



Critical Flood Risk Infrastructure Grant Program Application Instructions and Evaluation Criteria



The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Coastal Program and Watershed Assistance Section are accepting Critical Flood Risk Infrastructure Grant (CFRING) applications for flood resilience and stormwater management projects located within New Hampshire’s Coastal Watershed. The applications will be scored and ranked according to the “Evaluation Criteria,” as described in Section F. Applicants with the highest-ranking applications will be notified in writing and must enter into a Grant Agreement with NHDES to receive funds. The final Grant Agreement will be subject to successful negotiation and State of New Hampshire Governor and Executive Council approval. Federal funding for this grant opportunity is provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

A. Purpose

Communities and infrastructure in New Hampshire’s Coastal Watershed are highly susceptible to damage from severe and increasing flood risks, including relative sea-level rise (RSLR), coastal storms, RSLR-induced groundwater rise, extreme precipitation and freshwater flooding. The [New Hampshire Coastal Flood Risk Guidance](#) recommends coastal watershed communities plan for between 2.9 and 6.2 feet of RSLR by 2100, groundwater levels to rise between 33% and 66% of RSLR within three miles of a tidal shoreline, and at least a 15% increase in extreme precipitation estimates. Furthermore, debris, sediment, leaves, and other materials often clog inland catch basins and drain pipes, thereby reducing the capacity of community stormwater systems to handle heavy precipitation. Many coastal watershed communities are also subject to federal permits that require improved stormwater management. Fortunately, there are ways to mitigate these risks and challenges by retrofitting vulnerable infrastructure and facilities, implementing nature-based flood resilience projects with habitat protection and restoration benefits, improving stormwater system operation and maintenance programs, and updating undersized drainage infrastructure.

NHDES is pleased to announce the CFRING funding opportunity, which will provide targeted funding for flood resilience and stormwater management projects necessary for saving money, infrastructure, and lives, as well as providing regulatory relief for many coastal watershed communities through planning, assessment, and project implementation. For the purposes of the CFRING funding opportunity, flood resilience refers to the capacity of a community or system to thrive in a changing climate – not only measured by the capacity to “bounce back” quickly from shocks and stresses like storms, but also, and perhaps more importantly measured by the capacity to “leap forward” to create new ways of working that enable sustained achievement of community goals and social, economic, and environmental well-being over the long-term. Stormwater management is defined as the use of structural or nonstructural practices that are designed to reduce stormwater runoff pollutant loads, discharge volumes, and/or peak flow discharge rates.

B. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include New Hampshire municipalities, quasi-governmental organizations (e.g., regional planning commissions, county conservations districts, etc.), non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions. Projects must take place within one or more of the 42 New Hampshire

communities located within New Hampshire's Coastal Watershed.¹ Each applicant may apply for funding for multiple projects, but to ensure efficient use of funds, each project must be independent from each other. Applicants that have already received ARPA funding through other NHDES funding programs are still eligible to apply for CFRING funding, including applicants that may have already reached the \$2,000,000 ARPA grant limit for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) program and/or the \$2,000,000 ARPA grant limit for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program.

C. Project Categories and Eligibility

The U.S. Department of Treasury defines eligible uses of ARPA funds.² Eligible uses must be aligned with the wide range of types or categories of projects that would be eligible to receive financial assistance through the CWSRF or the DWSRF.³ For example, CWSRF eligibility includes, but is not limited to, projects that support the implementation of an "a-i" Watershed Management Plan, the [New Hampshire Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan](#), and/or the [Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](#). CWSRF requires stormwater management projects to result in a tangible water quality benefit, but projects that address increased volumes of stormwater will still be eligible to receive CFRING funding regardless of whether there is an expected water quality benefit. Other flood resilience projects must either increase the resilience of wastewater treatment and/or drinking water assets or achieve dual benefits of habitat protection and restoration.

Eligible projects must fall under at least one of the following project categories: (1) *Planning and Assessment*; and (2) *Implementation*. Applicants should apply under the project category that best describes the purpose of their project, but projects that span both categories will also be considered (i.e., an implementation project with a planning and/or assessment component).

