



John R. Kasich, Governor
Mary Taylor, Lt. Governor
Craig W. Butler, Director

May 23, 2014

Request for Proposals
FY2015 Section 319 Grants
Application Deadline July 25, 2014

Dear Nonpoint Source Management Partner:

We are pleased to announce that Ohio EPA, in concert with other state water quality partners, is soliciting proposals for grants awarded under Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act. Grants up to \$400,000 each will be awarded to local governments, park districts and other organizations for the implementation of projects to restore Ohio streams, reduce loadings of nonpoint source pollutants such as nutrients, sediment and/or projects that undo damage caused by hydromodification or the alteration of stream or riparian habitat. Smaller grants (up to \$200,000) are available to design and implement green storm water management demonstration projects. These grants provide up to 60% of total project costs and are awarded for three year terms. Local participants must provide 40% of total project costs either through in-kind services and/or cash.

Based on anticipated FY15 federal funding, we anticipate that at least \$2 million will be available for Section 319(h) grant funding during Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. The actual amount depends upon the final FY15 U.S. EPA budget approved by Congress and the allocation awarded to Ohio by U.S. EPA.

Background and Funding Priorities: Section 319(h) grant funding is targeted to Ohio waters where NPS pollution is a significant cause of aquatic life use impairments. Projects that eliminate such impairments and/or restore impaired waters will score significantly higher in the review process and receive more favorable consideration than general NPS pollution prevention projects. Projects identified in completed Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) reports and State-endorsed watershed plans that eliminate impairments and/or restore impaired waters will receive higher consideration than projects submitted from other watersheds. Consistent with recently revised federal program guidance we do not anticipate funding any projects from watersheds that do not have an endorsed watershed plan, and/or approved TMDLs; however, Ohio EPA's director may elect to fund demonstration projects in such watersheds when doing so may result in the elimination of impairments and/or advancement of NPS management capacity. All proposed projects must be implemented consistent with the nine required program elements listed in **Attachment 1** of this RFP.

Projects that propose using all grant funds for on-the-ground construction work (including engineering and design services) will receive significantly higher consideration than projects that include requests for disproportionate amounts of personnel, overhead, grants administration and/or project management costs. Disproportionate = more than 15% of total project costs (which includes match).

Grant Amounts and Local Matching Requirements

Applicants may apply for varying amounts (depending upon activity) up to a maximum of \$400,000 in federal Section 319(h) grant funds for a three-year period. **The required local share of project costs is 40%** – in other words, 40 percent of the total project costs MUST be provided as local match. *For example: if **total** project costs equal \$200,000, then no more than \$120,000 may be federal 319(h) grant funds. Applicants providing cash match will score higher than those providing in-kind services as match.*

Applicants may apply for more than one type of project within a single grant application; **however, TOTAL** Section 319(h) grant funding requests may not exceed \$400,000 in total federal funding. *Grant sponsors may submit only one (1) application per watershed.* As a means of encouraging broad participation, grant criteria are established to provide additional credit to applicants without active subgrants or who have never received a Section 319 grant.

Grant sponsors currently holding two (2) or more active Section 319(h) and/or Surface Water Improvement (SWIF) grants should not apply for additional funding until existing subgrant projects are complete and closed.

Eligible Applicants: The following entities are eligible to apply for and receive grant funding awarded under Section 319(h):

- Local municipalities, counties and townships
- County and municipal park districts
- Soil & water conservation districts
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation and watershed organizations
- Watershed groups with local government sponsorship
- State agencies with land management responsibilities

School districts and private schools are **NOT** eligible to apply for Section 319(h) grants; however a local government may apply to complete projects on publicly accessible school grounds with permission and support from the school. Similarly, municipalities or regional sewer districts operating under a consent decree or other legal orders are **NOT** eligible to apply for stormwater projects. State universities are **ONLY** eligible to apply for innovative storm water demonstration projects.

