Watersheds United Vermont
2025 Enhancement Design and Implementation Block Grant
Grant Guidelines

Overview

Watersheds United Vermont (WUV) is administering a round of funding under the Enhancement Design and Implementation Block (EDIBG) Grant program, which will serve to support the design and implementation of priority water quality enhancement projects. Funding is provided by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's (VT DEC) Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP). WUV seeks proposals for the preliminary design, final design, and implementation of enhancement projects.

No match is required under this program. Voluntary leverage/match is appreciated, particularly for larger implementation projects. Please note that this funding ***can*** be used as match/leverage for other funding sources.

Please complete and submit this application as a Word or PDF file and submit a second document that combines the Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form and all other supplemental/additional documents.

Email the application and any attachments to both:

WUV Director Lyn Munno at ***lyn@watershedsunitedvt.org, and***
WUV Grant Manager Christian Pelletier at ***christian@watershedsunitedvt.org***

WUV anticipates supporting a number of design and implementation projects with the available funding. This grant round is for projects that will be designed and/or implemented in 2026 and 2027

All grant information and material can be found at WUV's website:
https://watershedsunitedvt.org/grants/enhancement-dam-removal-design-and-implementation-block-grant

Grant Guidelines and Information

Key Dates

January 12, 2026: Full Project Application including the Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Due

Mid to Late February 2026: Funding Decisions Announced

Available Funds

Funding Category	***Total***
Preliminary Design, Final Design, Implementation	***~$1,000,000*** **Future rounds possible dependant on amount obligated under this round*

Application Documents

To complete submission of the application for this grant round you must submit the following documents:

1. ***WUV Enhancement Design and Implementation Block Grant Application***
2. ***Enhancement Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form***

Any additional documents should be attached to the Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form and emailed with the application. It is indicated next to the document type if the document is required for the project phase.

1. Site Plan(s) ***(required for implementation projects)***
2. Site Photos ***(required for implementation projects)***
3. Written landowner commitment to implement project ***(required for implementation projects)***
4. Written landowner commitment to project phase being applied for project ***(required for design projects)***
5. Project Feasibility Studies
6. Additional Bid(s), Quote(s), or Proposal(s)

*Please note we do not need letters of support.

Complete and submit the application as a Word or PDF file and submit a second document that combines the Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form and all other supplemental documents.

Submitting the Application and Eligibility Screening

Please complete and submit the application as a single Word or PDF file and submit a second document that combines the Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form and all other supplemental documents.

Email the Full Application and the combined Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form and Supplemental Materials to:

WUV Director Lyn Munno at lyn@watershedsunitedvt.org, and
WUV Grant Manager Christian Pelletier at Christian@watershedsunitedvt.org

There is no limit on the number of applications per organization nor a limit on the amount requested per project. However, WUV must fund multiple project types and phases with this funding. Therefore, match is appreciated on larger projects, and some project awards may have to be reduced in order to fit into WUV's funding structure and portfolio.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to ask questions; we are happy to help navigate any issues throughout the application process!

Please Note: DEC has awarded the Enhancement Grant funds to 3 entities: WUV, the Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) and Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC). The funding requirements are the same for all entities, though the application and grant administration process may vary somewhat. While we encourage for administration purposes that if the timing works out NRCDs apply to NRCC, watershed groups apply to WUV and municipalities apply through MARC, all eligible entities can apply through any Enhancement Grant holder and all entities currently hold grant agreements with multiple eligible subgrantees. WUV, NRCC and MARC will coordinate on project applications as needed. Likewise, EDIBG grant holders and Clean Water Service Providers (CWSPs) will coordinate should projects be a better fit for Formula Grant Funds or EDIBG funds.

Project Phase and Types

All projects must fit the project types and phases from the enhancement project type spreadsheet found here:

2025 WUV Enhancement Project Types Table

2025 WUV Enhancement Practice Types Table

For a project to be eligible for EDIBG, it must be in one of the following project phases:

- Preliminary Design
- Final Design
- Implementation

Definitions for the project phases listed above can be found on pages 57-61 on the ***2023 CWIP Funding Policy***

WUV will accept applications that combine 2 project phases where appropriate. This means applications can be submitted for combined Preliminary Design and Final Design or for combined Final Design and Implementation. WUV will not accept applications that combine all three project phases.

