

2024-2025 Watersheds United Vermont
DEC Enhancement Project Development Grant (EPDG)
Grant Guidance

Overview

Watersheds United Vermont (WUV) is administering funding under the Enhancement Project Development Grant (EPDG) program, which will serve to support the project development of priority water quality enhancement projects in 2024 through 2025. WUV seeks proposals for the development of new enhancement projects and for the development efforts needed between the design and implementation phases of enhancement projects.

The EPDG program is part of WUV's larger Enhancement Development Design and Implementation Block Grant (EDDIBG) through the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's (VT DEC) Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP). WUV has separated out the Project Development portion of this grant as the work completed under project development is significantly different from the work completed under design and implementation.

No match is required under this program. 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.

Email the application to:

WUV Director Lyn Munno: lyn@watershedsunitedvt.org

and

WUV Grant Administrator Christian Pelletier: christian@watershedsunitedvt.org

Application Due Date **January 19, 2024**

Anticipated Notification of Award.....~**3 weeks after application submitted**

Grant Guidelines and Information

<i>Key Dates</i>
December 14, 2023: WUV Enhancement Project Development Grant (EPDG) - Request for Proposals released
January 9, 2024. 9am – 10am: WUV will be hosting a webinar on the EPDG program. Please register for the webinar here: EPDG Webinar Registration
January 19, 2024: Enhancement Project Development Application due
Early – Mid February: Funding Decisions announced
December 1, 2025: All projects funded through this grant round must be complete with final invoicing and deliverables submitted by December 1, 2025 or no more than 3-months after the completion of the project (whichever one occurs sooner).

<i>Available Funds</i>	
<i>Funding Category</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Enhancement Project Development</i>	<i>~\$150,000</i>
<p>There is no set limit that can be requested by each group under this grant program. Your organization can submit an application that meets your organization’s project development needs. However, please be aware that WUV plans to support project development efforts of many groups.</p> <p>There are two other Funding Program Administrators with Enhancement Project Development funds: Natural Resources Conservation Council and the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission. The funding requirements are the same for all entities, though the application and grant administration process may vary somewhat. For ease of grant administration, if possible, NRCDs should apply for project development funding through NRCC and RPCs should apply through the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission. However, all eligible entities can apply through any Enhancement Grant Funding Program Administrator if there is a need.</p>	

Application Documents

To complete submission of the application for this grant round you must submit the following document:
2024-2025 WUV Enhancement Project Development Grant Full Application

The application can be found [here](#)

Please complete and submit the application as a Word or PDF file. The completed application must be emailed to both Lyn Munno (lyn@watershedsunitedvt.org) and Christian Pelletier (christian@watershedsunitedvt.org) by **January 19, 2024**.

Project Eligibility

Although Project Development work is often not well defined as it represents the earliest stages of a project, applicants must ensure that all work completed under this grant program meets the statutory goals and definitions below. These goals and definitions have been broadened for this round of project development funding as compared to previous WUV project development grants. Although the eligibility criteria may seem complex, most of the “common” types of projects that organizations explore and develop will fit into the criteria below.

In the past, DEC project development grant work needed to focus on nutrient and sediment reduction. DEC’s new 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). Projects that seek to achieve 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.

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 a proposed project doesn’t meet one of these objectives, it is not eligible for funding under the EPDG. Please contact WUV if you have any questions about your project meeting these objectives.

To be eligible for the Enhancement Project Development Grant (EPDG) projects must meet the following additional 3 eligibility criteria:

1. Activities must meet the Project Development Definition

2. Project must be non-regulatory

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

1. Project Development Definition:

Scoping work on any non-regulatory project type to determine feasibility, constraints, and overall suitability for implementing the project. This typically includes reviewing site assessments or other project identification tools and prioritized plans, conducting site visits, refining project scope and phasing, developing conceptual maps and drawings, estimating pollutant reduction benefits, confirming landowner/municipal interest, identification of – and possible engagement with – other stakeholders, partners, and likely concerned parties (e.g. neighbors, funders, regulators), identifying the prospective responsible operations and maintenance party, consulting with DEC staff, and determining project budget and permit needs (local, state and federal), natural and cultural resource constraints, co-benefits, and other project considerations, site constraints and feasibility factors (e.g. rights-of-way, infrastructure, invasive species presence, hazardous materials concerns) in advance of design or between design phases.

Performance Measure: Number of projects explored for design and/or implementation

2. Project must be non-regulatory: To be eligible for the Enhancement Project Development Grant (EPDG), projects cannot be driven by a regulatory requirement. Regulatory projects are those required/compelled by water quality-related 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 Enhancement 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

Further definitions are 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 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.”

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 Watershed 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.

Eligible Project Types:

All project development activity completed under the EDPG program must fit under one of the below project types. To understand the project types above, please see the definition of each project type that can be found at the Project Type table [here](#).

