

SOUTH CAROLINA NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR INITIAL PROPOSALS WATERSHED-BASED PLAN DEVELOPMENT

SEPTEMBER 2019

DEADLINE FOR INITIAL PROPOSAL – OCTOBER 10, 2019 AT 3 P.M.



The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) is seeking project proposals for the development of watershed-based plans (WBP). All watershed-based plan development projects must use the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WBP-development guidance.

EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) for Source Water Protection (SWP) will be funding watershed-based plan development projects for the protection of source water. Proposals for SWP funding must address ambient surface water pollutants that can impact source water for drinking water systems. Only project proposals for the development of WBPs within a watershed with a drinking water intake or containing surface source water will be considered for this SWP funding.

SCDHEC also has limited Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments (CZARA) funding from EPA available for watershed-based plan development. This funding does not require a SWP area for WBP development; however, CZARA funds must be allocated to watershed-based plan development in one or more of South Carolina's eight coastal counties: Dorchester, Jasper, Beaufort, Colleton, Charleston, Berkeley, Georgetown, and Horry. These funds may be combined with SWP funds, or they may be provided to an entity seeking funding for WBP development outside of a SWP area, or where there is no drinking water intake. More information on these options can be found in Section IV. Available Funding.

I. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

South Carolina public organizations such as state agencies, drinking water utilities, local governments, Councils of Government, public universities, soil and water conservation districts, regional planning commissions, water systems, watershed organizations, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to receive this grant.

Please note that for-profit entities should not develop proposals for other organizations in anticipation of receiving a future contract. All sub-contracts awarded under a selected project's grant must be issued in accordance with federal and state procurement guidelines. This cautionary comment does not apply to for-profit entities already retained by organizations through such a procurement process. Please be aware that these funds cannot be used to pay for any work done by consultants prior to the award of this grant.

II. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

This solicitation is solely seeking proposals to **develop a watershed-based plan** for future implementation for watersheds within South Carolina. Unless WBP development will use only CZARA funding, the WBPs should include an element for implementation and protection of public drinking water sources. A watershed-based plan can enhance or augment a Source Water Protection Plan because it encompasses both the entire watershed that impacts the supply source and the delineated source water protection area in that watershed. This funding is specifically for a WBP, *not* a Source Water Protection Plan.

Once a watershed-based plan is in place, it becomes the guidance and framework for any water quality improvement activities in that watershed. Having a watershed-based plan in place also opens additional funding opportunities such as Section 319 grants for WBP implementation, as well as the potential for reduced interest rates to implement eligible activities using a Clean Water SRF loan. Thus, watershed-based plans should be comprehensive, addressing both point and nonpoint sources.

A. WATERSHED-BASED PLANS

Watershed-based plans are documents that identify pollutant(s) in a watershed, determine the sources of the pollutant(s), and describe what needs to be done to address each source. A watershed-based plan *must* include stakeholder participation, assessment of the specific causes of impairments and sources of water quality problems, identification of measurable water quality goals, and the implementation of specific actions needed to solve those problems—point *and* nonpoint. To be eligible to receive funding for future 319-funded watershed implementation projects, a WBP must be in place. Current federal 319 grant guidelines outline EPA's nine elements that must be included in a plan (available here:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/2008_04_18_nps_watershed_handbook_handbook-2.pdf).

SCDHEC has also created a *South Carolina Simplified Guide to Developing Watershed-Based Plans* (available here: <https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-010496.pdf>).

This document describes the required elements in detail and walks potential grantees through what is expected in an approvable watershed-based plan.

The purpose of this solicitation for plan development is to assist stakeholders in preparing plans that may be eligible to receive 319 funding in the future. Of note, 319 funds are not available for use where an implementation project would assist in satisfying the requirements of an NPDES permit; thus, a WBP must include a solid number of 319-eligible best management practices (BMPs).

Ultimately, plans should *demonstrate a clear, in-depth knowledge* of the watershed, as well as the relationship to surface water intakes and how activities in the watershed impact surface water. Local groups are often best-suited to develop and implement these plans as they are most familiar with their watersheds and those in the community. Drinking water utilities are highly recommended as partners, or as lead organizations.