The project phase of *Project Development* is not eligible.

For a project to be eligible for the EDIBG, it must fall into one of the following project types:

- Lake Shoreland
- Floodplain/Stream Restoration (including culvert projects)
- Forestry
- Wetlands
- Stormwater
- Roads Project
- Roads/Stormwater Gully
- Agricultural Pollution Prevention

The definitions, milestones, and deliverables associated with each one of these project types can be found in the 2025 WUV Enhancement Project Types Table excel spreadsheet found here.

In addition to project type, applicants must identify the practice type (the actual practice being completed under the project type, for example “replace culvert” under the Floodplain/Stream Restoration project type). Please see the following document for the full list of eligible practice types and their definitions:

It is crucial that applicants review and understand the project definition, milestones, and deliverables for the applicable project type.

Project Eligibility

All projects under the Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) must meet one of the following objectives:

1. Minimize Anthropogenic Nutrient and Organic Pollution
2. Protect and Restore Aquatic and Riparian Habitats
3. Minimize Flood and Fluvial Erosion Hazards

4. Minimize Toxic and Pathogenic Pollution and Chemicals of Emerging Concern

These four objectives serve as the highest-level eligibility screen for all CWIP projects which include projects under this funding source, if the project does not meet one of these objectives, you can't proceed to EDIBG specific eligibility criteria below. Please contact WUV if you have any questions about the project meeting these objectives.

To be eligible for the Enhancement Design and Implementation Block Grant (EDIBG), projects must meet the following additional 3 eligibility criteria:

1. Project must satisfy all requirements of Eligibility Screens #1-7 in the Eligibility Screening found on pages 9-16 in the 2023 CWIP Funding Policy.

2. Project must be non-regulatory

3. Project must meet at least one of the statutorily-defined purposes for Water Quality Enhancement Grants

Please see the definitions of the enhancement eligibility criteria below:

1. Eligibility Screens #1-7: The 2023 CWIP Funding Policy lists seven criteria (#1-7) that are applicable across all relevant CWIP Funding Programs. To ensure that you meet these eligibility criteria, you must complete the ***Enhancement Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form*** which will guide you through the first 7 eligibility requirements.

2. Project must be non-regulatory: To be eligible for Enhancement Design and Implementation Block Grant funds (EDIBG), projects cannot be driven by a regulatory requirement. Regulatory projects are those required/compelled by water quality-related regulatory programs.

For example, a stormwater retrofit project on a private property that has more than three acres of impervious surface and is subject to the stormwater General Permit 3-9050 would be a regulatory project. As another example, a wetland enhancement project would not be eligible if it was required compensation as part of a wetland permit or restoration of a wetland violation.

Non-regulatory projects (i.e. projects performed voluntarily) are eligible. These voluntary projects are often still subject to regulatory oversight and may require one or more permits.

There may be cases where an individual project is designed to both fulfill and exceed regulatory requirements. Additional guidance is needed to define eligibility for this scenario. A portion of the project costs may be eligible for EDIBG funds. If this is the case, please consult with DEC and WUV as special provisions would be needed to ensure coordinated tracking and reporting across potentially multiple funding and regulatory programs.

3. Projects must meet at least one of the statutorily-defined purposes for Enhancement Grants:
There are 5 statutorily defined purposes for the EDIBG grant program:

a. Protect high quality waters,
b. Maintain or improve water quality,
c. Restore degraded or stressed waters,
d. Create resilient watersheds and communities, or
e. Support the public's use and enjoyment of the State's waters

For a project to be eligible for EDIBG funding, it must meet at least one of the above purposes. In the application, you will be asked to address in narrative each one of the project purposes that your project will meet.

In past DEC Ecosystem Restoration Grants, Design and Implementation Block Grants, and the Formula Grant program, projects (and eligible activities) were required to be focused on nutrient and sediment reduction (and specifically phosphorus reduction in the current Formula Grants). DEC's Enhancement Grant programs have established a broader definition of water quality improvements to include benefits that have historically been considered co-benefits (ex. habitat improvements, flood resiliency, recreational benefits, and pollutant reduction). 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 CWIP funding requirements and WUV subgrant requirements.