- Lake Shoreland
- Rivers – Floodplain/Stream Restoration
- Forestry
- Wetlands Restoration
- Stormwater
- Roads Project
- Roads/Stormwater Gully
- Agricultural Pollution Prevention
- Riparian Buffer Planting
- Dam Removal

Ineligible Entities:

The following entities are ineligible for applying for these funds:

- Private citizens, individuals
- Private for-profit businesses and industries
- Private for-profit colleges and universities

- Federal agencies
- DEC programs

Ineligible Project Development Activities:

The following project types are ineligible for this funding:

- Project Development is not assessment and planning work. Ineligible activities include performing Lake Wise assessments, road erosion inventories, Stream Geomorphic Assessments, or developing prioritized plans like Stormwater Master Plans, Lake Watershed Action Plans, and River Corridor Plans. These activities are supported under separate CWIP spending initiatives.
- Project Development is not design work, nor is it the work supporting the design or implementation phase of a project. Project Completion tasks for design and implementation phases are supported under separate CWIP spending initiatives.
- Project Development funds may support tasks between design phases but not within or during a design phase. Some limited concept drawings or designs are allowable if they are needed to determine project viability or secure landowner support, but work cannot result in completion of 30%+ designs.
- Project Development is not any activity otherwise supported through Tactical Basin Planning contracts to statutory partners pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 1253(d)(3). If you have questions on the difference between your Tactical Basin Plan and Project Development funding, please contact WUV directly.
- Project Development is not grant writing. Sub-grantees may use funds to gather all the necessary information that might be requested on a funding application but may not charge their time to this grant for writing any applications.
- Project Development is not general, untargeted outreach and education.
- Project development work is not allowed on projects that do not meet the goals and definition of the Enhancement Grant Program.
- Project Development funding cannot be used for any project requiring a 3-acre permit or any other project obligated under the law.

Project Location Eligibility

The EPDG funding can support projects in any basin across Vermont. However, proposed projects located outside of a watershed with access to Water Quality Restoration Formula Grants (Champlain and Memphremagog Basins) will have priority for project development funds.

If the proposed projects are in a watershed with access to Water Quality Restoration Formula Grants (Champlain and Memphremagog Basins), they still may be eligible for EPDG funding, but you must indicate in the application why the proposed set of development projects is best suited for the Enhancement Project Development Grant funds.

If you are unsure if your proposed projects and project locations will fit into the EPFG, we encourage you to contact WUV as soon as possible.

Project Development Watershed Project Database Identification Number

Under this round of Enhancement Project Development funding all applicants must get a Watershed Project Database Identification Number (WPD-ID).

Applicants are likely familiar with getting a WPD-ID number when it is associated with a known project. However, DEC is now requesting that groups receive a WPD-ID that represents the entire request of funding under the application that you will submit. This means that this WPD-ID will be a high-level identification number that represents the entire suite of project development work you outline in your application.

Projects must have this new Watershed Projects Database (WPD) identification number (WPD-ID) to be eligible for funding. To request a Project Development WPD-ID, you must use the New Project Form (N-Form).

[Clean Water Project - New Project Form in ANR Online](#)

At the N-Form link, you will be prompted to input data requirements to obtain a WPD-ID. This includes:

Project Title: Please name your EPDG project with a general name. For example an appropriate name would be “ (Watershed Group’s name) Enhancement Project Development Work”

Project Type: Even though you will be exploring multiple different project types for the actual work you complete, for this WPID, you must choose Project Development as the project type.

Description: Provide a brief ~4 sentences on the types of activities you plan to complete under this grant. For example: “Our group plans to explore 4 stormwater projects identified in a SWMP with the goal of advancing 2 high priority projects to be ready for design funding”

Location, watershed or sub-basin: Please specify general geographic regions you will be working in. Please be sufficiently broad to capture the breadth of the area you are working in.

Please note that this is a new process and the N-Form is generally set up to provide information for one discrete project, please do your best to fill out the form as general as possible to cover the entire suite of projects that you are applying for.

Watershed Planners will need up to 2 weeks to provide applicants with a WPD-ID. Please complete the N-Form as early as possible before you submit the WUV EPDG application. You CAN submit the application if you have not yet heard back from the Watershed Planner with the Project Development WPD-ID, but the N-Form must be submitted before you submit your application. WUV will not be able to award funding prior to receiving the WPD-ID number.

At the end of the EPDG, you will use the New Project N-Form again to receive WPD-IDs for projects that have been developed and ready for the next project phase.

What is Project Development?

