Community Stormwater Solutions Grants
Questions and Answers

Q1: What is the "DCPS Initial Project Feasibility Form" (RFA Appendix 5)? Is this the same as getting the school principal's approval?

A1: This form is required for all projects located *at* a District of Columbia Public School. For example, if you plan to change a physical element at the school, such as installing a garden or adding art, you would need to complete the form, send to the email address on the form, receive approval, and upload that approved form with your online application. You will also need a letter of support from the school principal and teachers working on the project. If you are simply involving students from a DC Public School, you will only need to provide letters of support from the school principals and teachers. The Appendix 5 form is not required in that case.

Q2: Is a W9 the same as the IRS 990 form? Do you need to submit a 990 form?

A2: A W9 form is different from an IRS 990 form. This application only requires your organization's W9 form.

Q3: Can you apply for more than one project?

A3: Yes. There is no limit on the number of projects you apply for. You must submit a separate application for each project. The online application system, ZoomGrants, allows you to create multiple applications.

Q4: What does MS4 mean?

A4: The Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) is the area of the District that drains directly into local waterways and is located along the edges of the city.

Q5: How can I determine which "sewershed" (the MS4 or the Combined Sewer System (CSS)) or watershed (Anacostia River, Rock Creek, or Potomac River) my project is in?

A5: You can enter your project address into this website: http://geospatial.dcgis.dc.gov/WatershedFinder/. Or you can use this interactive map: http://dcgis.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=749dadd13b3f4bb39767aad5b4d96731.

Q6: If my project falls into more than one of the RFA's defined Project Areas, do I need to split up my project into separate applications and apply multiple times?

A6: No, one project can cover more than one project area. You will only need to submit a separate application if you have a separate and distinct project to propose.

Q7: By "stormwater solutions," do you mean that you are looking for grantees to develop a new stormwater technology through research and development?

A7: We would like you to propose a solution to a stormwater problem in your community. For example, if trash is a problem, you may propose a project/solution that addresses Project Areas 4 or 5 (see Section 1.6 for a full list of project areas).

Q8: My project involves community partners. Should I include letters of support from them?

A8: Yes.

Q9: Who is on the scoring committee?

A9: The scoring committee is comprised of experts in the areas of stormwater, watersheds, sustainability, and/or grants.

Q10: Will matching funds make my project more competitive?

A10: Whether or not a project brings matching funding to the grant is not an element of the scoring criteria, so the connection is not direct. Match could potentially make a project more competitive if it makes the project more cost effective. For instance, if the project provides more education or water quality treatment as a result of having a budget that includes match, or if volunteer labor displaces cost in the budget, then the District receives a greater benefit for a lesser cost. This is often referred to as getting "more bang for the buck."

Q11: Is there an established rate for calculating the value of volunteer labor?

A11: Yes, the established rate for calculating volunteer labor can be found on Page 2 of the Document "General Terms and Conditions," in section 3.b.(2).

Q12: Whose bio/resume should be submitted with my application: the applicant staff, sub-contractors?

A12: A bio or resume should be submitted for all high-level persons who are integral to the project. This may apply to staff and volunteers for the applying organization and may also apply to contractors if they have already been chosen. This provides assurance that the applicant is qualified and supports the determination that the project is feasible.

Q13: Is it correct to say that if the proposed project is not located in one of the two priority areas for this grant, the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) or the Anacostia Watershed, then the score for that project is automatically decreased by 15 point?

A13: That is correct; however, please note that DOEE did fund projects outside the priority areas previously, so losing those points does not by itself determine a project's final ranking.

Q14: Is it likely that the Community Stormwater Solutions funding opportunity will be offered next year?

A14: DOEE has not been told that this program will be eliminated, so as long as funding is available, the program should continue.

Q15: Was this program funded for the first time last year?

A15: Yes.

Q16: Are the points awarded for the scoring criterion all or nothing, or could a project score partial points?

A16: The points presented in the scoring criteria are the maximum points a project could earn in each scoring category. Review team members assess the degree to which the project application addresses an individual criterion, and assigns points, up-to the full number of points. Additionally, the final score for a project application is an average of the total points awarded by each of the review team members.

Q17: How is a project's cost effectiveness judged?

A17: Cost effectiveness is a measure of how much the District benefits from the project versus how much the project will cost the District. Examples:
- If a project educates a huge number of people for a very low cost, then it would be more cost effective than a similar project that educates very few people for the same cost.

- If the applicant is providing a cash match or volunteer labor that allows more work to be performed than could otherwise be purchased with the grant award, then the benefit to the District is greater than the investment, and that will be seen as cost-effective.

Q18: Can we take recommendations from a DOEE RiverSmart Communities audit and formulate a proposal from there?
A18: Yes. RiverSmart Communities provides technical and financial assistance for installing green infrastructure, which falls into Project Area 1 for this grant.

Q19: Can grant funds be used for projects on publicly-owned land? And if so, what is the process for gaining permission?
A19: Yes, grant funds can be used for projects on publicly-owned land. To obtain permission, first identify the land-owning agency and reach out to it. Each agency will have its own process for approving projects.