Further definition is provided below:

High Quality Water: 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 EDIBG 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."

Degraded or stressed waters: Please see the list of impaired waterways in Vermont to determine whether or not your project is in an area with degraded or stressed waters: https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/map/assessment (list of impaired waters can be found mid page at the link provided). If you need clarification on whether your project area is degraded or stressed, please contact the DEC River Scientist or Basin Planner that is responsible for your project area.

Create resilient watersheds and 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.

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.

The above section outlined the main eligibility criteria to determine if a project is eligible for EDIBG funding. There are often other required approvals and documentation to fully assess project eligibility. These requirements are found in screening documents and the CWIP policy. In order to help subgrantees understand the full breadth of requirements, we have listed some of the most important below. Please note, these are not extra requirements but highlights from some of the above eligibility requirements:

- Projects must be in the Watershed Projects Database or in the process of being added to the Watershed Projects Database. Request a WPD-ID here.

- Projects must be approved by Basin Planner before funds are awarded
- Projects must be identified/prioritized in existing assessments or plans or approved by DEC Basin Planner
- For implementation projects, all permits must be in place before implementation occurs
- Applicants must complete the Project Readiness and Eligibility Screening Form
- All projects must complete the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) Review Process as part of receiving funding, or provide rationale for being exempt/conditionally exempt
- All project funding recipients must have the state mandated insurance coverage
- Implementation projects must be able to obtain a signed DEC Operation and Maintenance Agreement
- All design projects must be able to obtain landowner commitment to next steps
- All projects funded through this grant round must complete final invoicing and deliverables no more than 3-months after the completion of the project
- All sub-contractors used for projects must be approved using the WUV / DEC sub-contractor approval process and all subcontracts must include DEC standard subcontract language
- Projects must be planned to be designed or implemented in 2026/2027

Ineligible Entities:

The following entities are ineligible for applying for these block grant funds:

- Private citizens, individuals
- Private for-profit businesses and industries
- Private for-profit colleges and universities
- Federal agencies
- DEC programs

Ineligible Projects and Activities:

The following project types are ineligible for this funding:

- 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. Site prep mowing is eligible if it's within the same footprint of the planted buffer and is used just to suppress competing grasses (i.e., not invasive management).
- Projects related to compliance with the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit Minimum Control Measures, including street sweeping and catch basin cleaning.
- 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")
- 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, additional gully project information will be released in future CWIP funding policy documents).

- 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.
- Dam Removal and Riparian Buffer Planting project types aren't eligible through the EDIBG but contact WUV for more information on other block grant programs to fund these project types.

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) Project Review

Most projects under the EDIBG must complete a VDHP Project Review if they are awarded funding. In certain situations stormwater, agricultural, gully, roads, and forestry projects may be exempt from this process, please see page 28 of the 2023 CWIP Funding Policy for additional details on projects that may be exempt. The VDHP review is required in order to identify a project's potential impact to historic buildings and structures, historic districts, historic landscapes and settings, and to known or potential archaeological resources. These resources are known collectively as "Historic Properties" or
"Historic Sites." This consultative process, also known as Project Review, occurs between the Vermont State Historic Preservation Office (VDHP) and project proponent. Purpose of review is to assure that Historic Properties/Sites are not impacted, or if affected, are not adversely impacted.

Please review pages 30-33 of the CWIP guidelines (2023 CWIP Funding Policy) for an outline of this process. There may be significant expenses incurred for VDHP Review, especially in the final design phase of projects. These expenses are eligible and should be included in your budget. Please review the process before applying to fully understand the potential cost of the VDHP review.
Please also see the VDHP Project Review Form here: VDHP Project Review Form

In the 2023 CWIP Funding Policy, there is also guidance for projects that may be exempt/conditionally exempt from VDHP review, please review this section and if your project is exempt/conditionally exemp, you will be required to provide rationale for determining this in the EDIBG application.