Eligible Projects: Water quality improvement and nonpoint source management projects eligible for funding under Section 319(h) are limited to:

- Stream restoration and re-naturalization using natural channel methodology
- Riparian restoration using green methodology
- Wetland restoration
- Innovative stormwater demonstration projects
- Highly targeted (HUC-12 scale) agricultural best management demonstration projects
- Inland lake management and restoration

Additional information about eligible projects is listed below.

Project Specific Educational and Outreach Requirements

All applications for Section 319(h) grants must include project-specific educational and public outreach activities describing how the successes of the project will be communicated throughout the community. ***Costs associated with project-specific educational and outreach activities are eligible for grant funding, but may not exceed 10 percent of total project costs.***

Environmental Monitoring

Ohio EPA will conduct project-appropriate environmental monitoring for all grant funded sub-grant projects using a dedicated crew from the Division of Surface Water's Ecological Assessment Section or by a contract provider. ***No grant (or matching) funds may be used by applicants for water quality monitoring activities.***

Sample Projects

A sample listing of the types of projects that we are seeking to support with Section 319(h) grant funding follows. We also have included general grant guidelines and limitations that may apply to specific types of projects:

1. Stream Restoration and/or Dam Removal/Modification Projects

Stream restoration or re-naturalization projects that re-establish natural ecology, morphology, channel stability and natural flows continue to be **highly** encouraged. Hydromodification and habitat alteration are the two highest magnitude causes of NPS impairment in Ohio's streams.

Eligible projects include natural stream channel reconstruction; overwide ditch conversion; levee removal or modification; non-armored stream bank stabilization in areas of known impairment; low-head dam removal and/or modification; in-stream habitat restoration; and/or other projects that restore natural stream ecology, morphology and flow. Stream restoration projects will receive a higher score when restored areas are protected with conservation easements and/or other riparian protection measures. Applicants are eligible to apply for up to **\$400,000** in federal Section 319(h) funding to implement these projects.

*Logjam removal is **NOT** eligible for funding or for use as local match under this program. Also, any project that is under enforcement order or required as mitigation under regulatory programs such as Section 401 permits is **NOT** eligible for funding.*

2. Wetland Restoration and/or Re-naturalization

The restoration of wetlands that are hydrologically connected to surface waters is important for the effective filtering of nonpoint source pollutants. Section 319(h) subgrant funding is available for local groups to help restore and protect naturally occurring wetland areas. We are particularly interested in funding projects that restore previously existing wetland areas that are being degraded through existing land uses such as farming, mowing or other activities. Up to **\$400,000** is available for wetland restoration projects that will contribute to improvements in surface water quality. Wetlands must be hydrologically connected to the stream in order to qualify for funding. Restoration of isolated wetlands is not eligible.

Projects that also propose to protect restored areas with conservation easements or other protective measures will receive additional consideration.

Section 319 grant funding may not be used to construct wetlands in areas where wetlands did not exist naturally.

3. Innovative Storm Water Demonstration Projects - Please note reduced eligible amount

Uncontrolled runoff from storm events may be a serious contributor of nonpoint source pollutants to some of Ohio's streams. Many urban areas in Ohio are required to regulate and/or manage storm water flow and do so under storm water permits issued by Ohio EPA. Recent trends in storm water management have identified innovative practices and techniques that are showing increasing promise in the management of storm water. Ohio EPA is interested in promoting these practices by funding local projects that demonstrate these innovative storm water management practices. Applicants may apply for up to **\$200,000** in Section 319 grant funding to implement eligible projects and practices such as those listed below:

- Retrofitting public commons or parking areas with permeable pavements.
- Installing small scale green roofs on public buildings.
- Installing bio-filtration islands and/or vegetated retention structures such as large public rain gardens* or large infiltration planting areas.
- Installing passive "treatment trains" that combine multiple BMPs such as pocket wetlands, bio-filtration islands and others to treat storm water flows prior to discharging in a stream.
- Constructing storm water treatment wetland areas and infiltration zones.
- Installing rainwater harvesting and reuse systems on public buildings or facilities.
- Other practices designed to demonstrate innovative management of storm water flows.