Planning and Assessment

Many communities are in the early phases of understanding their flood risk, as well as identifying projects, gathering data, and developing preliminary designs to lay the groundwork for successful implementation projects that reduce vulnerability to flooding and achieve stormwater volume and pollutant load reductions. Recognizing this need, planning and assessment projects will support the development of plans that identify specific strategies and projects that will meet the needs of a community to increase flood resilience and improve stormwater management, the evaluation and prioritization of alternatives, and preliminary designs for flood resilience and stormwater management construction projects.

The amount of funding requested for planning and assessment projects should reflect the scope and needs of the proposed project and must not exceed \$100,000. Total project cost may exceed \$100,000, however, a maximum of \$100,000 will be reimbursed. NHDES will not reimburse work completed prior

¹ New Hampshire's Coastal Watershed communities include: Barrington, Brentwood, Brookfield, Candia, Chester, Danville, Deerfield, Dover, Durham, East Kingston, Epping, Exeter, Farmington, Fremont, Greenland, Hampton, Hampton Falls, Kensington, Kingston, Lee, Madbury, Middleton, Milton, New Castle, New Durham, Newfields, Newington, Newmarket, North Hampton, Northwood, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Raymond, Rochester, Rollinsford, Rye, Sandown, Seabrook, Somersworth, Strafford, Stratham, and Wakefield. A map of the Coastal Watershed is available here: https://preestuaries.org/02/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/map_PiscataquaRegionEstuary-1-1-scaled.jpg

² Department of the Treasury. 2022. Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, Final Rule. <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Final-Rule.pdf>

³ Environmental Protection Agency. 2016. Overview of Clean Water State Revolving Fund Eligibilities. https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-07/documents/overview_of_cwsrf_eligibilities_may_2016.pdf; Environmental Protection Agency. 2017. Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Eligibility Handbook. https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-06/documents/dwsrf_eligibility_handbook_june_13_2017_updated_508_version.pdf

to the grant approval. Planning and assessment projects are expected to be completed within 24 months of Governor and Executive Council approval.

Planning and assessment project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Developing a capital improvement plan with an emphasis on enhancing flood resilience.
- Performing detailed vulnerability and risk assessments of wastewater treatment and/or drinking water assets.
- Performing groundwater rise monitoring, modeling, and vulnerability assessments for wastewater treatment and/or drinking water assets.
- Conducting feasibility studies, site assessments, and preliminary designs for dam removal.
- Preparing preliminary designs for on-the-ground flood resilience and stormwater management projects.
- Evaluating and prioritizing existing stormwater infrastructure for retrofit and upgrade opportunities to reduce runoff volume and pollutant loads.
- Identifying and prioritizing community and/or regional stormwater system operation and maintenance program improvements.
- Developing a public education and outreach plan related to sustainable flood resilience and stormwater management funding strategies.
- Conducting a stormwater and flood resilience utility feasibility study.
- Developing a watershed management plan.
- Performing cost and effectiveness analyses for new stormwater system operation and maintenance programs that enhance flood resilience (e.g., leaf litter collection, street sweeping).
- Conducting septic system vulnerability and inundation assessments.
- Developing/assessing conceptual design alternatives for flood resilience and stormwater management projects that build upon local/state plans or have been prioritized through relevant planning processes:
 - Stormwater best management practices (BMPs).
 - Drainage improvements.
 - Flood attenuation, diversion, or retention strategies.
 - Living shorelines, wetlands restoration, and barrier beach and dune systems with habitat protection and restoration benefits.
 - Tidal culvert replacement.
 - Vulnerable septic system improvements.

Implementation

Applicants may request funding to support final design, permitting, and/or construction of on-the-ground implementation projects, as well as equipment purchases, training, and outreach related to flood resilience and stormwater management program improvements. Funding for implementation projects may be used for advancing preliminary designs into final designs and engineering plans, detailed cost estimates, robust communications with permitting officials at various levels of government, preparation of bid documents, related tasks to prepare projects for construction, construction of flood resilience and stormwater management infrastructure, and implementation of stormwater system operation and maintenance improvements that enhance flood resilience. Applicants should be able to demonstrate an understanding of all relevant permitting considerations. For all implementation projects, it is expected that planning, relevant assessments and prioritization of projects to address specific issues have occurred prior to application submission and that any prior work done to prepare for the activities being proposed will be described in the application.