B. ELIGIBLE WATERSHEDS

Unless WBP development will use only CZARA funding, South Carolina watersheds that supply source water for public drinking water systems are to be considered. See Source Water Protection Areas in the SC Watershed Atlas (scdhec.gov/atlas) for reference.

Selected watersheds should be chosen so that elements of the completed plan may then be eligible for use of Section 319 Nonpoint Source funds, although communities are encouraged to explore multiple funding options for plan implementation. Selection for funding under this RFP does not guarantee future 319 implementation funding.

Note that watershed-based plans are not meant to substitute or replace existing approved TMDLs. The load reductions prescribed in approved TMDLs must remain in place for permit requirements or other non-regulatory reduction goals. Watershed-based plans may build on these reductions and outline a set of best management practices needed to effectively reach them. Plans may address multiple pollutants.

Due to the relatively short project length and intense project requirements, proposals should have a limited watershed size to provide a workable focus area. Most accepted proposals cover a reasonable geographic scope of 1 to 4 12-digit HUCs.

C. PRIORITY WATERSHEDS

SCDHEC, EPA Region 4, and NRCS have established priority watersheds across the state. These include the following Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs):

- 03050109 (Saluda)
- 03060106 (Middle Savannah)
- 03050206 (Edisto)
- 030601100301 (May River)
- 030502080606 (Okatie River)
- 0304020106, 0304020107 (Black Creek)
- 030502090201, 030502090202 (Sewee-Santee)
- 03060103 (Upper Savannah)
- 03060109 (Lower Savannah)
- 030501091103 (Big Creek-Little Saluda River)
- 030402011102 (Smith Swamp)
- 030501091104 (Upper Little Saluda)

Bonus points will be awarded to any project within these HUCs. However, while priority is given to projects within these watersheds, projects in other watersheds are still encouraged.

D. PROJECT LENGTH

Watershed-based plan development generally takes between 12-18 months to complete and is expected to last no more than 18 months.

E. WATERSHED PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS FOR WBPs

Understanding how climate change may impact a watershed is an important aspect of any watershed-based plan. Climate change in South Carolina could result in both higher stream temperatures and more intense watershed disturbances. Examples of more intense watershed disturbances include: rain events, more frequent and intense flooding, tropical storm events, higher stream flows, rising sea levels, increased erosion rate, displacement of coastal wetlands, more frequent and larger wildfires, and tidal mixing. Such changes would likely cause increased levels of pathogens, nutrients, and dissolved oxygen in waterbodies. These changes could then also cause harm not only to humans, but to native aquatic life populations, such as macroinvertebrates and fish.

Thus, the South Carolina NPS Program encourages watershed-based plans to consider future threats. Integration of flood resiliency and adaptation planning approaches as a response to the potential impacts of climate change, as noted above, should therefore be included in watershed-based plans, following the EPA's nine element watershed-based plan format.

Watershed-based plans should assess and prescribe best management practices (BMPs) that project forward what local needs may be and incorporate adaptation planning aspects to ensure proposed BMPs take more intense watershed disturbances and their impacts into consideration.

BMPs identified should also address not just pollutants and their sources seen historically or in the present but take into consideration the impacts of more intense watershed disturbances. All watershed-based plans should include a protection component, such as conservation easements.

F. FINAL PRODUCT

At the completion of a selected project, grantees must submit a completed, fully-reviewed watershed-based plan. These plans must include, at a minimum, all nine required elements outlined in the *SC Simplified Guide to Developing Watershed-Based Plans* (<https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/CR-010496.pdf>). While WBPs may include considerable introductory, supporting, and alternative material, **each of the nine elements should be clearly identified as such in an addendum with corresponding page numbers**. Selected projects must submit a **final draft** of their watershed-based plan to SCDHEC **thirty (30) days prior to the completion of their contract** to provide enough time for final review.

III. SOLICITATION DEADLINES

This solicitation includes a phased application process. Applicants are required to submit a brief, initial proposal, which will be used to screen projects for eligibility based on consistency with grant guidelines, watershed location, impairment status, and/or source water intake/protection areas. Proposals that make it through this eligibility screening will then be invited to submit a full application package, due 30 days after receiving notification.