Section 319 grant funding **may not be used for projects such as rain gardens, rain barrels or other stormwater demonstration management practices conducted on private lands or lands owned by private for-profit businesses and/or individual homeowners. Section 319(h) funds may only be used for stormwater demonstration n projects on public properties.*

**Section 319 grants may not be used to implement any activities required under stormwater permits or as mitigation for other permits such as those issued under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.*

4. Agricultural Best Management Practices and Projects

When implemented effectively, creative and highly targeted projects using agricultural BMPs are effective at reducing or preventing NPS pollutants from entering surface waters. During the FFY 2015 grant cycle, Ohio EPA is particularly interested in funding two or three intensive agricultural projects employing multiple management practices in concentrated areas of known impairment. The types of projects being encouraged are:

- Nutrient management projects (**must** include more than nutrient management planning);
- Sediment control projects (including installation of filter areas (not strips));

- Controlled drainage projects;
- Livestock exclusion and manure management projects;
- Conservation crop rotation projects with cover crops; and
- Riparian re-vegetation and/or protection projects.

General limitations for the above agricultural BMP projects include:

- Projects must be implemented in a single 12-digit (old 14-digit) HUC subwatershed which is addressed by an endorsed watershed action plan and/or completed TMDL.
- Grant-funded practices must be selected from the Ohio USDA-NRCS list of conservation practices standards.
- Personnel costs may not exceed 15 percent of grant funds requested.
- Cost-share amounts may not exceed 75 percent of actual costs required to install or implement management practices.

Consistent with federal grant guidelines, Section 319(h) grant funds may not be used to replace and/or expand an existing EQIP (or other farm-bill funded) initiative within the same subwatershed for which a grant project is proposed. Neither may Section 319(h) grant or matching funds be used as cost-share for tillage and/or other agricultural equipment purchases. Applicants are eligible to apply for up to \$400,000 in federal 319(h) funding to implement these types of projects in only one 12-digit HUC per grant cycle.

5. Inland Lake Management and Restoration

Ohio lakes that are primary recreational areas often show the effects of nonpoint source pollution entering through tributaries in the watershed. Lake protection and restoration project grants are available to applicants interested in implementing projects that will measurably improve lake water quality in and around recreation areas. ***Grant funding is available ONLY for lakes that are publicly owned and accessible to the public.***

Applicants may apply for up to **\$400,000** in Section 319 grant funding to implement eligible projects and practices such as those listed below:

- Phase 1 Diagnostic-Feasibility Clean Lakes Studies (**\$100,000 maximum**)
- Lakeshore stabilization BMPs to reduce sediment loadings.
- Channel aeration to address anoxic conditions and eliminate fish kills.
- Alum treatment demonstration projects designed to inactivate nutrients.
- In-stream alum dosing unit demonstration to reduce tributary nutrient loadings.
- Lake water circulators and/or other devices to reduce blue-green algae blooms.
- Upstream fore bays or constructed wetlands designed to capture incoming pollutants and/or sediment.

6. Acid Mine Drainage Abatement and Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Projects

When conducted consistent with an approved acid mine drainage abatement (AMD) and treatment plan, AMD abatement and reclamation of abandoned mine land (AML) projects may significantly and permanently reduce or eliminate metals, sediment and other NPS pollutant from mining-impaired waterbodies.

Proposals requesting grant funds for a relatively small site-specific project in which Section 319 funds provide the majority of support will receive more favorable consideration than a project in which Section 319 grant funds are a rather small portion of a much larger project.

Construction projects designed to address AMD abatement or AML reclamation must demonstrate the following at the time of application: a completed characterization of the problem, general permission from all applicable landowners, preliminary cost estimates, and a conceptual design for treatment.

