

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT
2011 WATERSHED GRANTS PROGRAM
OPERATING SUPPORT GRANT
July 20, 2011**

A. PURPOSE

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) recognizes that watershed organizations play an important role in helping local governments and residents address flooding, erosion, and water quality concerns through innovative stormwater management practices, and stream and wetland restoration. This work compliments NEORSD's commitment to clean water and supports the goals of NEORSD's Regional Stormwater Management Program by facilitating flood control, erosion control, and water quality protection projects throughout the District's service area and tributary watersheds.

B. NEED

Many watershed organizations operate on small annual operating budgets while implementing projects that benefit NEORSD member communities. Much of the funding available to watershed organizations for operating support is from membership dues and small fundraising events. These organizations also implement projects using state and federal grants. The majority of these state and federal grants restrict the dollars available for administrative and operating costs. As a result, a significant portion of the staff time of watershed organizations is devoted to pursuing operating funds to keep the organization viable. This emphasis on operating costs limits the ability of watershed organizations to focus on projects and assistance to local governments and residents.

To address this issue, NEORSD's Watershed Grants Program will offer an Operating Support Grant to support the staff and operating costs of qualified watershed organizations. This support will enhance the performance of watershed organizations across Northeast Ohio by increasing their capacity to assist interested local governments and residents, and to focus on the implementation of innovative projects. This will further position Northeast Ohio as a leader in sustainable stormwater management and infrastructure solutions.

C. POTENTIAL AWARDS

NEORSD will award grants to qualified watershed organizations to support the operational needs of these organizations as they pursue implementation projects. The selection of grant recipients is solely at NEORSD's discretion and NEORSD is under no obligation to award any grant funding. Grant amounts will generally range from \$25,000 to \$35,000 and will be limited to qualified watershed organizations.

D. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Watershed organizations with 501(c)(3) status that primarily provide service to the tributary watersheds of NEORSD's service area are eligible as detailed below:

1. *What is a watershed organization?* Watershed organizations must provide board rosters, letters of support from local governments, and other information sufficient to substantiate that they are considered a representative organization for their watershed. See additional information under Sections H and I.

2. *What are the watersheds of NEORSD's service area?* Rocky River, Cuyahoga River, Lake Erie Tributaries, and Chagrin River watersheds.
3. *Who cannot apply?* Government entities and for-profit organizations are ineligible to receive grant funds.

E. NEORSD GOALS FOR THE OPERATING SUPPORT GRANT

NEORSD'S Operating Support Grant is designed to provide operating support to watershed organizations so that they may focus on the implementation of projects that benefit local communities. Through this grant program, NEORSD will support watershed organization as they work to generate additional funding for projects that meet the following goals:

1. Implement low-impact development practices and other innovative stormwater management practices to mitigate the water quality and quantity impacts of existing and new development.
2. Restore streams, wetlands, and other degraded landscapes to address flooding, erosion, and water quality problems.
3. Preserve and protect open space.
4. Demonstrate the economic incentives associated with innovative stormwater management, conservation, pollution prevention, and other practices,
5. Update local resolutions and ordinances to facilitate the implementation of site-based stormwater management practices, erosion and sediment control, riparian and wetland setbacks, and other improved local practices on new and redevelopment projects.
6. Provide workshops and assistance on stormwater management practices to interested landowners and community professional advisors, including law directors, engineers, and planners.
7. Assist interested planning commissions, councils, trustees, and other components of local governments to understand and consider implementation of best land use and land management practices.

F. ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

Grants will be awarded to eligible watershed organizations as detailed in Section D. Eligible costs include operating support such as rent, phone service, office supplies, travel expenses, software, website development, and salaries for implementing the 12-month plan of work discussed in Section H(4).

Recipients must use NEORSD grant funds as outlined in their proposals. Grant funding will be provided in two installments, provided demonstrated progress is shown on implementation of the watershed organization's 12-month plan of work as discussed Section H.