Under the EPDG, all subgrantees must follow the definition of Project Development that is found in the CWIP Project Type table and found in the section above. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation has provided additional guidance to further explain the project development process. In the provided definition of Project Development, the allowed activities can be split into two categories. The two general categories of project development work are: ***General Project Scoping*** and ***Specific Project Development***. In your workplan under this grant, you can describe a process that includes both general project scoping and specific project development work. It is important that any ***General Project Scoping*** that is part of the workplan will lead to ***Specific Project Development*** work. The goal of this funding is to advance projects past the general project scoping phase into specific project development with the goal of projects being ready for the design and implementation process.

Below please see descriptions and examples of the 2 types of project development:

General Project Scoping:

The general project scoping portion of project development aims to identify projects for development. This is intended to be for a relatively small portion of project development activities. General project scoping activities are those that, initially, cannot be linked to a specific project or suite of projects but provide the subgrantees with a list of specific projects to develop. A workplan can't just include general project scoping activities, it must also include next steps to advance scoping work to specific project development work.

Example Allowable General Project Scoping Activities (not an exhaustive list):

1. Review the Watershed Projects Database or existing plans and prioritization document (such as Stormwater Master Plans (SWMP), Flow Restoration Plans, Phosphorus Control Plans, Lake Wise Assessments, River Corridor Plans, Tactical Basin Plans, and the Watershed Projects Database) to find projects to develop
2. Discuss potential projects with Tactical Basin Planners to gauge priority
3. Respond as needed to landowner water quality questions and concerns and conduct landowner site visits to develop strategies for river restoration and protection opportunities that may turn into a project for development
4. Follow up regularly with potential project landowners to gauge interest
5. Educate and communicate with new municipal staff or town committee members on existing River Corridor or Stormwater Master Plans to gauge interest in selecting and pursuing top priority projects

Specific Project Development:

Specific Project Development activities are activities that provide the subgrantee with the information and commitments needed to bring a project successfully into design or implementation. Specific project development activities include the research and communications necessary to advance a

specifically identified project. Most project development work occurs prior to 30% design, however, some projects may already have 30% or 100% designs and may need some further development activities to move the project forward. Specific Project Development activities are the activities that are most often associated with project development.

Allowable Specific Project Development Activities (not an exhaustive list):

1. Work with DEC staff to refine project scope to ensure proposed project is the preferred cost effective project/best management practice (BMP) solution for a given water quality concern.
2. Identify and contact the appropriate landowner and secure landowner support.
3. Identify and contact the operation and maintenance (O&M) responsible party and secure their support.
4. Work with partners or available online tools to estimate potential water quality pollution benefits and project costs (if not already identified in prior-funded design/scoping work).
5. Review potential natural resource concerns and permit needs for the project.
6. Contact any other relevant stakeholders to review potential project barriers.
7. Meet with town staff and select board (if a municipal project) to encourage implementation of specific high priority projects from a sector-based assessment and discuss potential grant funding.
8. Develop project concept drawings, memos, or preliminary designs for the purpose of determining project feasibility and communicating with stakeholders and landowners to secure support. Concept drawing and designs cannot meet the threshold of a 30% design.

Completing your Application

Project Development Workplan

Project Development work takes many forms and our hope is that this application is an easy way to request funds across different project types and different types of project development work.

The main part of WUV's application asks applicants to create a workplan for each project type that they are requesting funds for. The workplan should provide an overview of the project development activities that you plan to complete under each applicable project type. Please include a description of the anticipated project development activities and how these projects will meet Enhancement Grant Program statutory goals. Include any known WPD-IDs for already established projects. WUV understands that project development work is often broad and changing; this section is your opportunity to describe not only the projects you will undertake but your process for identifying projects and proceeding through the project development process.

The workplan could include specific project development work on a known project or a known suite of projects or it could outline general scoping practices that will then result in specific project development work once the scoping is complete (or it can include both of these activities).

The most important part of the workplan is that all aspects meet the definition of project development work that is provided in the Project Types Table and listed in the above project eligibility and What Is Project Development section in this document.

As an example, an application could request funds for development of 2 specific known dam removal projects that already have WPD-IDs, a general scoping plan to review a river corridor plan with the goal of identifying 10 priority projects and from those 10 projects developing 2 projects for design under the river restoration project type, and doing a feasibility study for a culvert replacement. All these requests can be applied for in 1 application.

Project Need, Timeline, Barriers, Environmental Justice

WUV is interested in understanding the general need, timeline, and barriers of your whole proposal. These sections do not need to be divided up by different project types, though feel free to point out specific needs or barriers for aspects of the workplan if warranted.

When answering the Environmental Justice question, please see the following:

S.148 As Passed for Definitions of Environmental Justice, Environmental Justice Focus Population and Meaningful Engagement:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/ACTS/ACT154/ACT154%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

Feasibility Study

If you plan to complete a feasibility study, please make sure you complete the separate Feasibility Study section of the application. This section asks applicants for additional information on the project requiring a feasibility study to ensure the project is eligible for these funds and WUV has enough information to evaluate the need of the study. If you are pursuing a feasibility study, it can't rise to the threshold of a 30% design using these funds.