Applicants are eligible to apply for up to **\$400,000** in Section 319(h) funding to implement these projects.

7. Riparian Restoration Projects - Please note reduced eligible amount

Riparian areas play vital roles in preventing pollutants from entering surface waters. Tree planting, stabilizing eroding streambanks using bioengineering methods, levee and dike removal or riparian wetland restoration, and other projects designed to restore previously impacted riparian forests and floodplains are encouraged. If conducted on private lands, a conservation easement **MUST** be placed on the project sites. Applicants are eligible to apply for no more than **\$200,000** to implement riparian restoration projects.

8. Riparian and Wetland Protection and Conservation Easement Projects on HIGH QUALITY Waters - Please note reduced eligible amount

Riparian and wetland protection projects, when wetlands are hydrologically connected to surface waters, may be valuable in protecting existing high quality streams from potential NPS pollution threats. Riparian protection projects funded under Section 319(h) must be focused in areas where NPS causes are known to be the primary reason for impairments or threats of impairments. Riparian protection projects also may be focused along high quality streams where the threat of NPS impairments has been identified and localized. To be eligible, watershed must have a TMDL and/or endorsed watershed action plan in which protection is a recommended action and the stream must be in attainment of its designated aquatic life use. **Applicants have the burden of demonstrating that project sites selected for protection are indeed threatened.** Applicants are eligible to apply for no more than **\$200,000** to implement conservation easement and other riparian protection projects **ON HIGH QUALITY STREAMS ONLY. Land purchases are NOT eligible.**

General Section 319(h) Implementation Grants Guidelines

When preparing your application for Section 319(h) implementation grant funding, the following general guidelines apply:

1. In very limited instances, Section 319(h) grants may be awarded to state agencies with land management responsibilities or state universities. Private individuals and/or For-Profit businesses are NOT eligible for Section 319(h) funding under Ohio's program.
2. **Nutrient and/or manure management or agricultural run-off control from regulated livestock feeding operations are NOT eligible** for grant funding. Incentive payments for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and/or bonus payments for the adoption of certain long-term conservation practices under CRP or CREP are **not** eligible for Section 319(h) implementation grant funding.
3. Section 319(h) implementation grant funds may **not** be used to pay for best management practices (BMPs) or "end-of-pipe treatments" which either are required or anticipated to be required under an NPDES permit. Neither FFY 2015 Section 319(h) implementation funds nor local matching funds may be spent on Phase 1 or Phase 2 NPDES storm water compliance efforts.
4. **Land purchases are ineligible** under Section 319(h) implementation program funding. However, this limitation does not apply to the acquisition of conservation easements when the original landowner retains title to the property. Cost-share (and/or matching credit) may **not** exceed the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement or \$25,000 per acre, whichever is the lesser amount. Easements must be acquired consistent with provisions of Ohio Revised Code Section 5301.67(A).
5. **Local matching funds are "federalized" upon approval of grant funding.** Matching funds may **not** be used for activities or expenditures that would otherwise not be allowable, allocable, or reasonable for federal grant funds under federal grant regulations or guidelines. *For example, land acquisition is not allowable under Section 319(h) grant guidelines; therefore, local matching funds may not be used for land acquisition either.*
6. **Research and monitoring activities are NOT allowable.** However, activities such as sediment studies, hydraulic modeling and other analyses that are required as part of permitting for projects such as dam removal and stream restoration MAY be completed using Section 319(h) grant funds.
7. Costs associated with complying with stormwater permit requirements are **not** eligible for funding under Section 319(h).
8. Grant applicants and implementing agencies must have the proper jurisdiction within a watershed to implement the proposed activities.
9. Project sponsors may subcontract portions of their Section 319(h) or local matching funds for technical or other services associated with implementation of the proposed project.

