



State Natural Resources Conservation Council

2025 Clean Water Project Enhancement Design and Implementation Block Grant Request for Applications

Introduction and Program Goals:

The State Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) has received funding from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to administer the Enhancement Design and Implementation Block Grant Program (EDIBG). The purpose of the Enhancement Design and Implementation Grant is to support priority water quality design and implementation projects put forward by Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDs), watershed groups, municipalities, and others. The program is open to all eligible organizations and will fund preliminary design, final design, and implementation projects.

Timeline: RFA Release: February 28, 2025

Webinar (recorded from a previous round, use due dates listed below): [Watch the recording here](#)

Application Due Date: April 3, 2025

Award Announcements: May 1, 2025

All projects must be completed by: February 1, 2027

Questions Regarding this RFA should be addressed to NRCC Grants and Finance Manager Lina Smith at lina.smith@vacd.org

In addition to this RFA, applicants should review the materials located at <https://www.vacd.org/2025-edibg> and the [FY23 CWIP Funding Policy](#) to determine a potential project's eligibility prior to filling out an application. Applicants will use the [Project Types Tables](#) and the FY23 CWIP Funding Policy to find definitions and details on eligible project types, their unique requirements (including required reporting, outcomes, and deliverables) and other details. In addition, all projects must be eligible under the [Project Eligibility Screening Form](#) and compliant with the FY23 CWIP Funding Policy. Finally, project applicants will need to provide documentation of DEC program staff approvals of all projects (may include Watershed Planner, River Scientist, Wetlands Scientist, Stormwater Program, etc.) depending on the project, as determined by the Project Eligibility and Readiness Screening Form.

Some projects may require match/leveraged funds (dependent on project characteristics, applicants must check page 25 of the [FY23 CWIP Funding Policy](#) to verify if a proposal requires leveraged funds). All projects will be reviewed by NRCC’s review committee and will receive a written notice indicating whether the project is approved and will receive full funding, is approved with partial funding, or is not approved and will not be funded.

Available Funds, Project Categories and Project Size:

Approximately \$1 M is available for grants. Funding will be awarded for both stormwater and natural resources projects. There is no project budget limit, but applicants should note that especially large projects should demonstrate high prioritization, impacts, cost-effectiveness, and/or leveraged funds.

Project Selection Criteria

Projects will be selected for funding using the following criteria:

Project Need: Is there a demonstrated need for the work? And do the EDIBG funds fill a need where other funds are not available

Project Purpose: How well does this project meet the 5 statutorily-defined purposes for the EDIBG Grant.

Project Scale: Can the proposed project work be completed with the proposed grant dollars available or are sufficient matching funds available to cover the difference?

Project Likelihood: Does the project design and/or implementation have a high chance for success? Are there barriers to this work being completed? What is the financial risk if that is the case? How likely will the project be completed on time?

Project Budget: Is the project cost effective for the scope of work proposed?

Entities Eligible to Apply:

Eligible Entities	Ineligible Entities
Vermont Municipalities	Private citizens, individuals
Regional planning commissions	Private for-profit businesses and industries
Natural resource conservation districts	Private for-profit colleges and universities
Non-profit organizations	Federal agencies
State Agencies	
State colleges and universities	
Public Hospitals and medical centers	
Public schools	

Project Guidelines:

Eligible project types: (See the [Project Types Tables](#) and additional information for detailed descriptions of eligible project types)

- Floodplain/stream restoration
- Lake shoreland
- Wetlands
- Stormwater
- Agricultural pollution prevention
- Forestry
- Roads/stormwater gully
- Roads projects

Projects must meet at least **one** of the following objectives:

- Minimize Anthropogenic Nutrient and Organic Pollution
- Protect and Restore Aquatic and Riparian Habitats
- Minimize Flood and Fluvial Erosion Hazards
- Minimize Toxic and Pathogenic Pollution and Chemicals of Emerging Concern

All projects must meet the following additional **3** criteria:

- Project must satisfy all requirements of Eligibility Screens #1-7 in the [Project Eligibility Screening Form](#)
- Project must be non-regulatory
- Project must meet at least **one** of the following statutorily-defined purposes for Water Quality Enhancement Grants:

1. Protect high quality waters

Per the 2017 Vermont Water Quality Standards (§ 29A-105 (c)) “high quality waters” are waters the existing quality of which exceeds any applicable water quality criteria. The VTDEC uses monitoring and assessment data to assess individual surface waters in relation to Vermont Water Quality Standards as outlined in the 2016 DEC Assessment and Listing Methodology. The four categories currently used to assess Vermont’s surface water are full support, stressed, altered and impaired. Waters that currently exceed or support designated and existing uses and meet water quality standards are placed into the full support or stressed categories. Waters that do not support uses and do not meet standards are placed into the altered or impaired category. All altered and impaired water bodies are clearly listed in the relevant Tactical Basin Plan or one can find the list of impaired and altered waters here: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2019-02/documents/2018-vt-303d-list-report.pdf> For the purposes of the *EDDIBG* sub-initiative, “high quality waters” are defined as any waters not listed as altered or impaired in the relevant Tactical Basin Plan. Any eligible clean water project located upstream of a “high quality water” body is considered to have the potential to protect “high quality waters.”

2. Maintain or improve water quality

3. Restore degraded or stressed waters

See the list of impaired waterways in Vermont to determine whether or not your project is in the area with degraded or stressed waters: <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/map/assessment> (list of impaired waters is mid page).

4. Create resilient watersheds and/or communities.

Projects that assist with a community's resilience against the ecological responses to a changing climate (e.g., extreme droughts or rains, excessive heat, biodiversity decline, etc.) are eligible as long as they meet all other eligibility criteria.

5. Support the public's use and enjoyment of the State's waters

Signage, condensed access, and/or targeted outreach and education surrounding a specific project are all considered eligible project components and primary project benefits to "support the public's use and enjoyment of the State's waters." Other restoration-focused activities may also de facto "support the public's use and enjoyment of the State's waters" by making the waters more swimmable, fishable, and/or drinkable.

Note: Historically, Items 4 and 5 above have been considered co-benefits on CWIP's Ecosystem Restoration Grants and therefore ineligible for CWIP funds. Project components critical towards achieving any of the Enhancement Grant statutory goals are now considered primary (not co-) benefits and are eligible for CWIP funds as long as they meet all other funding requirements.

Additional Guidelines:

- Projects must be in the watershed projects database or in the process of being added to the Watersheds database.
- Projects must be approved by a Basin Planner before funds are awarded.
- Applicants should demonstrate how the project is a high-priority and/or how the project has been identified/prioritized in existing assessments or plans.
- Applicants must complete the Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form as part of each application. [Project Eligibility Screening Form](#)
- All project funding recipients must have the state mandated insurance coverage.
- All projects must complete the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) Review process as part of receiving funding. VDHP Project Review Process: Page 30 of the [FY23 CWIP Funding Policy](#)
 - VT DECCWIP VDHP Webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96lsiteAjUw>
 - [VDHP Project Review Form](#)
- Implementation projects need all permits in place before implementation occurs and will be required to include an Operation and Maintenance Agreement for the design life of the project. (at least 10 years)
- All design projects must be able to obtain landowner commitment to next steps.
- Leveraged funds/match requirements are dependent on project characteristics. Applicants must check page 25 of the [FY23 CWIP Funding Policy](#) to verify if a proposal requires leveraged funds.
- All grant recipients and subcontractors must pass debarment checks.

- All projects must be completed by **February 1, 2027** and reports, deliverables and invoices submitted by **February 15, 2027**.

Budgeting and Invoicing:

Applicants must complete a Budget Sheet found at <https://www.vacd.org/2025-edibg> or in the shared drive for each project and include it with their application. Applicants may include additional documentation including estimates from contractors, etc. All eligible costs will be consistent with the [FY23 CWIP Funding Policy](#)

Applicants should include all costs associated with project completion as direct costs, including:

- Implementing a procurement policy;
- Managing the block grant award;
- Selecting and awarding projects to subcontractors;
- Developing and monitoring subgrants and subcontracts;
- Processing subgrantee and subcontractor invoices for payment by DEC;
- Verifying project results; and
- Preparing and compiling required block grant deliverables (e.g., interim and final reports and individual project deliverables).
- In addition, applicants may receive 10% *de minimis* indirect costs on Total Modified Direct Costs. See the budget template for assistance with this calculation.