Q20: Do we need to RSVP for the pre-application information sessions?
A20: No.

Q21: Is this the same grant as the RiverSmart Innovation Grants DOEE offered earlier in 2016?
A21: Yes, this is the same grant. DOEE changed the name to better reflect the purpose of the program.

Q22: By "start-up funding" do you mean that this grant is not supposed to cover the entire cost of the project?
A22: By "start-up funding", we mean that funding is aimed at projects or programs, in whole or part, that would not otherwise be implemented. Examples:
- There is an existing program. An applicant applies for funding to add a new component.
- An applicant applies for funding for a project that is separate from any of their other work.

Q23: How do I access the online application?
A23: The link to the online application is in Section 2 of the RFA, which you can download from here: http://doee.dc.gov/release/community-stormwater-solutions-notice-funding-availability.

Q24: At what point in the process do you need to have required insurance coverages in place?
A24: If your project is selected, you will be asked to submit a certificate of insurance.

Q25: This is a reimbursement grant. Can I request an advance?
A25: This is a reimbursement grant. Under limited circumstances, DOEE will allow for an advance of grant funds. DOEE's advance policy states that you must request an advance as part of your proposal indicating how much advance payment and why. Do this in the Budget Narrative in the Budget Tab of the online application. Advance payments shall not exceed 25% of the grant.

Q26: What are the reporting requirements for this grant?
A26: Reporting requirements are outlined in Section 6.1 of the RFA, which you can download from here: http://doee.dc.gov/release/community-stormwater-solutions-notice-funding-availability.

Q27: In terms of insurance requirements, are they all applicable?
A27: Insurance requirements are in Section 26 of Appendix 1 General Terms and Conditions, which you can download from here http://doee.dc.gov/release/community-stormwater-solutions-notice-

. Depending on the project or grantee, some insurance requirements may not be applicable. If you have questions about your project and the coverages that may be required, please email your question to community.stormwatersolutions2017@dc.gov.

Q28: Is documenting/filming the project an allowable expense?

A28: It depends. If the activity raises awareness or educates about a stormwater issue, it would be an allowable expense.

Q29: How do I document "a record of integrity and business ethics" as requested on page 2 of Appendix 2 Promises, Assurances, and Certifications?

A29. This question references Appendix 2, paragraph 2 d, "The Applicant has or will have during the entirety of the grant period: … d. A record of integrity and business ethics." The cited section means that you should not do something that lacks integrity or business ethics. If you do, DOEE may cancel the grant. There is no reporting requirement stated. You don't need to document anything.

Q30: How do I document that I "establish safeguards to prohibit employees from using their positions for a purpose that constitutes or presents the appearance of a personal or organizational conflict of interest, or personal gain during the period of the grant" as stated in Appendix 2, on page 3?

A30: This question references paragraph 8 of Appendix 2. DOEE will not dictate business practices. It expects that people running businesses have researched such basic issues and applied what they have found to their staff. While it would be helpful for DOEE to see an excerpt from a personnel manual, or an employee pledge, or the like, before the grant is made, such a submission is not required.

Q31: Is a vegetable garden an eligible project?

A31: Vegetable gardens may be eligible if they provide a stormwater benefit. For example, a vegetable garden proposed at a location that is currently grass does not have additional stormwater benefit. However, a vegetable garden proposed at a location that would require removing impervious area does have a stormwater benefit.

Q32: Is there a lot of interest in this program?

A32: Last year, we received 36 proposals and awarded nine grants. It is hard to say how many proposals we will receive this year.

Q33: How long as this grant program been around?

A33: This is the 2nd time DOEE has offered these grants. The first time was earlier in 2016.

Q34: If I have an LLC, am I an eligible applicant?

A34: In order to be an eligible applicant, you must be licensed and registered to do business in the District. You must be able to supply a DC business license number, a DUN & Bradstreet Number (DUNS), and an EIN.

Q35: Why would I need a fiscal agent?

A35: If you are not an eligible applicant, you can apply for funding by partnering with a fiscal agent. In this case, the fiscal agent will be the applicant, and if the project is selected, DOEE's grantee. It is important for you to communicate that to a prospective fiscal agent. Typically a fiscal agent will charge a fee for their service and you can include that in the project budget.

Q36: Does DOEE provide grantees with any resources, like trash cans or rain barrels?

A36: No, DOEE does not provide grantees with any resources beyond the grant funding. Applicants should try to leverage available resources when putting together their budget. For example, the Department of Public Works' [Helping Hand Neighborhood Clean-up program](#) lends tools such as five rakes and brooms, two shovels, and 20 trash bags.

Q37: Are you looking for completely original project ideas or can I propose projects that have already been successfully implemented in other places?

A37: You do not need to propose a completely original idea. It is okay to "steal" good ideas from other places that have worked well.

Q38: Regarding Appendix 5 DCPS Initial Project Feasibility Form, is this also required if you are doing work at Charter Schools?