Application Deadline & Review Procedures

The deadline for submitting Section 319(h) implementation grant applications is **close of business July 25, 2014**. **Applications must be complete and received and/or postmarked by the above date to be considered for funding.** Applications postmarked (or hand-delivered) after this date will be returned to the applicant without further consideration.

Please submit **three (3)** copies of the complete application with **original** (blue ink) signatures and **one (1)** copy of the application in **Microsoft Word** format on a flash drive or CD. Completed applications may be mailed or delivered to:

Russ Gibson, NPS Program Manager
Ohio EPA / Division of Surface Water
50 West Town Street, Suite 700
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

Upon receipt, all Section 319(h) implementation grant applications will be reviewed for completeness, technical merit and adherence to the 1987 Amendments to the Clean Water Act, 2014 U.S. EPA Section 319(h) Program Guidance, and FFY 2015 Request for Proposals criteria. Applications found to be administratively complete will undergo a comprehensive review using criteria designed to evaluate and score the following:

1. environmental results likely to be achieved;
2. status of TMDL and/or local watershed planning efforts;
3. applicant's prior performance with Ohio EPA grants;
4. overall effectiveness of the project at solving an identified problem;
5. feasibility of completing the proposed project in a timely manner;
6. local commitment and matching funds;
7. applicant's capability to administer federal grant funds;
8. project specific educational and outreach activities; and
9. existing environmental quality and restorability of the watershed.

In addition to the above general criteria that are applicable to all applicants, projects also will be evaluated using specific technical criteria developed for the specific type of proposed project.

Upon completion of all reviews, applications will be ranked according to their review scores and recommendations for funding will be developed based upon this ranking. Funding decisions will be made by the director of Ohio EPA and recommended to U.S. EPA Region 5. Recommended subgrant applications will be incorporated into the Ohio Section 319(h) grant application submitted to U.S. EPA. We anticipate that formal grant awards will likely be announced in early Spring 2015. Successful applicants will be required to execute a formal grant agreement and adhere to all requirements of the Section 319(h) implementation grants program.

Application Materials and Technical Assistance

Applications are available at the Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water homepage located at <http://epa.ohio.gov/dsw/nps/index.aspx#LiveTabsContent120842>. Applications are also available at Ohio EPA's district offices or by contacting Russ Gibson, NPS Program Manager, at (614) 644-2020.

We appreciate your interest in Section 319(h) grants and look forward to working with you to help Ohio meet important water quality goals. If after reviewing this information you require additional assistance or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at the numbers listed above.

Sincerely,



Karl R. Gebhardt
Deputy Director, Water Resources
Chief, Division of Surface Water

KRG/rg/jh

Attachments

Attachment 1

Nine Program Elements that All Projects Must Meet

The following information is condensed from 2003 U.S. EPA Guidance for Watershed Action Plans.¹ All Section 319 implementation grant projects are required by federal 319(h) grant guidelines to meet each of the following nine elements:

1. An identification of the causes and sources or groups of similar sources that must be controlled to achieve the load reductions estimated.
2. An estimate of the load reductions expected for the management measures described.
3. A description of the NPS management measures that must be implemented to achieve the load reductions estimates and identification (using a map or a description) of the critical areas in which those measures are required.
4. An estimate of the amount of financial assistance needed.
5. An information/education component that will be used to enhance public understanding of the project and encourage their early and continued participation.
6. A schedule for implementing the NPS management measures that is reasonably expeditious.
7. A description of interim, measurable milestones for determining whether NPS management measures or other control actions are being implemented.
8. A set of criteria that can be used to determine whether loading reductions are being achieved over time and substantial progress is being made toward attaining water quality standards.
9. A monitoring component to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation efforts over time, measured against the established criteria. (Projects will meet this element by virtue of Ohio EPA performing statewide Section 319 project monitoring during FY15).

¹ For the complete text, please refer to <http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-WATER/2003/October/Day-23/w26755.htm>. These nine program elements also form the basis of Ohio's watershed plan endorsement criteria.