Initial proposals must be received by 3 PM on Thursday, October 10, 2019. All proposals must be submitted electronically to NPSGrants@dhec.sc.gov. SCDHEC staff will review proposals for eligibility within 21 days. Applicants with eligible proposals will be notified and given 30 days to submit a full application package.

The **estimated** final application package due date is December 12, 2019 (actual deadline will be determined when the review of initial proposals is complete).

Once final applications are received, a review committee will select eligible projects for funding. For each project selected, the applicant may be asked to submit a revised workplan, incorporating the comments received from the review committee. Following the submittal of the revised workplan, SCDHEC will conduct a final review. Applicants will be notified of selection within 45 days of the close of the final application period. From the time that SCDHEC staff evaluate the proposals until the grant agreement is signed will be approximately 60 days.

SCDHEC reserves the right to (1) make no awards following this solicitation, (2) reject all proposals, or (3) to reject proposals which, in the judgment of SCDHEC staff, fail to reasonably meet requirements of the RFP.

IV. AVAILABLE FUNDING

Source Water Protection Grants will be funded with monies provided to SCDHEC by EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) set-aside for Source Water Protection (SWP). For FY2019, SCDHEC is allocating \$150,000 for projects under this RFP. No per-proposal maximum funding amount is specified in this solicitation, but proposals must clearly justify all costs included in the final application. *Please note that no non-federal match is required and will not be included in the actual grant contract; however, additional consideration will be given to proposals showing supplementary funds leveraged for WBP development, as this shows there is community and partner interest and investment in the WBP development.*

For FY2019, SCDHEC has also received \$24,900 in CZARA funding, which does not require a SWP area for WBP development; however, these funds must be allocated to watershed-based plan development in one or more of South Carolina's eight coastal counties: Dorchester, Jasper, Beaufort, Colleton, Charleston, Berkeley, Georgetown, and Horry. Please note that these funds may be combined with other source water protection grant funds, or **they may be provided to an entity seeking funding for WBP development outside of a SWP area, or where there is no drinking water intake.** *If these funds are applied for under this later condition, a match is not required, but for the WBP development to be successful, the applying entity would almost always need to present a non-federal match, whether in-kind or cash.*

All WBP development projects, regardless of funding source, are funded by quarterly reimbursement. SCDHEC is not liable for any costs incurred by the grantee prior to the date of grant agreement approval, and no payment in advance of the final approval can be made.

Applicants may incorporate previously completed work in the watershed-based plan, but no funding can be used to pay for work done prior to the grant agreement.

V. APPLYING

This solicitation involves a phased selection process. To be considered, interested groups should submit an initial proposal form. This form was distributed with the e-mail announcement of this solicitation and can also be requested via e-mail to NPSGrants@dhec.sc.gov.

The initial proposal form will be used to screen for eligibility and asks the applicant to include the following information:

- Information about the lead organization, project partners, project location, estimated funding request, and water quality concerns and potential pollutant sources to be addressed
- A brief description of what the applicant is planning and a brief plan for stakeholder engagement
- Potential best management practices (BMPs) that may be identified in the watershed-based plan

In addition to the initial proposal form, all applicants are required to provide a digitally-created location map of the targeted project watershed or area on one page of 8.5"x11" paper clearly showing, *at a minimum*, the SCDHEC monitoring site(s), waterbody(ies), town(s), drinking water intake(s), and watershed boundaries. This information can be found in the SC Watershed Atlas (scdhec.gov/atlas). For projects near MS4-permitted coverage, the permit boundaries should also be included.

Initial Proposals must be *received* by 3 PM on Thursday, October 10, 2019. Email your complete proposal to NPSGrants@dhec.sc.gov. Only emails sent to this address will be considered. Confirmation e-mails will be sent upon receipt of all proposal-related messages.