A38: No, this only applies for projects proposed at District of Columbia Public Schools. For projects at private or charter schools, you must submit a letter of support from the principal.

Q39: In the online application, there is a character limit for each paragraph field. How many characters equal one page of text?

A39: Roughly 3000 characters equal one page of text.

Q40: Is the timeline for this grant a year?

A40: Yes, roughly a year. The grant period runs from the date of the Grant Award Notice until April 30, 2018. DOEE anticipates making awards on this grant in April 2017.

Q41: Regarding "other supporting documents" in the Attachments section, can we submit a file that includes a link to a video?

A41: Yes, you can submit a document that includes a link to a video about the project, but any video would be considered supporting documentation, not the proposal itself.

Q42: In the attachments section, how many individual attachments can you submit under each category?

A42: Each individual file must be less than 4 MB. There is no limited to the number of individual files. Here's a short video about uploading files to a ZoomGrants application: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0Ixkjss_Ow&feature=youtu.be.

Q43: In the online application, are you able to save the application and go back to it later?

A43: Yes, you can login and log out as often as you like. The system automatically saves as you enter information.

Q44: How do you notify applicants if they did or did not receive a grant award?

A44: DOEE notifies every applicant about it via email. If your project is not funded, you may request a de-brief to discuss.

Q45: In terms of the requested project budget, does DOEE typically scale budgets back from the original request or will applicants receive the entire amount they request?

A45: DOEE may eliminate certain expenses from the budget if they are not allowable or appropriate expenses or could be funded through another source. Please refer to Section 3(c) of the RFA, which

can be downloaded from here: http://doee.dc.gov/release/community-stormwater-solutions-notice-funding-availability.

Q46: If one requests an advance, does that jeopardize the possibility of funding?
A46: No.

Q47: Does the online application system allow me to start an application and return to it later?
Q48: Yes, you can login and logout as often as you need.

Q48: Are projects proposed on federal land eligible?
Q48: Yes, you must submit a letter of support from the property owner.

Q49: Must the applicant be based in the District?
A49: Yes

Q50: Do you have to scan and attach to the online application system the entire 7 page Appendix 2 Promises, Certifications, and Assurances document?
Q50: You must only scan and attach the fully signed signature page.

Q51: If I am using a fiscal agent because I am not an eligible applicant, who should complete the application?
A51: You may complete some aspects of the application like the project description, and your fiscal agent will need to complete other aspects. With the online application system, ZoomGrants, you may add the fiscal agent as a "Collaborator" so that more than one person is contributing to the application.

Q52: If my organization is a 501 c3, do I need a fiscal agent?
A52: No. A fiscal agent is only needed if you are not an eligible applicant. See Section 1.6 of the Request for Applications.

Q53: If my project is on Department of Parks and Recreation land, do we need a letter of support?
A53: Yes, all applications require a letter of support from the property owner, if the applicant does not own the land.

Q54: Does the letter of support need to be submitted by the application deadline?
A54: Yes

Q55: My organization is based in MD. Can I collaborate with a DC-based organization to apply?
A55: Yes

Q56: Can you submit more than one letter of support?
A56: Yes, submit as many as you need.

Q57: If you submit early, can you get early feedback?
A57: No

Q58: What is an indirect cost?
A58: Indirect costs are costs that are not directly associated with the funded project. Indirect costs can include administrative costs, utilities, and office space.

Q59: Is there a limit to the percent of indirect costs charged?
A59: No, but a high indirect cost makes a project less competitive. For example, if the DOEE funded project represents 10% of the organization's work, then 10% would be a justifiable indirect cost rate. An applicant that includes indirect costs in the budget must justify that rate in the Budget Narrative section of the online application.

Q60: Can grant writing be charged to the grant?
A60: No, grant writing occurs before the grant award.

Q61: In regards to fiscal year budget and financial statements that we are required to submit with our application (See Section 3.4 of the Request for Applications), can we submit documents from fiscal year 2015?
A61: You must submit the current year's fiscal year budget and financial statements.

Q62: Is a DUNS number required for this grant?
A62: Yes, you will provide that in the Basic Information section of the online application.

Q63: If we are collaborating with a District of Columbia Government Agency on our project and plan to submit a letter of support, who should sign the letter of support?
A63: The respective agency will determine that.

Tips provided during the pre-application information sessions:
- Stressed the importance of letters of support to demonstrate your ability to complete the project.
- Make sure to give the review team a comprehensive and clear plan of what you intend to accomplish with your project. Supporting documents can help to demonstrate that your plans are feasible.
- If you want to do a school garden, consider including plans to remove impervious surface, such as concrete or asphalt, as part of the plan. We received numerous school garden proposals last year that simply proposed creating a school garden in a grassy area. The stormwater benefits of those projects were not significant and therefore not good fits for the program.
- The funds for this grant program prioritize projects that reduce the amount of stormwater that runs off our impermeable surfaces, such as sidewalks, roads, and basketball courts, but we also understand the importance of education in keeping our waters clean.
- You can include insurance costs in your budget.