Grantees may invoice for actual costs incurred throughout the project monthly or less frequently as necessary. To receive full project funds, the project must adhere to all project and funding guidelines and deliverables outlined in the [FY23 CWIP Funding Policy](#), the [Project Types Tables](#), the [Project Eligibility Screening Form](#) and the grant agreement.

Funding Restrictions:

Project funds cannot fund the following:

- Projects that can be wholly funded through other grant sources. Projects may be eligible if other options are ill-suited, insufficient, or poorly timed and justification is provided. Projects that can be funded through other loan or financing sources may still be eligible.
- Operation and Maintenance activities of prior implemented clean water projects (e.g., mowing, weeding, replanting, and road re-grading).
- Large scale site mowing to manage for invasive species like Japanese Knotweed (No invasive species projects)
- Projects related to compliance with Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit Minimum control Measures.
- Projects that treat stormwater associated with new, redeveloped, or expanded impervious surfaces, including but not limited to projects to comply with the operational stormwater General Permit 3-9050 associated with new development redevelopment or expansion of impervious surfaces.
- Retrofit projects to comply with the operational stormwater General Permit 3-9050 (“Three-Acre General Permit”) unless located on a public school three-acre site and funded through the Green Schools Initiative. No other Three-Acre General Permit projects are eligible for funding through CWIP, as other funding/financing programs are available to support these projects.

- Projects that solely address hazard mitigation and protection of infrastructure
- Restoration or stabilization of in-gully channels caused by stormwater or road runoff unless the project also addresses precipitating upstream flow (Please note gully projects are eligible if they do address upstream flow).
- Streambank hard armoring or “riprapping.” However, a bioengineered slope stabilization practice that includes a rock toe or other similar streambank stabilization practices may be eligible subject to DEC Rivers Program approval.
- Projects to comply with Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont on active logging/harvesting sites.
- Projects dealing with wastewater management, as other funding/financing programs are available to support these projects.
- Land acquisition, as in, a fee simple purchase.
- General outreach and education activities unrelated to a specific clean water project.

Ineligible expenses:

- Project components that are above and beyond those necessary to achieve the project’s enhancement purpose (as listed under eligibility screen #1). For example, where a project’s stakeholders prefer higher cost materials or a more complex design than what is necessary to achieve the project’s clean water outcomes, the cost differential must be covered by another funding source. Budget proposals can provide reasonable justification if need be. These additional expenses may be considered leverage.
- Expenses incurred outside award duration.
- Annual fees associated with permits that require/compel implementation of the clean water project
- In Lieu Fee payments to mitigate wetland impacts.
- Tools and/or equipment, unless the intent of tool or equipment is to assist with implementation of clean water projects. Eligible tool or equipment purchases must have an expected useful life of more than one year. Tools are defined as having a per unit cost of less than \$5,000 and are not subject to DEC’s Equipment Purchase Policy. Tools may be sold, or otherwise disposed of with no further obligation to DEC. Items with a per unit cost of equal to or greater than \$5,000 are defined as “equipment” and subject to DEC’s Equipment Purchase Policy. See Appendix D of CWIP FY 2023 Guidelines for more information.
- Office supplies such as computers, cell phones, uniforms/staff apparel.
- Food/beverage/event space costs (such as for a meeting);
- AmeriCorps host site or member costs
- General outreach and/or education; unless specific only to the project and clean water purposes
- Political advocacy;
- Fundraising and grant writing

Submitting Your Application:

Please submit your application in 2 separate documents.

1. The [Budget Sheet](#) in excel.
2. All other documentation as a single pdf.

To NRCC Grants and Finance Manager Lina Smith at lina.smith@vacd.org with the subject "2025 NRCC Clean Water Enhancement Design and Implementation Grant Application".

Include the following in your application:

- Completed Application Form
- Completed [Project Eligibility Screening Form](#)
- Project Locator Map
- Any additional materials that will help clarify/support the project, including photos, letters commitment from landowners, site plans, project feasibility studies etc.
- Quotes or bids received from contractors if applicable

For Design Projects:

- List of anticipated permits needed if known
- Written landowner commitment to project phase being applied
- Itemized quotes from contractors if applicable

For Implementation Projects:

- Site Plans
- Written landowner commitment to implement project
- Copies of permits secured.
- Itemized quotes received from contractors if applicable
- Any additional materials that will help clarify/support the project.