



2026 – 2028 METROPOLITAN COUNCIL WATER EFFICIENCY GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

updated 02 / 26 / 2026

1. Overview

The Metropolitan Council (Met Council) will implement a Water Efficiency Grant Program (WEGP) effective July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2028. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to municipalities that operate or are served by a municipal public water supply system.

In this program, municipalities design and operate their own rebate or grant programs, which are funded by the Met Council with pass-through funds from the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment. The Met Council will provide 80% of the program cost; the municipality must provide the remaining 20% of the program cost.

The WEGP focuses on grant activities that reduce existing water use at residential, commercial, and municipal properties. Met Council-approved grant activities include the replacement of specific water-using devices with more efficient alternatives, irrigation system audits, and the conversion of turfgrass to low-input, drought-tolerant landscapes at municipal properties. Residents and businesses participating in a municipality's program must be connected to municipal water.

Grants will be made available in amounts with a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$75,000. In the event that there are unused or returned funds, municipalities may apply for a grant amendment to increase their award beyond \$75,000 (at the discretion of Met Council). Grantees will be required to submit quarterly reimbursement requests and provide actual or estimated water savings achieved through this program for Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment reporting purposes.

Grant program goal

The goal of the Water Efficiency Grant Program is to support technical and behavioral changes that improve municipal water use efficiency in the seven-county metropolitan area.

Changes for 2026-2028

Several changes to the WEGP have been made from past grant cycles. These changes are outlined in the bulleted list below.

- Maximum grant amount: \$50,000 → \$75,000
- Clearer guidelines for grant activity/device eligibility and property type
 - Faucets and faucet accessories added
 - Flushing urinals and flushometer-valve toilets added
 - Commercial clothes washers and commercial dishwashers added
- Met Council strongly encourages (*not a requirement*) that an irrigation system audit be conducted before the replacement of an irrigation controller or spray sprinkler bodies. An irrigation system audit from an Irrigation Professional certified by a US EPA WaterSense

program ensures the user has information for proper set-up and operation of their irrigation system.

- Municipal facility grant activity option added
 - Replacement of water using devices in municipal properties
 - Property turfgrass conversion/replacement
- Low-income cost assistance option added (additional \$10,000 available to expand maximum grant amount to \$85,000)
 - Full cost coverage for eligible residents on indoor water use devices
- Updated reporting form
- Standardized estimated water savings built into reporting for most grant activities (with option for municipalities to provide more specific water savings estimates)

Additional detail about the low-income cost assistance option, newly eligible devices/grant activities, and new eligibility requirements is provided in the following pages.

Critical points to remember

- The applying municipality must be served by a municipal public water supply system
- New construction and new developments are not eligible
- A portion of each eligible grant activity's cost must be paid by the property owner
- Funds are for rebates or grants only; consulting and city staff time are ineligible
- Grant recipients must display the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment logo and the Metropolitan Council logo on program-related web pages and paper communications
- Applications are due April 13, 2026
- Funds must be spent down by June 30, 2028 (municipalities and Met Council will work together to monitor spending and adjust/reallocate funds as needed)
- Grant activities on municipal properties must supplement and not supplant dedicated municipal funding sources

2. Grant program structure

Administration and funding source

The 2026-2028 WEGP will be administered by the Met Council and will be funded with \$1,400,000 appropriated by the 2025 Minnesota Legislature. Grant applications will be reviewed and scored by Metropolitan Council Water Resources staff.

Legislative Directive:
Minnesota 2025 Session Law

\$650,000 the first year and \$750,000 the second year are for grants that implement water demand reduction measures. The grants are to assist municipalities in the metropolitan area with implementing water demand reduction measures to ensure the reliability and protection of drinking water supplies.

Grants will be awarded to municipalities in amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$75,000 for providing rebates or grants to property owners and their renters. (An additional \$10,000 will be available for Low Income Cost Assistance, as discussed below). Municipalities will be responsible for the design and operation of their rebate or grant program and its details. Grant payments to the municipality will be for 80% of approved program amounts. The municipality must provide the remaining 20% of the granted/rebated amount to the property owner. Municipality rebates or grants are eligible for reimbursement on device replacements and other approved grant activities conducted July 1, 2026

through June 30, 2028 (purchases of eligible devices or grant activities must be made on or after the day the grant agreement is fully executed).