Applicants who make it through the initial screening will be invited to submit a full application. This application will include extensive detail about the project and its budget. The email attachments include samples of the full grant application form. These materials apply only to those proposals that make it through the eligibility screening. However, all applicants should review these materials to understand what they may be required to submit at a later date. Should a proposal be invited to submit a full application package, detailed instructions and forms will be provided. When it comes time to prepare the budget for the application, keep in mind that:

- While no maximum budget amount is specified in this solicitation, ALL costs must be justified.
- The solicitation is for 100% funding, no non-federal match is required; however, additional consideration will be given to proposals showing supplementary funds leveraged for WBP development.

The following table outlines the significant events of this solicitation process:

Process Step	Date	Applicants Submit
Initial Proposal	<u>Due Thursday, 10/10/19 by 3 pm</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Proposal Form • Map
Eligibility Screening (SCDHEC)	Within 21 days (by 11/8/19)	(n/a)
Full Application <i>(Eligible applicants only)</i>	30 days after invitation to submit (approximately 12/12/19) <i>(Actual deadline will be determined when the review of initial proposals is complete)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Form • Map • Budget • Cooperator <u>Commitment Letters</u>
Applicants are notified of selection decision	Within 60 days of application submittal	(n/a)
Selected projects are asked to revise application/workplan	Given 2-3 weeks to make changes	All requested information
Grant agreement drafted and sent to grantee for signature	Three weeks	Signed grant agreement

VI. FAQs

A. Are Matching Funds Required?

Matching funds are not required. Selected projects will be funded 100% by monies provided to SCDHEC by EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund set-aside for Source Water Protection. However, additional consideration will be given to proposals which show supplementary funds leveraged for WBP development.

B. Can SCDHEC Staff Review Draft Documents?

NPS staff and Watershed Managers are available to review draft initial proposals and draft applications on a first-come, first-served basis. Applicants are *strongly* encouraged to submit draft materials and to submit those materials well before the deadlines to receive timely feedback.

C. Who Can I Contact for Assistance?

The following staff are available for assistance with this solicitation. Applicants should contact the NPS Program Coordinator and the appropriate Watershed Manager for their watershed of interest.

Nonpoint Source Staff

Carmony Corley
NPS Program Coordinator
corleyc1@dhec.sc.gov
803-898-4401

Jana Baxley
Grant Coordinator
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803-898-4213

Karin Skipper
Section Manager
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803-898-4187

Watershed Managers

Amanda Ley
Broad and Edisto Watershed Manager
leyah@dhec.sc.gov
803-898-4183

Andy Miller
Pee Dee, Santee, and Salkehatchie Watershed Manager
millerca@dhec.sc.gov
803-898-4031

Jordan Elmore
Saluda and Catawba Watershed Manager
elmoreja@dhec.sc.gov
803-898-4355

Eliza Nixon
Savannah Watershed Manager
nixoneh@dhec.sc.gov
803-898-4168

D. WHAT GRANT CONDITIONS WILL APPLY TO SELECTED PROJECTS?

The applicant for each selected project must enter into a written Grant Agreement with SCDHEC to establish mutually agreeable terms for completing the project. The Grant Agreement is in the form of a contract formatted according to standard SCDHEC contract procedures. A sample grant agreement is available upon request. Some of the key elements included are as follows:

Administrative Capacity

A “Grantee” (grant recipient) must have administrative capacity to comply with the applicable requirements of federal “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements” (40 CFR Part 30 or 31) or “Uniform Administrative Requirements” (2 CFR Part 200 and 1500) and State requirements. Applicable federal requirements will be specified in an executed grant agreement. This includes, but is not limited to, managing allowable project costs, non-federal match, cost accounting and invoicing, audit procedures, records access, record keeping, sub-agreements, and progress reporting.

Timely Implementation and Closeout

A grantee is obliged to implement the project as planned and closeout the project in the time frame outlined in the workplan. The final watershed-based plan document will be due at the close of the grant period. Note that additional final financial paperwork and closeout reporting documents will be due 30 to 45 days AFTER the close of the project. NO costs will be allowed after the close of the project; hence potential grantees should plan to complete these requirements accordingly.

Pre-Award Costs

SCDHEC is not liable for any cost incurred by the Grantee or any Grantee subcontractor(s) prior to the contract effective date. SCDHEC cannot authorize any payments prior to final approval and signing of the grant agreement.

