

Environmental assistance grant round: climate adaptation

State Fiscal Year 2020

Request for Proposal (RFP)

The RFP assists applicants in applying for and managing state grants. This document describes the State Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) **Environmental Assistance (EA)** grant round, including information on who may apply for funding, the funding priorities, match requirements, activities eligible for funding, and other information that will help applicants plan their project and submit a competitive application. **Applications are due no later than 2:00 p.m. Central Time on Wednesday, March 11, 2020.**

The applicant should check the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) EA Grants Program webpage at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/about-mPCA/environmental-assistance-grants> for the most recent updates on competitive grant rounds, including questions and answers, and addendums.

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A sample grant agreement, grant application form, project workplan, budget, and affidavit of noncollusion can all be found at: [MPCA Environmental Assistance webpage](#).

1. Program overview

The EA Grant Program was established under Minn. Stat. § 115A.0716 and is administered by the MPCA under Minn. R. 9210.0800 to 9210.0845. The purpose of the EA Grant Program is to provide financial assistance for researching, developing, or implementing projects and practices related to all aspects of waste management and prevention, including hazardous substances, toxic pollutants, and problem materials. Additionally, market development and education grants are also allowed under the laws governing these grants. The MPCA seeks to encourage environmentally sustainable practices and approaches to pollution prevention and resource conservation.

The MPCA invites eligible applicants to submit applications to research, develop, and implement strategies for communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change and improve community resilience while achieving positive environmental outcomes. These efforts will prevent or reduce the environmental impacts including waste and pollution caused by warming temperatures and extreme precipitation while protecting public health and well-being. Examples of fundable projects are:

- For cities that have adopted a City Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) ordinance to identify and repair wastewater connections on private property, funding for accelerated inspections for the purpose of reducing flows and bypasses during intense/prolonged rainfall events and sustained high groundwater resulting from wet weather.
- Integrate climate resilience into an asset management/preservation program.
- Conduct authentic engagement on climate adaptation and resilience needs directly with residents within MPCA-identified environmental justice areas of concern, and develop strategies to address these needs.
- Conduct planning and implement projects (e.g., tree inventories, gravel bed nurseries, etc.) that support increased resilience and coverage of tree canopy for the many climate mitigation and resilience benefits that trees provide.
- Research or demonstrate alternative building/infrastructure materials, methods, and designs for applications in Minnesota to address climate related impacts (e.g., flooding, increased frequency of freeze/thaw cycles, urban/extreme heat, etc.).
- Add storage/islanding capability to public renewable energy installations for resilience during grid failure.
- Design/install blue-green infrastructure for the purpose of reducing localized flooding during intense rainfall events.

2. Funding

The MPCA has approximately \$250,000 available for grant awards. Funding for this FY20 EA grant round comes from the Environmental Fund and other sources as appropriated by the state legislature for programs administered by the MPCA. The EA grant round is a competitive application process. The MPCA will select for award those projects that best meet the environmental outcomes outlined in this RFP within funding limitations.

For Inflow and Infiltration (I&I), focused projects, the maximum grant award, per project, will not exceed \$20,000.

There is no minimum or maximum individual grant amount for other fundable projects except as limited by the total amount available.

Match requirements

Local direct and indirect matching support of at least a quarter (25%) of the total project budget is required. The match may be in the form of in-kind services or cash. A reasonable dollar-value must be assigned to all in-kind matches. The match cannot be met with services or funds derived from other grant sources administered by the MPCA.

Payment schedule

The MPCA shall reimburse the Grantee for only those expenditures incurred during the term of this grant. No funds shall be disbursed by the MPCA in the absence of adequate documentation of matching funds as determined by the MPCA. Grant funds shall be disbursed in accordance with the sample grant agreement <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/p-f2-27d-fy20-1.pdf>.

3. Eligible and ineligible applicants

Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants include Minnesota not-for-profit organizations, institutions, political subdivisions of the state, and tribal governments (Minn. R. 9210.0810, subp. 2.B). Multi-organizational collaboration is encouraged.

Ineligible applicants

- Per Minn. R. 9210.0805, subp. 9, the definition of eligible persons specifically excludes the MPCA and State employees
- Any individual and businesses (for-profit)
- Applicants debarred by state, its departments, commissions, agencies, or political subdivisions

4. Eligible and ineligible projects

Eligible projects are those that address the need identified in this RFP.

