

VADNAIS LAKE AREA WATER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

800 East County Rd E
Vadnais Heights, MN 55127
651-204-6070
www.vlawmo.org

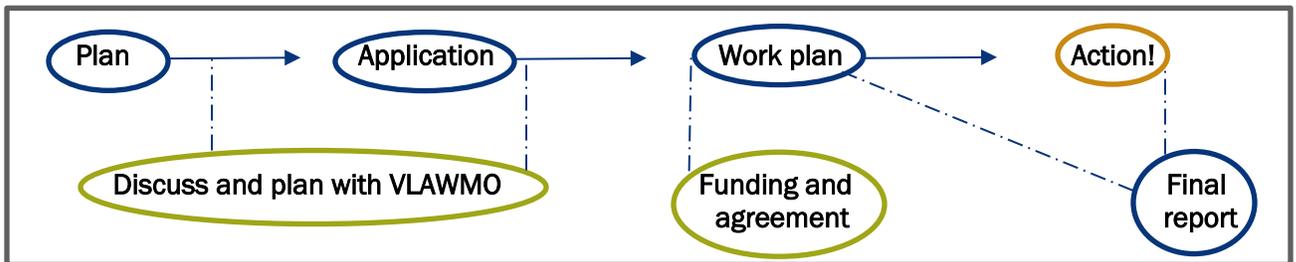


COMMUNITY BLUE GRANT GUIDE

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:



All grant applications are evaluated by the VLAWMO Technical Commission (TEC) for approval. The application and the work plan must be completed and submitted together. Approval is subject to available funding and the prospective project's relevance to VLAWMO's mission.

Grant amounts: \$200 - \$10,000

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

Funding dispersal: Upon application and plan acceptance, projects funding is segmented according to the outlines objectives in the application. VLAWMO will approach each grant's funding segments on a project-by-project basis due to the uniqueness of community collaboration projects. General guidance in this process is 80% upfront once application is approved ("project initiation"), and the remaining 20% of funds disbursed upon completion of 75% or more of the work plan.

Match: Cash or in-kind depending on nature of the project, mandatory 25%

Application deadline: None – funding renews each year on January 1st and is available until depleted. Applications up to \$4,999 are reviewed monthly through the VLAWMO Technical Commission (TEC), and applications \$5,000 and greater are reviewed through both the TEC and the VLAWMO Board of Directors, which meets every other month.

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-profits and faith organizations
- public entities/local government
- business owners
- schools, teachers, and educators
- neighborhood groups/associations
- Master Water Stewards in conjunction with Freshwater Society
- Watershed Action Volunteers (WAV) or Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members with a completed application and active volunteer role

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.

Project Types:

COMMUNITY EDUCATION	DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS WITH EDUCATION PLANS	WORKSHOPS & TRAININGS
<p>Community education programs are learning opportunities, programs, or printed signage with public exposure. Examples include guest speakers relating to water resources or watershed education, contracting with actor/educator performances, storytellers, artists, acquiring a license for a relevant movie/documentary screening, creating a water-friendly carwash kit, or printing signage to accompany a best management practice (BMP). Education programs may require printing, guest speaker honorariums, or assistance for advertising.</p>	<p>Demonstration projects are BMP (best management practice) installations with outlined education plans. BMP's include raingardens, lo-mow turf, native plantings, bee lawns, bioswales, shoreline restorations, rain guardian catch basins, or other stormwater improvement practices recognized by the VLAWMO cost-share program. Education plans must be defined with at least three years of annual maintenance, outlined budget, contact information of participants and their roles, and three of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual community maintenance events supported by an ongoing list of active volunteers. • Annual open house or tours in combination with other local BMPs (bus/van rental within grant application) • A phenology picture post with entries posted a minimum of monthly • Printed watershed education materials on hand (assisted by VLAWMO) • Seasonal updates on the BMP status posted to websites, email blasts, or social media. 	<p>Workshops or trainings are single events or a short series that fosters watershed awareness to a community. Topics can range from teacher curriculum training, green infrastructure presentations, professional conferences, turf management or de-icing best practice training, or in-home water conservation. Grants may cover workshop materials, guest speakers, promotion materials, or tools such as space rental or low-flow faucet aerators.</p>

Goals & Objectives:

Community Blue program goal

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

Individual project goals & objectives

Each accepted project must identify a goal that relates to the Community Blue program goal, supported by one or more measurable objectives. Grantees are expected to evaluate their activities.

Planning SMART goals & objectives

To organize the project, applicants are encouraged to specify the objectives of the project.

While the goal is a general guiding statement, the objectives tell the story of the project broken down into steps. Planning for the objectives should be SMART: Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Effective objectives include front-end, middle, and back-end measurements. For example, "submitting a minimum of 2 newspaper articles" is front-end measure, that lists something the applicants will *do*. "Acquiring a minimum of 10 participants to an event" is a middle measure that describes what happens in the project. "Documenting a 50% increase in improved lawn maintenance habits", "gallons of water infiltrated annually by a BMP", "sq. footage of turf converted into lo-mow fescue" or "inspiring 15 adopt-a-drain sign-ups" are back-end evaluations that are results beyond the project's tasks or timeframe. Back-end results describe what remains when the project is said and done. Objectives early in the project (1-2) generally reflect front-end, and objectives at the end (4-5) generally reflect the back-end, or the final results. VLAWMO works with applicants to outline an entire project at the time of the application, which will serve as a guide over the course of the project. VLAWMO will assist with the creation of back-end evaluation strategies and measurements.