Reporting and Invoice Requirements

The grantee agrees to submit interim **quarterly** progress reports and invoices, as well as a final closeout report that evaluates the project. The evaluation is to include a critique of approaches that were used and recommendations for other similar projects.

The grantee also agrees to support minority and women-owned businesses whenever feasible and will submit MBE/WBE (Minority Business Enterprise/Women Business Enterprise) forms.

Fund Reimbursement

Grantees will be paid by reimbursement **only**. Applicants should have funds available to cover costs each quarter while waiting for reimbursement.

Monitoring and Environmental Data Quality Assurance

Due to the relatively short project duration, monitoring will not be a *funded* component of the WBP development proposals. Watershed-based plans may utilize any existing data collected prior to plan development (including applicable volunteer monitoring data), but no new data is envisioned as part of a plan development proposal through this grant. Data collection may occur *outside* of the grant with *outside funding*. If your project involves environmentally-related measurements such as water quality sampling, monitoring, or sample analysis, the work must be completed in accordance with a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that is approved by SCDHEC prior to data acquisition. No costs associated with monitoring occurring outside of a QAPP will be allowed and no data collected outside of a QAPP will be considered. All

grant agreements will include a term stipulating this requirement. More information on QAPPs, including guidelines, can be found online:

https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/docs/HomeAndEnvironment/Docs/OAPP_Guide%20Sept_2008_Finalflags.pdf

Food and Promotional Items

NO food or promotional items may be purchased with SWP funds.

GIS Requirements

All selected projects that have a Geographic Information System (GIS) component must follow EPA/SCDHEC GIS guidance. Please ensure the most current protocols are used.

Travel

Travel expenses, including room and board, incurred in connection with the project will be limited to reimbursement at the standard State rate in effect during the period of the project agreement and will be included within the maximum amount of the contract. The 2019 mileage rate is \$0.58 per mile. Due to travel reimbursement policy changes made by the State of South Carolina, effective on July 1, 2006, the State standard rate for hotels will be at the established Federal Government Services Administration rate or below for the area of travel. These rates can be found at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

Management Fees and Similar Charges

Management fees or similar charges in excess of the direct costs and approved indirect rates are not allowable. The term “management fees or similar charges” refers to expenses added to the direct costs to accumulate and reserve funds for ongoing business expenses, unforeseen liabilities, or for other similar costs which are not allowable under this solicitation. This includes any markup added to eligible costs.

VII. REVIEW CRITERIA

The review committee will evaluate proposals with the following criteria:

- Does the proposal mention protection of source water and specify ambient surface water pollutants that impact source water (unless the proposed WBP development will use only CZARA funding)?
- Does the organization demonstrate administrative capacity, expertise, and experience? Are HUCs part of the source water for drinking water intakes?
- Is the application clear and thorough, with well-defined steps for completion of all nine elements of the Plan?
- Are all budget costs reasonable, explained, and justified?
- Does the Plan identify appropriate partners (including the drinking water system, unless the proposed WBP development will use only CZARA funding)?
- Does the proposal provide a detailed description of the watershed? Is it of reasonable geographic scope? Does it include the number of drinking water customers (unless the proposed WBP development will use only CZARA funding) and demonstrate local interest in protection and restoration?
- Does the proposal demonstrate use of and good understanding of water quality monitoring data in the area?

- Are all required attachments present? This includes a digitally-created map showing monitoring site(s), waterbody(ies), town(s), target watershed boundary(ies), DW intake(s), and MS4 permit boundary(ies), if applicable. This also includes Commitment Letters from **ALL** cooperating organizations.
 - Does the proposal identify potential BMPs that will be addressed in the watershed-based plan?
 - If applicable, does the proposal reflect all revisions from the initial submission?
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VIII. DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

SCDHEC's NPS Program reserves the right to refuse any proposal which does not meet the RFP requirements for:

- Eligibility
- Complete budget justification
- Submission of required information

Additionally, proposals which, in the judgment of SCDHEC staff, fail to reasonably meet other requirements of the RFP may also be rejected.

IX. ATTACHMENTS

- Initial Proposal Form
- Sample Final Application Form