The amount of funding requested for implementation projects should reflect the scope and needs of the proposed project and must not exceed \$2,500,000. Total project cost may exceed \$2,500,000, however, a maximum of \$2,500,000 will be reimbursed. NHDES will not reimburse work completed prior to the grant approval. Implementation projects involving construction are expected to be completed within 36 months of Governor and Executive Council approval. All other types of implementation projects are expected to be completed within 24 months of Governor and Executive Council approval.

Implementation project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Retrofitting vulnerable wastewater treatment and/or drinking water assets.
- Relocating or elevating wastewater treatment and/or drinking water assets.
- Installing flood attenuation or diversion strategies within or beyond the footprint of wastewater treatment and/or drinking water assets:
 - Deployable/demountable flood barriers.
 - Flood-proof doors and access hatches.
- Implementation of nature-based flood resilience projects with habitat protection and restoration benefits:
 - Living shorelines.
 - Barrier beach and dune systems.
 - Wetland restoration and marsh ditch remediation.
- Upgrading tidal culverts.
- Removing a dam and implementing associated stream and habitat restoration activities.
- Reducing vulnerability of septic systems.
- Disconnecting impervious cover from stormwater drainage systems.
- Upgrading or substantially improving drainage infrastructure.
- Implementing stormwater BMPs designed to withstand current and future flood risks*.
- Implementing improvements to stormwater system operation and maintenance programs that enhance flood resilience (e.g., leaf litter collection, street sweeping):
 - Equipment purchases.
 - Program evaluation tools.
 - Training.

*Please note that stormwater BMP implementation projects will be required to develop an operation and maintenance (O&M) plan, signed by the grantee or designated BMP owner indicating that they understand the maintenance required and that they intend to provide on-going maintenance for that BMP.

D. Funding Availability

The CFRING program will utilize ARPA funds to award approximately \$4,500,000 in grants in 2022. Guidance on maximum funding requests for each project category are referenced above in Section C. Total project costs may exceed the maximum funding request for each category, but costs that exceed the maximum funding request will not be reimbursed. There is **no match requirement** for accessing CFRING funding.

E. Application Instructions

Complete and submit an application via the online [Application Form](#) no later than 4 PM Eastern Time on April 15, 2022. Refer to the following application instructions as you fill out the application form. You may also want to refer to the application evaluation criteria presented in Section F.

Section 1: Applicant Information

- 1.1 **Organization Name:** *Enter the name of the lead applicant organization.*
- 1.2 **Mailing Address:** *Enter the mailing address of the lead application organization.*
- 1.3 **Primary Contact Person:** *Enter the name of the primary contact person for the application.*
- 1.4 **Contact Email:** *Enter the email address of the primary contact person.*
- 1.5 **Contact Phone:** *Enter the phone number of the primary contact person.*

Section 2: Project Information

- 2.1 **Project Title:** *Enter a descriptive title for the project (300-character limit, including spaces).*
- 2.2 **Project Type:** *Choose at least one of the following project categories that best describes the purpose of the project. If the proposed project is an implementation project with a planning and/or assessment component, choose both options. Descriptions of project categories are provided in Section C of the Application Instructions.*
 - a) Planning and Assessment
 - b) Implementation
- 2.3 **Project Summary:** *Enter a clear and succinct summary of the most important project details (1,500-character limit, including spaces).*

Section 3: Project Need and Outcomes

- 3.1 **Project Need:** *Describe the flood vulnerabilities and/or stormwater management challenges that exist, why the project is needed to address the identified vulnerabilities and/or stormwater management challenges, whether the project has been prioritized in existing plans, why it is timely, and why CFRING funds are appropriate to support the project (1,500-character limit, including spaces).*
- 3.2 **Flood Risk Considerations:** *Clearly articulate how the project will consider current and future flood risks and describe how and when the project will apply best available flood risk science and guidance (e.g., [New Hampshire Coastal Flood Risk Guidance](#), [NOAA Atlas 14](#), [Extreme Precipitation in a Changing Climate for New York and the New England States](#), etc.) (1,500 character limit, including spaces).*
- 3.3 **Desired Outcome:** *Describe the expected outcome(s) this project strives to achieve with respect to flood risk and potential stormwater volume and pollutant load reductions. For multi-phase projects, if the outcome is not expected to be achieved during this phase, explain how the project will make progress toward the desired outcome (1,500-character limit, including spaces).*