Completing the work plan

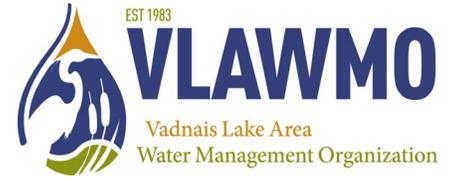
The work plan becomes the final report of the project, in addition to several follow-up questions custom to the project scope. Each objective is broken down into sub-tasks according to the needs and scope of the project. Hours and costs are documented along the "story" of the work plan. Other points 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:

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- Staff time: Administration, coordination, data collection, planning, or assessment
- Purchasing supplies and materials
- Professional services
- Facilities or equipment rental
- Contracted professional services.
Contractors must outline costs and invoices in congruence with the grant application.
- Prints, mail-outs, newspaper advertising
- Expenses eligible if accompanying another expense listed above
 - 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.
2. For contributing professional assistance (including teachers, teaching artists, and staff) please give a brief description of qualifications or experience within the grant application.

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.

Scoring Criteria: Procedure for VLAWMO Board and Technical Commission in reviewing, weighing, and/or modifying received applications.

Category	Points
Program fit (20%): Project is compatible with the Community Blue goal or makes a strong case to relate to VLAWMO's mission. SMART Goals and desired outcomes are clearly stated. Topic of interest is timely and appropriate, target audience(s) defined, outreach method, and connections are made to local water resources are	1-20

defined. A minimum of 25% match-funds are outlined. Projects within VLAWMO cost-share target zones are weighed more.	
Leadership (20%): Project demonstrates watershed leadership and motivates participants to reflect on and improve their relationship to water. Project inspires water-related awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills, and behaviors, while outlining and committing to physical maintenance when needed.	1-20
Evaluation (20%) Project has an evaluation component with goals that are specific and measurable. Evaluation provides meaningful information that can be used to assess results and provide comparison to future projects. Applicant has a plan for sharing and disseminating results.	1-20
Growth and replication (10%) Project creates social and organizational networks to inspire future projects related to water resource improvement and education, or demonstrates an ability to be efficiently replicated.	1-10
Collaboration/Engagement (10%) Project engages appropriate partners and local citizens in the planning, implementation and/or evaluation process. Partners demonstrate a high level of support for project proposal.	1-10
Budget (10%) Funding request is detailed and appropriate. Sub-costs in objectives clearly add up to final cost.	1-10
Timeline (10%) Timeline is clear and realistic given the scope of the project.	1-10
Total:	100

Coverage Limits: Approved grant coverage dependent on available funds, subject to VLAWMO review and adjustment. Funding renewed annually.

	Project type	Coverage %	Match %	Funding Available
Homeowner: Master Water Steward, WAV or CAC member. VLAWMO Cost-share grants are defined as separate projects.	Community education, workshops, trainings	100%	Minimum 25% in-kind	Up to \$10,000
	Demonstration project: Public/community property	100%	Minimum 25% in-kind	Up to \$4,000
	Demonstration Project: private property	75%	Minimum 25% cash Additional 25% in-kind	Up to 2,000
Group: Scouts, neighborhood assc., local government, congregations, external organization, business, etc.	Community education, workshops, trainings	100%	Minimum 25% in-kind	Up to \$10,000
	Demonstration project	100%	Minimum 25% in-kind	Up to \$4,000

Application Criteria: Tools for applicants in writing applications as well as VLAWMO review.

Category	Points
Outlined objectives (40%): The project is clearly outlined by up to 5 objectives serving as stages of the project. Each objective is a specific task within the project, accompanied by a measurable outcome, timeframe, and associated cost. Costs and timeframes of objectives clearly match the overall budget and timeframe.	1-20
SMART measurements (40%): Objectives include front-end, middle, and back-end measurements according to the examples outlined on page 3. Exceptional applications seek not to just complete the project but to also collect information for evaluation (closing survey, etc.). If parts of the project are dependent on unknown variables at the time of the application, these are clearly defined and distinguished as a list of prospective directions and actions. Prospective actions are equipped with defined measurements should they occur.	1-20
Partnerships and Contacts (20%): Project partners are listed in the application with names, titles, contact information, and role in the project. Maintenance responsibilities are defined with contacts and timeframe.	1-10
Total:	50

Past Projects:

- Actor/educator presentations on water quality from theater groups
- Collaboration with local congregations to promote water-related service projects, events, and public education
- Alternative turf groundcovers accompanied by neighborhood tours and open-house demonstrations with Q&A
- Installation of picture posts to monitor phenology (changes in the environment over time) in or around lakes, streams, or wetlands.
- Education signage for native plantings

Visit vlawmo.org/grants/community-blue for more examples. 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.

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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 to boost community engagement and maintenance activities when applicable. 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.

Publicity and Acknowledgement Requirements

VLAWMO is happy to help advertise projects. Please send information six weeks before your event so we can post it on our web site and send it via our list serve.

All projects, publications, and publicity generated or developed as part of this project must include public 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.

To obtain the VLAWMO logo contact the Education and Outreach staff. If signage is a part of the grant it must be approved by the VLAWMO Education and Outreach Coordinator.

Final Report Requirements

All grantees are required to track and report information about project participation (measurables that are defined in the objectives). Priority will be given to applicants with clear, effective, and relevant measurables as deemed by the VLAWMO Technical Commission (TEC). Projects that receive grant funding must complete a work plan submitted to VLAWMO, which becomes the final report. Work plan spreadsheet provided by VLAWMO, project photographs, surveys, or other outcome materials are presented separately as deemed appropriate

VLAWMO Staff Access

Grant applicants agree to provide access to private property or buildings for VLAWMO staff to photograph and inspect project installations, for as long as the project is in existence. Specific visit guidelines such as timing and accessibility are to be established between the property owner and VLAWMO.

Acronyms

TEC: Technical Commission

BOD: Board of Directors

WAV: Watershed Action Volunteers

CAC: Citizen Advisory Committee

BMP: Best Management Practice