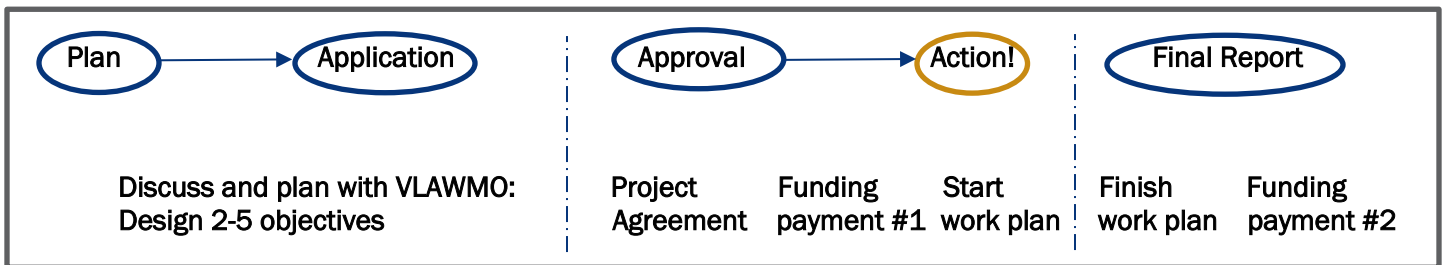


COMMUNITY BLUE GRANT GUIDE

Program Overview

Community Blue is a grant program that fosters environmental education, community service, and citizen engagement. Its projects promote an understanding of watershed stewardship while exhibiting leadership in stewardship behaviors.

The program is designed in the following order. Grant stages are shown at the top, with planning components at the bottom.



All grant applications are evaluated by the VLAWMO Technical Commission (TEC) for approval. Grants above \$1000 are evaluated and approved by both the TEC and the Board of Directors (BOD). Approval is subject to available funding and the prospective project’s relevance to VLAWMO’s mission.

Grant amounts: \$100 - \$10,000

Contract duration: Contracts are set according to project need. Minimum of 1 year, maximum of 3 years.

Funding dispersal: Upon acceptance of the application, projects will receive funding in one or two increments, delineated in a case-by-case basis according to the objectives in the grant application.

Grants over \$1,000 are divided into two payments (Ex: payment for objectives 1-2, followed by payment for objectives 3-5). The first payment serves as a start-up payment to support the project’s early stages, and the final payment functions as a reimbursement, to be distributed upon the completion of the project and its documentation in the official work plan/final report. A project report may be requested between the start of the work plan and the finishing of the work plan.

Match: Cash or in-kind, mandatory 25% annually. Preference is given to projects with higher in-Kind match funds.

Application deadline: None – funding renews each year on January 1st and is available until depleted.

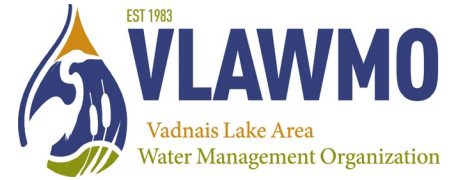
Eligibility

Any community group is eligible to receive a Community Blue grant. Examples of applicants include:

- girl scouts/boy scouts
- community service or service learning groups
- non-profit and faith organizations
- public entities
- business owners
- schools, teachers & educators
- neighborhood groups/association

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Project Examples

Grant projects must be for public benefit, be publically visible, and occur within VLAWMO. Examples include:

- community education programs/curriculum
- demonstration projects: citizen science, aquatic invasive species (AIS) research and management, neighborhood clean-ups
- workshops or trainings on water conservation
- educational material development/signage
- support for events focused on water conservation: food (accompanying at least one other relevant component) and water-related entertainment.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION	DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS	WORKSHOPS OR TRAININGS	EVENT SUPPORT
Community education programs are ongoing learning opportunities for the public. For example, a teacher seminar or a series of classes that teach about water or water-related issues such as pollinators may require printing, honorary guest speakers, or curriculum training.	Demonstration projects are on-the-ground projects that tell a story showing how a specific water-related issue (such as polluted stormwater) can be addressed. Responsibility and physical maintenance for demonstration projects fall on the grant applicant - VLAWMO will help plan the project, cover building costs, and provide resources to make it an ongoing, publically visible, real-life case study that encourages others to join in the effort.	Workshops or trainings are single events or short series that may or may not support a demonstration project. Topics can range from shoreline restorations, turf management, road salt application, green roof construction, to in-home water conservation. Grants can cover workshop materials, guest speakers, promotion materials, or tools such as low-flow faucet aerators.	Planning a community event or expanding an existing event is a great way to promote water conservation. To attract popular attention and support, grant funds can be utilized for culturally relevant attractions that are also specific to water. For example, a professional theater performance, storyteller, or license for a public movie screening with supporting promotion and evaluation strategies.

Past Projects

- Purple loosestrife control in wetlands
- Actor/educator presentations on water quality from theater groups
- Raingardens and corresponding educational material
- Floating bio islands that promote lake water quality
- Youth leadership projects focused on promoting watershed behaviors (adopt-a-drain, planting natives, water-friendly lawn care, smart salting, etc.)

If you're thinking of a project but are unsure how to get started or how it would fit into Community Blue, contact VLAWMO for assistance at (651) 204-6070.

Goals & Objectives

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Community Blue program goal

The goal of Community Blue is to support community-oriented, publically visible, and educational projects that promote water conservation, natural resource stewardship, and stormwater BMP's (best management practices) within VLAWMO.

Individual project goals & objectives

Each accepted project must identify a goal that relates to the Community Blue program goal as well as one or more measurable objectives that support that goal. Grantees are expected to evaluate their activities and be able to demonstrate measurable results. VLAWMO reserves the right to edit project measurables to support effective impact and documentation in a manner consistent with past Community Blue grants.