G. GRANT RECIPIENT RESPONSIBILITIES, FAILURE TO COMPLY AND LIMITATIONS OF NEORSD SUPPORT

Upon signing a grant agreement with NEORSD, recipient watershed organizations will be required to:

1. Recognize NEORSD's support in presentations, publications, annual reports, websites, and other documents as appropriate.
2. Complete work as detailed the proposal submitted in response to this Request for Proposal.
3. Complete and submit required progress and financial reports. Templates for these reports will be provided by NEORSD.
4. Meet with NEORSD staff when requested to review progress and grant status

Failure to meet any of these requirements may result in termination of the grant and reimbursement of disbursed grant funds to NEORSD.

Support from NEORSD through a successful grant application shall not be construed as NEORSD's support for the applicant's overall activities. Recipients shall not use NEORSD's name or logo in connection with activities outside the scope of an approved grant application without prior approval of the Operating Support Grant administrator.

H. AWARD CRITERIA

Distribution of grants under NEORSD's Operating Support Grant shall be conducted through a competitive process. Proposals shall be eligible for funding only if all the criteria detailed below are addressed. NEORSD staff will review proposals and award points in each category based on the quality and depth of answers provided. Proposals will be ranked based on points awarded and NEORSD staff will make funding selections based on this ranking. As stated in Section C, NEORSD is under no obligation to award any grant funding.

1. Describe the organizational structure, history, staffing, membership, and annual budget. Provide sufficient detail to substantiate that applicant is an Eligible Applicant per Section D. Provide status of Watershed Action Plans, Balanced Growth Plans, and Total Maximum Daily Load studies. (25 points)
2. Detail the need for assistance under the NEORSD Operating Support Grant includes a list of specific budgetary items for which funding is requested. Provide rationale for any proposed subcontracting and equipment purchases. (10 points)
3. Discuss past implementation projects completed within the last five years, including the source of project funding, level of community support and involvement, and level of success. (15 points)
4. Provide a 12-month plan of work detailing proposed projects and potential implementation grant applications. Provide a brief project description and list proposed funding sources for these implementation projects. The project description should describe the ways in which the proposed plan of work

supports NEORSD's goals for the Operating Support Grant as detailed in Section E. Watershed organizations must demonstrate plans for viable grant applications to project-based grant programs, including but not limited to, ODNR Coastal Zone Management, Ohio EPA 319. Water Resources Restoration Sponsor Program, and other local, state, federal, foundation, and non-profit funding sources. (35 points)

5. Demonstrate that the 12-month plan of work has been discussed with the appropriate technical experts for the applicable watershed. This may include the Ohio EPA, ODNR, and others. (15 points)

I. SUBMISSION FORMAT AND CONTENT

In responding to this Request for Proposals, please submit the following items:

1. A proposal addressing each of the Award Criteria listed in Section H. This is limited to ten single spaced pages on 8.5 x 11 paper in 12 point font. Please submit five hard copies of this proposal.
2. Applicable attachments. These include those required under Section H(1) including the most recent audited Financial Statement, 2009 board roster, and at least three letters of support from local governments sufficient to substantiate that the watershed organization is considered a representative organization for their watershed. Applicants may also include attachments about past projects and other organizational highlights. While there is no limit on these attachments, be aware that the NEORSD proposal reviewers will be looking for well written, well conceived, and concise proposals. Please submit all attachments electronically in PDF format on one compact disk.

J. SUBMITTALS, QUESTIONS, AND IMPORTANT DATES

Please direct all **questions** and **submittals** for this funding opportunity to Linda Mayer-Mack, the NEORSD's Watershed Grants Program administrator. Interested applicants are encouraged to discuss possible proposals with Ms. Mayer-Mack as soon as possible to facilitate good proposals and efficient review.

Linda Mayer-Mack
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Important Dates

1. Request for Proposals available from NEORSD: July 20, 2011
2. Proposals due to NEORSD: August 12, 2011 (By 4:00 p.m. close of business)
3. Project awards: September 15, 2011