Ineligible projects

- Projects seeking funding for general operating expenses
- Projects for environmental compliance remediation
- Projects limited to individual benefit or do not have a broad community impact
- Projects that do not meet the eligibility specifications identified in this RFP

Priority projects

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant making. [The Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

Projects demonstrating innovation and those benefitting underserved communities and areas of concern for environmental justice will be rated higher. The MPCA considers communities with higher concentrations of low-income residents and people of color, including tribal communities, to be areas of concern for environmental justice. MPCA's criteria and interactive mapping tool are [here](#). Applicants of relevant projects are asked to evaluate and describe how the proposed project activities benefit these areas.

5. Eligible and ineligible costs

Eligible costs

Eligible grant costs are limited to the costs of:

- Researching, developing, or implementing environmental assistance projects or practices in Minnesota
- Equipment costs may be eligible on a case-by-case basis
- Unless specified as ineligible, a determination of eligible costs will be dependent on the proposed project

Ineligible costs

Ineligible costs do not count toward the required matching funds percentage unless stated otherwise:

- The cost of preparing the grant application.
- The cost of activities initiated and costs incurred prior to execution of a grant agreement.
- The cost of general operating support such as routine overhead expenses not related to the proposed project.
- The cost of environmental compliance remediation.
- The purchase of real property (land, real estate, and buildings), or easements. However, if not incurred prior to execution of a grant agreement, such costs may count toward the required match percentage.
- The cost of equipment, except as determined on a case-by-case basis. However, if not incurred prior to execution of a grant agreement, such costs may count toward the required percentage match.
- The cost of obtaining any required permits from the MPCA. However, if not incurred prior to execution of a grant agreement, such costs may count toward the required percentage match.
- The cost of any of the following: fundraising; lobbying, lobbyists, and political contributions; entertainment, gifts; and bad debt, late payment fees and finance charges.

6. Application review process

Applicants are encouraged to score their own application using the evaluation score-sheet (Exhibit A) before submitting their application. Formal review of applications will be conducted by a team of MPCA staff and community-based grant reviewers.

Notification

The MPCA anticipates notifying applicants of award status within 60 days of closing of the application period.

Grant award offer

A grant award offer will be made based on MPCA's review of the applications for eligibility and availability of funding. Applicant must accept the award offer and be willing to finalize project workplan and budget, become a registered vendor in the State's electronic procurement system [SWIFT](#) (Statewide Integrated Financial Tools), and electronically sign a grant agreement.

Award offer will be contingent on the applicant's attainment of an MPCA approved project workplan and budget within 60 calendar days of an award offer. For purposes of the workplan and budget, a project start date of July 10, 2020 shall be assumed.

In addition to the ability to partially award projects, the MPCA reserves the right to withdraw the award offer or to refrain from awarding a grant in the event that program funding is made unavailable or none of the proposed projects meet the requirements of the grant. If the MPCA concludes that no project has sufficient potential to implement the desired environmental outcome in Minnesota, the MPCA may or may not reinstate the RFP process. In the event that additional funding is made available, the MPCA reserves the right to award additional grant funds to eligible applicants who were not originally funded.

Execution of grant agreement

The estimated start date of the project is July 10, 2020 approximately 60 calendar days from the date of an award offer, or the date the state obtains all required signatures, whichever is later. No grant disbursements will occur prior to MPCA execution of the required grant agreement. If a grant agreement is not completed within a reasonable timeframe due to insufficient action by the awarded applicant, the MPCA reserves the right to withdraw the award offer. **The end date of the grant agreement will be no later than June 30, 2023.**

7. Grantee responsibilities

Prior to execution of a grant agreement, the applicant will be required to provide documentation of secured matching funds, be a registered vendor in [SWIFT](#) and, if governed by a Board, a resolution committing to the project and authorizing signature for acceptance/execution of the grant agreement.

Grant agreement

Each awardee must formally enter into a grant agreement. The agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation of the project. Once the agreement is signed, the recipient is expected to read and comply with all conditions of the agreement.

A sample State of Minnesota Grant Agreement can be found on the [MPCA Environmental Assistance webpage](#) for your reference. Much of the language reflected in the agreement is required by statute.

Reporting requirements

Reporting requirements are outlined in the sample grant agreement, and will be in accordance with applicant's approved workplan and budget.

Public data

Applications are private or nonpublic until opened. Once the applications are opened, the name and address of the applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in an application is private or nonpublic data until all agreements are fully executed. After MPCA has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the applications is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in Minn. Stat. § 13.37. A statement by a grantee that the application is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the application (Minn. Stat. § 13.599, subd. 3).

Conflict of interest

We will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minn. Stat. § 16B.98](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties.
- A grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

Grant monitoring

[Minn. Stat. § 16B.97](#) and [Policy on Grant Monitoring](#) require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants of \$50,000 and higher.
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants of \$250,000 and higher.

- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee’s expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants of \$50,000 and higher. For this purpose, the grantee must make expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents available upon request by the State.

The monitoring schedule will be determined after grant execution.

Grantee bidding requirements

Grantees that are non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) must follow:

Any grant-funded services and/or materials that are expected to cost:

- \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process
- Between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three verbal quotes or bids
- Between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor

For grant-funded projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, prevailing wage rules apply per; [Minn. Stat. §§ 177.41](#) through [177.44](#). The bid request must state the project is subject to *prevailing wage*. These rules require that the wages of laborers and workers should be comparable to wages paid for similar work in the community as a whole. A prevailing wage form should accompany these bid submittals.

The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:

- [State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#).
- Metropolitan Council’s Targeted Vendor list: [Minnesota Unified Certification Program](#).
- Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification Program](#).

The grantee must maintain:

- Written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- Support documentation of the purchasing and/or bidding process utilized to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.

The grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in Minnesota:

<http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/debarredreport.asp>.

Grantees that are municipalities must follow:

- The contracting and bidding requirements in the Uniform Municipal Contracting Law as defined in Minn. Stat. § 471.345.
- The requirements of prevailing wage for grant-funded projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, per [Minn. Stat. §§ 177.41](#) to [177.44](#). The bid request must state the project is subject to *prevailing wage*. These rules require that the wages of laborers and workers should be comparable to wages paid for similar work in the community as a whole. A prevailing wage form should accompany these bid submittals.

The grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in Minnesota:

<http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/debarredreport.asp>

Audits

Per [Minn. Stat. § 16B.98](#) subd. 8, the grantee’s books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement

will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Affirmative action and non-discrimination requirements for all grantees

- A. The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. [Minn. Stat. § 363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.
- B. The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minn. R. [5000.3500](#)
- C. The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Voter registration requirement

The grantee will comply with [Minn. Stat. § 201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

8. Application instructions

In completing the application, please ensure all sections are addressed and the application is submitted before the deadline. Pay close attention to any specific information that is requested and demonstrate connections to project eligibility. Additional pages may be submitted as supporting documentation.

A complete application will consist of the following documents:

- Application form (Word format is preferred)
- Project workplan (Word format is preferred)
- Budget (Excel format is preferred)
- Affidavit of noncollusion

9. Application submission instructions

Email applications to grants-loans.pca@state.mn.us with the subject line: EA application.

Applications must be received electronically by the MPCA no later than **2:00 p.m. Central Time on Wednesday, March 11, 2020**. The email properties header will reflect the date and time submissions are received. Application submittals received after the deadline will not be eligible for consideration.

The MPCA is not responsible for any errors or delays caused by technology-related issues, even if they are caused by the MPCA.

Applications submitted via any other method, including but not limited to fax, mail, in-person deliveries, will not be accepted. The only documents accepted as scans, or in portable document file (PDF) format are supporting and signature documents, such as board resolutions, letters of support, and letters of secured matching funds.

10. Application questions

The MPCA is obligated to be transparent in all aspects surrounding grant work. To meet this obligation, all questions must be submitted in the same manner, and answers are only provided via the MPCA Environmental Assistance webpage. It is the applicant's responsibility to check the MPCA website for the most recent updates on a FAQ sheet, including questions and answers.

Applicants who have any questions regarding this RFP must submit questions to grants-loans.pca@state.mn.us, subject line: "EA Question", no later than **4:00 p.m. Central Time on March 2, 2020**. Answers to questions will be posted frequently on the MPCA Environmental Assistance webpage.

MPCA personnel are not authorized to discuss this RFP with applicants, and contact regarding this RFP with any MPCA personnel may result in disqualification.

Exhibit A: Application evaluation score sheet

Evaluation factors

A 100-point scale will be used to evaluate eligible applications. Scores will be used to develop final recommendations. **Applicants are encouraged to score their own application using the evaluation score-sheet before submitting their application.** This step is not required, but may help ensure applicants address the criteria evaluators will use to score applications.

Applications will be evaluated and ranked according to the following criteria:

1. Meets an environmental need with project impact/outcomes that will advance climate adaptation and community resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated environmental outcomes • Anticipated community resilience outcomes 	35
2. Project feasibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and completeness of application • Financially realistic/cost effective/sustainable • Qualifications and, if applicable, past performance, of the applicant and/or individuals who will perform the work described in the application • Probability of project success 	35
3. Use of innovative strategies, technologies, methods, or techniques	10
4. Sharing of results with other persons or organizations in Minnesota	5
5. Project serves areas of concern for environmental justice (communities with higher concentrations of low-income residents and/or people of color, including tribal communities)	15
Total	100