternative Funding Available: A project that has current access to other State or Federal sources of primary funding.

2. PROJECT SCOPE (10 points) (Section D.2)

Applicant must provide a description of project including; (1) water quality issues/threat being addressed, (2) how the project addresses those issues, and (3) why the work is necessary.

Points Category

- 10 Includes all three elements specified in adequate detail to determine goals of the project.
- 5 Includes the three elements specified, but does not provide enough specificity.
- 0 Does not provide the elements specified.

3. TARGETING TO ACHIEVE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS (10 points) (Section D.3)

Applicant is asked to describe the (a) current conditions and (b) how the project addresses the current conditions and critical pollution sources that are causing impacts to a specific water body

Points Category

- 10 Includes details on current conditions and specific detail on improving water quality by targeting critical pollution sources; describes the necessity of the project, and how it aligns with CWIP's goals.
- 5 Includes basic information on current conditions and some information on water quality, necessity, and CWIPs goals, but does not provide enough specificity; or neglects to address one of the three questions.
- 0 Does not provide the elements specified.

4. STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT (5 points) (Section D.4)

Applicant asked to describe the project's stewardship commitment and the entity that will be responsible for carrying out the agreement.

Points Category

- 5 Includes a detailed description of a stewardship agreement or maintenance contract for the design life of the project and includes reference to the entity that will be carrying out the agreement or contract.
- 2 Describes a stewardship agreement, but without sufficient detail and/or neglects in include the entity responsible for the stewardship agreement.
- 0 Does not provide a stewardship commitment or an adequate commitment.

5. COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT (10 points) (Section D.5)

Applicant Explain the extent to which you have identified and secured local support for the project including commitments from municipalities and landowner(s).

Points Category

- 10 Proposal clearly identifies local support from municipalities and landowners and includes documentation to demonstrate local support.
- 5 Proposal describes and demonstrates some preliminary support for the project.
- 0 Proposal offers no demonstration of local support.

6. MEASURABLE OUTCOMES, PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MILESTONES (20 points) (Section D.6)

Applicant must identify performance measures and complete table of milestones, anticipated task-based performance measures, associated project deliverables, and payment per deliverable. They must include as deliverables: a press release, a final performance report, and stewardship commitment. Applicant must input budget into table provided and provide a narrative explaining the costs listed in the budget. This must include hourly rates and number of hours anticipated for Personnel category.

Points Category

- 20 Performance measures are clear and task-based, include the required deliverables, and reasonable payments. Budget is complete, inclusive of all costs and reasonable given the nature of the project. And Budget Narrative includes sufficient details, describe entire project's costs, and costs are competitive.
- 13 One of the sections (performance measures, budget, or budget narrative) and their components are incomplete or lack sufficient detail for a proper review. However, the other components still allow for a complete understanding and analysis of the costs associated with the project.
- 10 Two of the sections (performance measures, budget, or budget narrative) and their components are incomplete or lack sufficient detail for a proper review. Project costs do not appear to be in line with project scope as detailed in the proposal.
- 0 Performance measures are not tied to clear tasks or tasks are undefined, required deliverables are missing, and/or partial payments are included. Budget and narrative are incomplete, do not encompass the scope of the project, and/or are not in line with expected costs.

7. PROJECT READINESS (5 points) (Section D.7)

Grant recipients not implementing the project promptly or fall behind schedule and cannot complete the project within the specified one or two year timeframe may be at risk of having the grant award reduced or rescinded. Thus, the proposal must specify that the project will be:

(a) implemented soon after the grant is awarded and contract signed, and (b) completed within a one or two year time frame.

Points Category

- 5 Yes; to both
- 0 No to one or both questions about readiness.

8. ITEMIZED BUDGET AND NARRATIVE (10 points) (Section D.8)

Applicant must input budget into table provided and provide a narrative explaining the costs listed in the budget. This must include hourly rates and number of hours anticipated for Personnel category.

Points Category

- 10 Budget is complete, inclusive of all costs and reasonable given the nature of the project. And Budget Narrative includes sufficient details, describe entire project's costs, and costs are competitive.
- 5 Budget or budget narrative is incomplete or lacks sufficient detail for a proper review. However, the other components still allow for a complete understanding and analysis of the costs associated with the project.
- 2 Budget, or budget narrative is incomplete or lacks sufficient detail for a proper review. Project costs do not appear to be in line with project scope as detailed in the proposal.
- 0 Budget and narrative are incomplete, do not encompass the scope of the project, and/or are not in line with expected costs.

9. PROJECT MATCH (10 points) (Section D.9)

Match is the incorporation of additional funding sources, cash donations, in-kind contributions, or other resources that substantially expand the project's scope and environmental benefits. Match is encouraged but not required (exception – MS4 entities). Applicants showing match should also be documented in the previous section (Itemized Budget and Narrative), please compare these sections. Match amount(s) shown in your proposal will become an expectation in a grant agreement.

Points Category

- 10 \geq 50% Match
- 7 25% – 49% Match
- 4 10% – 24% Match
- 2 < 0% - 9% Match
- 0 0% Match

10. PAST PERFORMANCE (5 points) (section D.10)

Past performance on similar projects, if applicable, is a predictor of the likelihood for successful outcomes. DEC asks that applicants describe performance on similar projects within the last five years. Describe whether the project was successful, your history meeting

reporting requirements, and how you documented success. If applicants have no prior experience with grant programs, they need to provide relevant examples of successful project completed on time and within the budget provided. If applicants have received but have not yet completed the terms of a grant or contract, they need to provide assurances that they are compliant with the terms of the grant or contract.

Points Category

- 5 Applicant submitted description of past performance that demonstrated completion of a grant or contract within the time allotted and within budget.
- 0 Applicant's failed to submit description of past performance or description failed to provide assurances that the project will be completed within the fixed timeframe and budget.