Planning SMART goals & objectives

To achieve the program goal, applicants are to specify the objectives of the project.

The goal is a general guiding statement, and the objectives tell the story of the project. Objectives lead to direct, measurable outcomes. Planning for the objectives should be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Doing this planning up front helps ensure a successful, low stress project in the long term. Please consult with VLAWMO staff to outline objectives.

Completing the work plan

The work plan becomes the final report of the project, in addition to several follow-up questions. Each objective is broken down into sub-tasks according to the needs and scope of the project. Hours and costs are documented along the "story" of the work plan. Other points covered in the work plan include listing expected barriers, how barriers will be met, and describing how the project supports community awareness, knowledge, skills, and behaviors. VLAWMO staff is available to assist in the completion of the work plan with technical support and project guidance.

Eligible Expenses

What expenses will make the project a success? Eligible expenses should be reasonable, necessary, and approved in the Work Plan. Examples of eligible expenses include:

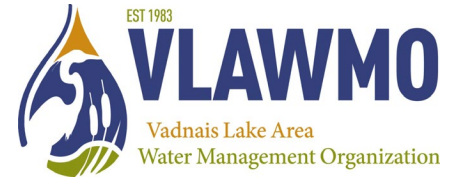
- Staff time: Administration, coordination, data collection, planning, or assessment
- Purchasing supplies and materials
- Professional services
- Facilities or equipment rental
- Contracted professional services
- Prints, mail-outs, newspaper advertising
- Other expenses eligible if accompanying an expense listed above. Subject to review on a case-by-case basis by the VLAWMO Technical Commission and Board of Directors.
 - Mileage (IRS rate)
 - Food

Fees for professional services:

1. VLAWMO does not specify compensation rates. Instead, compensation for professional services, (including teachers, teaching artists, and staff) contract hour rates, and compensation for support services such as project management, evaluation, planning, marketing, technical work, etc. should reflect industry standards, market rates, and the skill and experience of the worker. Rates are reviewed by the VLAWMO Technical Commission, should be appropriate to the project's needs, and be clearly justified in the project work plan.

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2. For contributing professional assistance (including teachers, teaching artists, and staff) please give a brief description of qualifications or experience.

Ineligible Expenses

Unallowable costs include but are not limited to:

- Paying of debts, late fees, investment fees
- Fundraising
- Gifts or prizes
- Lobbying or political contributions
- Activities outside of the VLAWMO watershed or failing to serve residents who live within VLAWMO's watershed. Subject to discussion and review from VLAWMO TEC and BOD.

Grant Amendments or Termination

Should an approved grant require more funding because of larger than anticipated interest, change in venue location, change in cost or availability of presenters or supplies, etc., requests will be approved by VLAWMO staff to be brought to the soonest monthly TEC meeting for approval. Amendment requests above \$1,000 will be brought to the TEC and BOD for approval. Grant recipients shall write to the TEC and/or BOD describing the reason for the grant amendment, detailed explanation of budget changes (referring to original grant objectives), how the amendment supports the goal of the grant, and description of why the original grant is inadequate. VLAWMO reserves the right to terminate a grant if project objectives are not being adequately met or if project updates indicated in the grant agreement are not submitted in a timely manner. Additional funding for grant amendments is dependent on VLAWMO approval and available program funds.

Evaluation Criteria

The selection criteria listed below is used by VLAWMO staff, TEC, and BOD to evaluate proposals.
Education (25%) Project responds to a demonstrated need, with goals and desired outcomes that are clearly stated and compelling. Topic of interest is timely and appropriate, target audience(s) is defined, messaging is accurate and citizens are engaged throughout the duration of the project.
Collaboration/Engagement (25%) Project engages appropriate partners and local citizens in the planning, implementation and/or evaluation process. Partners demonstrate a high level of support for proposal.
Evaluation (20%) Project has a strong evaluation component with goals that are specific and measurable. Evaluation will provide quantitative and qualitative results that can be used to effectively and simply summarize the project and promote future projects. Applicant has a plan for sharing and disseminating results.
Budget (10%) Funding request is detailed and appropriate for the proposed project.
Innovation (10%) Project demonstrates an innovative approach to traditional education and engagement methods.
Compatibility (5%) Project provides additional education or partnership opportunity for other VLAWMO activities in the same period
Timeline (5%) Timeline is clear and realistic given the scope of the project.

In-kind Matching

In-kind matches include the value of goods and services donated to the project. A minimum of 25% is requested, but up to 100% is possible and appreciated to boost community engagement. The in-kind value for volunteer time is \$25/hr. Other examples include donated services, donated materials (specific to this project), complementary advertising, use of space for seminars, and printing.

VLAWMO reserves the right to award full or partial support for proposed expenses.

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Publicity and Acknowledgement Requirements

VLAWMO is a resource to help promote projects. Please send complete information (location, date, time) six weeks before your event so we can post it on our web site and send it via our list serve. Photos may also be included in event promotion.

All projects, publications, and publicity generated materials developed as part of this project must include acknowledgement of VLAWMO as a partner and funder. Printed or digital publications that are to be dispersed publically must contain the VLAWMO logo, which will be provided by VLAWMO staff.

Signage, flyers, text articles, or video ads they must be approved by the VLAWMO Education and Outreach Coordinator.

Final Report Requirements

All grantees are required to track and report information about the project according to the measurables defined in the agreed objectives. A minimum of three photos of the project in action should accompany the final report. Projects that receive grant funding must complete a final work plan using the official work plan document submitted to VLAWMO (add-ons accepted if more space is required).