Section 4: Project Audience and Engagement

- 4.1 **Stakeholder Coordination, Roles and Responsibilities:** *Identify the specific audiences, groups, or people you will engage in the project and describe the process for how they will be engaged in the project. Explain why you are planning to engage these stakeholders and why their engagement is important to the project's success. Explain what they will be asked to contribute to the project and how they will benefit (1,500-character limit, including spaces).*
- 4.2 **Advancement of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice:** *Explain the process by which the project will advance diversity, equity, justice, and/or inclusion. Examples may include, but are not limited to, addressing an environmental justice issue, bringing new voices to the decision-making table or shifting decision-making power, building flood resilience among hard to reach, vulnerable, or traditionally underserved groups, etc. (1,500-character limit, including spaces).*

Section 5: Project Team and Work Plan

- 5.1 **Project Team:** *List key project team members, including any team members from partner organizations/subcontractors funded by the grant, and identify their affiliation, role in the project, and relevant expertise. List only those project team members that will be involved in carrying out project tasks and will receive a portion of the grant funds requested.*
- a) Name:
Affiliation:
Project Role:
Relevant Qualifications:
- 5.2 **Project Work Plan:** *List the key project tasks and estimated timeframes for completion. Project management, required project meetings (kick-off, mid-level, and wrap-up meetings with key stakeholders and a representative from NHDES), and required reporting (quarterly project status reports and a final project report) should be listed as separate and distinct tasks in the proposed work plan. Work plans must include development of Operation and Maintenance Plans for stormwater BMPs.*
- a) Task #:
Title:
Description:
Timeframe:
- 5.3 **Project Deliverables:** *List the key project deliverables. Examples of project deliverables may include events, outreach products, conceptual design plans, final engineering designs, permits obtained, operation and maintenance plans, etc.*
- a) Deliverable #:
Description:

Section 6: Project Budget Detail

6.1 Total Project Budget: *Enter the total amount of grant funds requested and the total amount of match contributions (if any).*

- a) Total Grant Funds Requested:
Total Match (optional):
Source of Match (if applicable):
Total Project Budget:

6.2 Budget by Task: *Provide a breakdown of grant funds requested for each proposed task detailed in Section 5.2. Refer to Section C of the Application Instructions for project category maximum funding amounts.*

- a) Task #:
Grant Funds Requested:

6.3 Budget by Project Partner (if applicable): *Provide a breakdown of grant funds requested for each project team partner organization/subcontractor, including the lead applicant.*

- a) Project Partner/Subcontractor Funded by the Grant:
Project Partner/Subcontractor Grant Funds Requested:

Section 7: Letters of Approval, Commitment, and Support*

7.1 Letter(s) of Approval (required for construction projects only): *Upload letters of approval from project site landowners that demonstrate permission has been granted for construction access and work.*

7.2 Letter(s) of Commitment (required for any partner organization receiving grant funds): *Upload a letter of commitment from each of the project team partner organizations/subcontractors funded by the grant.*

7.3 Letter(s) of Support: *Upload letters of support from project stakeholders that demonstrate the need for the project.*

7.4 Supporting Documentation (optional): *Upload maps, photos, or other documents relevant to the proposed project.*

*Please note that NHDES does not consider attachments confidential and attachments marked as confidential will not be accepted and will delay processing.

F. Evaluation Criteria

Eligible applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following criteria and point values (total of 100 points).

Section #	Section Topic	Maximum Points	Evaluation Criteria
1.1	Organization Name	0	-
1.2	Mailing Address	0	-

