

Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program | Frequently Asked Questions (2018)

PROGRAMMATIC

What's the focus for this program?

The focus for the HWS Grant Program is WATERSHED PROTECTION -- how the LAND in the watershed can be protected from deteriorating and impacting watershed function. This program is more about the land in the watershed rather than a strict a focus on water quality. Water quality benefits from land cover which supports natural processes while also providing adequate species habitat. For example, a project that improves water quality but that does not protect the land in the watershed is not likely to be competitive.

Are restoration/management projects eligible?

The primary focus of the HWC Grant program is protection of land within the watershed. If a restoration or management project may be clearly linked to accelerating protection of land and watershed function, then conceptually it would be eligible. Restoration projects may also be considered if they are smaller components of catalytic or innovation projects with clear, scalable applications that lead directly to protection of land and watershed function.

So this is kind-of an EPA Section 319 program?

No—this project is distinct from Section 319 funding. The HWC focus is landscape protection—working to prevent deterioration of land in the watershed. Nonpoint sources of pollution may be addressed through landscape protection, but a strict focus on nonpoint sources of pollution may not capture this program's focus on landscape protection.

How do I know if I have a healthy watershed?

It is up to applicants to present their case to the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program review committee that their watershed is healthy. There are many sources of information that can be used to make this case. Information from a comparative watershed assessment or plan from a government agency or not-for-profit may be helpful for this purpose. Watersheds may contain a variety of human land uses, but still be in relatively good condition. A healthy watershed may include natural, semi-natural, and well-managed lands, each of which could be worthy of protection.

What if my area is on the 303d list? Can our project still qualify?

Maybe. Your project would not be automatically disqualified. We want to understand the whole picture of your watershed and recognize that in some cases an impairment that adversely affects water quality may be limited to just one portion of the watershed and may not reflect the overall health of the land in the watershed. However, you will need to demonstrate that there is protection potential for watershed lands that are in relatively good condition. If your needs are primarily restoration, other sources of funding may be more appropriate.

Does my watershed have to be forested?

No! Healthy watershed lands of all land cover types are eligible.

What forms of protection or sustainable forestry practice are acceptable as watershed protection?

Protection should be systemic, at least long-term, and preferably in perpetuity. Publicly protected forest lands or forest conservation easements are preferred forms. However, we recognize this may not be possible or desirable, in which case, forest certification, which requires sustainable forest practices that protect watershed health, may also be used as a protection tool. There may be other approaches that are not addressed here; we welcome your innovative approaches.

Are urban projects appropriate for consideration?

The HWC Grant Program seeks large-scale watershed protection. Given the small scale of many urban projects, they are unlikely to be competitive. An urban project that fits the “Advancing the State of Practice” category might be appropriate, if there were clear ways to scale and broadly disseminate the technique.

How does the program compare to EPA’s Healthy Watersheds Initiative?

In the past, the EPA Healthy Watersheds Initiative provided financial support for detailed watershed assessments developed at statewide or larger watershed scales. While assessments are still considered an important success factor for a sustainable watershed protection program and can be funded, the new Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program asks potential grantees to show how their assessment will be used to achieve watershed protection.

Are Green Infrastructure projects suitable approaches for watershed protection?

The program supports and encourages green infrastructure approaches to watershed protection. Green Infrastructure can be defined as an interconnected network of conservation lands across landscapes that serve multiple purposes including watershed protection or as site specific interventions used primarily for stormwater management. While both contribute to watershed health, this program emphasizes the landscape approach, identifying elements of green infrastructure such as hubs of natural habitat and corridors which support aquatic freshwater communities and overall watershed health. Low impact development (LID) or other site level applications of green infrastructure that typically involve restoration or retrofits to the landscape are not the focus of this program. However, applicants who can show how multiple scales of green infrastructure practice can be integrated are welcome to apply.

ELIGIBILITY**What geographic areas are eligible to receive funding?**

Work must be completed in the 50 United States, Tribal Lands, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories.