Project Budget

The project budget does not need to be divided up into different project type categories. Each budget line item can represent the total amount of funding to cover all work requested across multiple project types. Please be sure to review the EPDG Expenses and Funding Restrictions section to understand details on allowable expenses. In the budget narrative section, we ask that applicants give a rough breakdown of anticipated expenses in each project type that you are applying for EPDG funds. WUV will not hold you to the estimated funding breakdowns, but would like to know the general anticipated spending for each project type.

Required Deliverables

All projects explored for development under the EPDG will need to be reported on in the ***Project Development Findings Report***. This report can be found on the WUV block grant resource page [here](#). Please review the PD Findings Report to understand the type of information that will be required to complete project reporting.

If you are familiar with the previous Project Development rounds under WUV, the PD Findings Report is similar to the PD BIF but simplified to provide a streamlined deliverable process.

Reviewing the PD Findings Report before applying for this funding will help to understand the allowable work under this grant program and the expected information that will result from the development work. WUV highly encourages groups to carefully review the PD Findings Report before applying.

Please note that some fields in the PD Findings Report are optional; this represents the understanding that many project development projects differ in the amount of information they produce. If a field is optional, you are not required to provide information, but please provide this information if known.

In addition to the PD Findings Report, a final deliverable for this grant will be WPD-IDs for all projects that have completed development activities and are ready for the next project phase. Subgrantees will be required to submit New Project N-Forms for all projects that are ready for the next project phase. The New Project N-Form can be found [here](#). Once the new project specific WPD-IDs are acquired, they will be listed in the Project Development Findings Report.

WUV will have a set of additional information and documents that will be required in order to access funds for this grant program, these include:

- Sub-Contractor Approval Forms
- W-9
- Certificate of Insurance
- Proof of Procurement Policy
- Invoices
- Interim Check-In/Required Meetings

If funding is awarded, all deliverables will be clearly outlined in the grant agreement.

EPDG Expenses and Funding Restrictions

Leveraged Funds/Match:

WUV has no required match commitment for this grant round. Regardless, match is always appreciated by DEC and WUV, but match will not be used to evaluate proposals. Please include anticipated match amounts as applicable and available.

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

Ineligible Expenses include:

- Expenses incurred outside award duration.
- Annual fees associated with permits that require/compel implementation of the clean water project
- 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 EPDG grant is a cost-reimbursable grant. Subgrantees are paid for eligible incurred costs. Grant recipients will need to provide WUV with itemized invoices for all expenses with a brief description of the funds used including hours and rates. Grant recipients will also need to provide WUV with invoices/receipts from any vendors/contractors. WUV will reimburse subgrantees upon receipt of funds from DEC. WUV will request that groups at least submit one invoice per year during the grant term for this project work. We also request that groups update WUV if you do not expect to spend all allocated dollars in order for WUV to reallocate funds to other watershed groups. WUV can only pay for eligible project types and eligible project expenses.

We understand how project priorities and opportunities can shift throughout a grant period, especially for project development and that projects can take more or less time than anticipated. If you need to adjust funding totals, please reach out to WUV as early as possible.

Project Changes from Previous WUV Project Development Grant Rounds

If you are familiar with WUV's previous Project Development Block Grant program also funded through Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's (VT DEC) Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP), you will notice that there are some significant changes to the application process and the definition of project development under this current round.

One major change is that EPDG funds no longer specify that all projects have a *primary purpose to improve water quality by reducing nutrient and sediment pollution*. This means that the EPDG program has a broader definition of water quality and a broader range of projects that are now allowable. If your proposed project for development meets the definition of the allowable project types, the CWIP grant program overall purpose, and meets the eligibility criteria outlined in this document (non-regulatory and at least one of the 5 statutorily defined purposes), it can be eligible for funding through the EPDG program. If you have any questions about your project development work being eligible for funding, please reach out to WUV as early in the application process as possible.

Another major change is that previous requests for project development funds had to separate out the general project development scoping and specific project development work. WUV is no longer asking applicants to break out this work into separate narratives and budgets. The general scoping work and the specific project development work are still eligible but can be combined into one workplan for a project type. WUV's hope is that this will streamline the project development process and groups can move from scoping project prioritization tools to achieving specific project development tasks seamlessly.

New to this round of funding, all applicants must get a new general Watershed Project Database Identification Number (WPD-ID) for the suite of project development work. Applicants are likely familiar with getting a WPD-ID number when it is associated with a known project. However, DEC is now requesting that groups get a WPD-ID that represents the entire request of funding under the application that you will submit. This means that this WPD-ID will be a high-level identification number that represents the entire suite of projects you outline in your application.