1.3	Primary Contact Person	0	-
1.4	Contact Email	0	-
1.5	Contact Phone	0	-
2.1	Project Title	0	-
2.2	Project Type	0	-
2.3	Project Summary	5	Project summary is clear, succinct and summarizes the important details of the project.
3.1	Project Need	15	Applicant identifies the existing flood vulnerabilities and/or stormwater management challenges and provides compelling justification for why the project is needed to address the identified flood vulnerabilities and/or stormwater management challenges. Applicant also explains why the project is needed now, why CFRING funds are appropriate to support the project, and whether the project has been prioritized in existing plans.
3.2	Flood Risk Considerations	10	Applicant demonstrates a clear understanding of current and future flood risks relevant to the project, as well as the best available flood risk science and guidance. Use of best available flood risk science and guidance is logically built into the project.
3.3	Desired Outcome	10	Desired outcome(s) are clearly described, realistic, and will lead to progress toward flood resilience and stormwater management goals in New Hampshire communities. Applicant specifically identifies tangible flood risk reductions and potential stormwater volume and pollutant load reductions the project will achieve.
4.1	Stakeholder Coordination, Roles, and Responsibilities	10	Applicant provides specific descriptions of the audiences, groups, or people that will be engaged throughout the project, why they will be engaged, how they will be engaged, what they will be asked to contribute, and how they will benefit.
4.2	Advancement of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice	5	Applicant demonstrates understanding of the need to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice and provides a thoughtful explanation of how the project will play a role in meeting this need.
5.1	Project Team	10	Roles for each project team member are clearly defined and any team members from partner organizations/subcontractors funded by the grant are identified. The project team has a wealth of relevant experience and includes the appropriate expertise to ensure project tasks are technically sound and feasible.
5.2	Project Work Plan	20	Proposed work plan is thoughtful, realistic, and clearly demonstrates what the applicant will do, when they are going to do it, and what the end results will be.

			The work plan includes the three required project meetings, quarterly status reports, and a final project report as described in Section H of the Application Instructions. For stormwater BMP implementation projects, the work plan includes the development of an O&M plan.
5.3	Project Deliverables	5	Project deliverables are appropriate and reasonable given the proposed work plan.
6.1	Total Project Budget	0	-
6.2	Budget by Task	5	The amount of grant funds requested for each task are reasonable, appropriate, and well-justified given the level of work proposed in the work plan.
6.2	Budget by Project Partner	0	A budget breakdown by project partner/subcontractor is provided if the project involves multiple partner organizations that will be funded by the grant.
7.1	Letters of Approval	0	Letters of approval are provided from all project site landowners that demonstrate permission has been granted for construction access and work. If letters of approval from project site landowners are missing, the application will be automatically rejected.
7.2	Letters of Commitment	0	Letters of commitment are provided from all project team partner organizations/subcontractors identified in the application as receiving grant funds. If letters of commitment from any partner organizations receiving funds are missing, the application will be automatically rejected.
7.3	Letters of Support	5	Letters of support are provided from target stakeholders, audiences, or groups that showcase the need of the project.
7.4	Supporting Documentation	0	-

G. Timeline

Event	Date
Application Webinar	March 7, 2022 at 1:30-2:30 PM ET A webinar will be held to describe this funding opportunity and answer questions. All are welcome to attend.
Deadline for Emailed Questions	March 11, 2022 Please contact Ben Sweeney, NHDES Watershed Management Specialist, at benjamin.r.sweeney1@des.nh.gov or (603) 559-0021 with any questions about this solicitation.
Answers to Questions Published	March 25, 2022 All questions and responses will be posted to the Critical Flood Risk Infrastructure Grant Program webpage .
Application Due Date	April 15, 2022 at 4 PM ET

Award Notifications	May 13, 2022 Selected applicants will be invited to negotiate final scopes of services and budgets with NHDES.
Finalize Project Scopes	June 17, 2022
Anticipated Project Start Date	September 2022, subject to change Projects will begin upon New Hampshire Governor and Executive Council contract approval.
Project End Date	Implementation projects involving construction are expected to be completed within 36 months of Governor and Executive Council approval. All other projects are expected to be completed within 24 months of Governor and Executive Council approval.

H. Terms and Conditions

NHDES reserves the right to reject any or all applications and to negotiate the scopes of work, timeframes, and requested grant amounts. Selected grant recipients will be notified in writing and must enter into a grant agreement with the NHDES to receive funds. NHDES will use the information provided in the application and/or revised scopes of work to prepare the grant agreement.

Submittal of an application does not commit NHDES to award a grant or pay any costs incurred during the preparation of the application. All awards are subject to Governor and Executive Council approval. Once the grant has received final approval, the project can begin. Three meetings with key stakeholders and a representative from NHDES will be required: kick-off, mid-level and wrap-up. Quarterly project status reports will be required throughout the project and a final project report will need to be completed prior to final disbursement of the grant.

I. Contact

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