****Who is eligible for a grant?**

Not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organizations, for-profit companies, tribes, intertribal consortia, interstates, state, and local government agencies including water utilities and wastewater facilities, and colleges and universities are eligible for funding. Unincorporated individuals and federal agencies are not eligible. Public/private partnerships are particularly desirable.

Are 501(c)(4) entities eligible for funding?

In general, 501(c)(4) organizations are not eligible to receive federal funds through this program. There is some potential for a 501(c)(4) to receive non-federal funds from the Endowment, but these funds would be subject to availability and subject to the provisions in the Request for Proposals, such as that funds may not be used for lobbying, fundraising, political advocacy, or litigation.

****Are there any other requirements potential applicants should consider?**

All selected grantees must provide a current Duns and Bradstreet (DUNS) number and be registered and up-to-date in the SAM.gov grantee registration system. We strongly suggest grantees start this registration process as early as possible to avoid delays in the contracting process.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

What is your Indirect Cost Rate Policy?

The Endowment's [policy on Indirect Cost recovery](#) can be found here. Please direct any questions about this policy to [Cameron Tommey](#), Director, Legal and Program Compliance.

Are HWC Grant Program subawards federal or non-federal funds?

Either or both. EPA and NRCS funds are federal; Endowment funds are non-federal. We will be as flexible as possible to match award funds to grantee needs.

****Are there any limitations on what the HWC funding may be spent on?**

Because of the potential inclusion of federal funds, all funds under the HWC program must be spent on "Allowable Costs" as defined by the Office of Management and Budget. More guidance on these restrictions may be found in 2 CFR Part 200, Cost Principles. [EPA general terms and conditions](#) should also be reviewed in advance of application submission.

****May HWC funds be used for meetings, food, and beverage?**

Unless the event(s) and all of its components are described in the approved workplan, the grantee must obtain prior approval from the Endowment for the use of grant funds for light refreshments and/or meals served at meetings, conferences, training workshops and outreach activities (events).

Note: U.S. General Services Administration regulations define light refreshments for morning, afternoon or evening breaks to include, but not be limited to, coffee, tea, milk, juice, soft drinks, donuts, bagels, fruit, pretzels, cookies, chips, or muffins. (41 CFR 301-74.11).

May I use federal funds as match?

Potentially. If grantee federal funds have not been previously used as match in other programs, they may be considered as match for the Endowment's non-federal funds.

What qualifies as "proposed matching funds?" Will in-kind staff time be counted?

In-kind staff time can be counted as match. However, we will also look favorably on other forms of direct match such as other grant funds, state or local agency support, corporate contributions, etc.

Matching funds should meet these criteria: verifiable from applicant records; not already considered as match to another Federal award; necessary to complete project objectives; committed directly to the project and used within the project period (begins date your application was submitted); and Allowable under OMB 2 CFR 200 Cost Principles.

Because Healthy Watershed Consortium awards may include non-federal (Endowment) and/or federal funds (EPA/NRCS), it is important to clearly state the origin of proposed match in the application.

Are funds/in-kind activities received/expended before the HWC Grant Program award date eligible as match?

For the 2018 HWC Grant Program cycle, matching funds may be counted towards a grantee's match as long as the funds were extended no more than one (1) year prior to the date of application submission.

Must matching funds be for the same exact project or area as applied for in my HWC application?

Your proposed match must be for projects that are clearly related to or interconnected with the project for which you seek funding.

If more than one organization applies as a team, will each entity be reimbursed separately or will it be a prime and sub arrangement?

The grant will go to a prime applicant. They can create subawards for project partners.

I work for a national organization or firm. Should we submit one proposal for all of our projects?

It depends. If you have several watershed-specific or area specific projects, it might be best to submit multiple applications corresponding to the watersheds/areas in which you plan to work. If you propose a project with regional or national benefits, one proposal might be appropriate. Call us to discuss!