Please note that this review is a project step and does not have to be completed during the application process.

Project Selection Criteria

Projects will be selected for funding using the following criteria:

Project Purpose: How does the project meet the 5 listed statutorily-defined purposes for Enhancement Grant. Projects will be evaluated on both how well the project meets a purpose and also how many of the statutorily-defined purposes the project meets. For example, a project that highly meets one project purpose will be competitive with a project that moderately meets 2-3 project purposes.

Project Scale: Does the project seem reasonable to complete given the timeframe of the grant, the capacity of the organizations, the complexity of the partnerships and permits, and the budget?

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? For design projects we are evaluating likelihood of design completion and of resulting likelihood of project being implemented.

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

Project Budget: Is the project cost effective for the scope of work proposed? Does the project fit into WUV's available budget, are all costs eligible (see CWIP guidelines)?

Other Prioritization Criteria:

a) WUV must fund 10% of our available funds on projects that have the potential to protect high quality waters, projects that meet this enhancement goal will be given additional scoring points
b) Projects located outside of watersheds with access to Water Quality Restoration Formula grants will be given extra scoring points but will not automatically trump strong and eligible enhancement projects located within those watersheds.
c) Environment Justice Focus Populations. Act 154 of 2022 (S.148) requires the Agency of Natural Resources to direct investments with environmental benefits proportionately to Environmental Justice Focus Populations. Under this funding source "Environmental justice focus population" means any census block group in which:
    1) the annual median household income is not more than 80 percent of the State median household income;
    2) Persons of Color and Indigenous Peoples comprise at least six percent or more of the population; or
    3) at least one percent or more of households have limited English proficiency

Block Grant Expenses and Funding Restrictions

Project Management:

Personnel time spent completing the following grant administration-related activities will be considered project completion costs under this grant including:

- Direct staff time on a project including any staff time on the actual design or implementation of the project
- Implementing a procurement policy;
- Reviewing bids, selecting and Preparing Requests for Proposals and costs to advertise for bid proposals awarding projects to subcontractors;
- Developing contracts and monitoring subgrants and subcontracts;
- Preparing invoices; Monitoring and verifying project results; and
- Preparing and compiling required deliverables (e.g., final report, operation and maintenance agreements, match certification, media releases at project start and after project completion).

Leveraged Funds/Match:

WUV has no required match commitment for this grant round. Regardless, match is always appreciated by DEC and WUV, so please include anticipated match amounts as applicable and available. With the limited funding under this round, WUV may not be able to fully fund high cost implementation projects. For these types of projects, other funding sources would be considered beneficial. Please make sure to indicate in the application narrative section if partial funding would be an option for your project.

If you are providing leveraged/matching funds for a project, please make sure to indicate the source of matching funds. WUV understands the current state of grant funding can be uncertain (especially federal funds). To best understand your funding needs, please indicate the leverage/match source and the current status of the funds (applied for, awarded, obligated, currently on hold, match in hand, etc).

If there is a strong benefit to private landowners in your project, WUV will consider match/leverage funds provided by the landowner when evaluating the project.

Under this round of funding, awarded EDIBG funds can be used as a required match for other funders. If you plan to use this funding as a match for other received awards, please make sure to indicate this in the budget section of your grant application.

Ineligible Expenses include:

- 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 the grant period listed in the grant agreement.
- 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 $10,000 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 $10,000 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

Invoicing:

The EDIBG grant is a cost-reimbursable grant. Subgrantees are paid for eligible incurred costs. Subgrantees can invoice when needed. WUV asks that subgrantees invoice at least once per year and preferably not more than once per month (though we understand that may be necessary during project implementation). Grant recipients will need to provide WUV with itemized invoices for all expenses with a brief description of the funds used. Grant recipients will also need to provide WUV with all sub invoices/receipts from any vendors/contractors. WUV will have the ability to pay approved invoices quickly under this grant program as compared to previous WUV grants and without the usual DEC summer business office shutdown. Please reach out to WUV if you believe you will have unique invoicing payment requirements under this grant. 10% of the grant award will be held until the project is complete and all deliverables are submitted.