Grant program components

Each municipality is expected to design their own program to whatever meets their community needs. Three potential components are residential/commercial grant activities, municipal grant activities, and low-income cost assistance for residential properties.

Municipalities may include any combination of property type and grant activity offering in their program design. Program design has varied by municipality among past participants, with some focusing on a single type of device replacement such as toilets, and others offering a range of options. In the application form and work plan, municipalities will be asked to lay out the grant activities and property types that would be included in the proposed program. While past grant cycles have occasionally included participants pursuing commercial- and municipal-focused grant activities, the 2026-2028 WEGP guidelines more clearly define, and expand, the options available to municipalities that are interested in designing commercial- or internal-facing programs.

Residential and/or commercial grant activities

Municipalities may choose to design their programs to include grant activities at residential and commercial properties. This is the most common approach among participating communities. The participating community selects which devices or other approved grant activities (irrigation audits) to offer to residents or businesses within the municipality. The participating community also determines how much of an eligible grant activity's cost is covered by the program. Property owners must pay a portion of the eligible grant activity's cost.

Eligible grant activities for residential and commercial properties are listed in the table in the Eligible Grant Activities section.

Municipal grant activities

Municipalities may also choose to design their programs to include grant activities occurring on municipal properties. Grant activities eligible for municipal properties are device replacements, irrigation system audits, and the conversion of existing turfgrass to low-input landscaping/drought-tolerant alternative turf. Municipalities that choose to conduct grant activities on municipal properties shall provide measured water savings (ideally) or calculated water savings estimates. These municipalities will also be required to display signage near the grant activity areas that includes the Metropolitan Council and Clean Water Fund logos as well as an explanation of the work done. Participating municipalities must cover the 20% "municipal match" as normal.

This funding is intended to promote and supplement funding for device replacement or turf grass conversion efforts. It is not intended to supplant dedicated municipal funding sources for projects.

Eligible grant activities for municipal properties are listed in the table in the Eligible Grant Activities section.

Low-income cost assistance grant activities

Municipalities operating a residential-facing rebate or grant program may elect to include a low-income cost assistance option in their program. Residents or households who meet a certain income threshold are eligible to receive full cost coverage* for the replacement of one indoor water-using device (toilet, clothes washer, dishwasher, showerhead, or faucet/faucet accessory) with a WaterSense or Energy Star alternative. If a municipality decides to offer the low-income cost assistance option, they can apply for an additional \$10,000 (max grant amount of \$85,000).

Municipalities that choose to include this option in their residential rebate or grant programs will be required to verify resident eligibility. No municipal match will be required. Residents are eligible for this cost assistance element if:

- The resident is enrolled in a county assistance program
 - [Hennepin County Water Assistance Program](#)
 - [Ramsey and Washington Counties Water Bill Assistance](#)
 - [Scott, Carver, Dakota Counties Energy Assistance Program](#)
 - [Scott County Financial Assistance](#)
 - [Carver County Emergency Programs](#)
 - [Dakota County Emergency Assistance](#)
 - [Anoka County Energy Assistance](#)
- The resident is enrolled in SNAP benefits

Eligibility for low-income cost assistance can be verified with appropriate paperwork showing participation in one of the above programs.

*Cost of device and installation is fully covered by Met Council up to:

- \$550 for toilets
- \$1200 for clothes washers
- \$1200 for dishwashers
- \$100 for showerheads
- \$100 for faucets and faucet accessories

Application funding request

The application form will include a table like the one below, where applying municipalities will lay out their funding request. Row A is the requested grant amount, which covers grant activities at any combination of property types and makes up 80% of the traditional grant program subtotal. Row B is the required municipality match of 20% of the traditional grant program subtotal. Row C is the traditional grant program subtotal. In Row D, applying municipalities may enter the low-income cost assistance amount they expect to spend. The funds in Row D do not require a municipality match. Row E is the sum of Rows C and D.

| | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| A | Requested grant amount for residential, commercial, or municipal grant activities (funding from Met Council) (80% of traditional grant program subtotal): | \$16,000 |
| B | Required municipality matching amount (20% of traditional grant program subtotal): | \$4,000 |
| C | Traditional grant program subtotal (sum of Met Council grant amount and required municipality match): | \$20,000 |
| D | <i>(OPTIONAL)</i> Low-income cost assistance requested amount (funding from Met Council) (100% covered by Met Council funds): | \$5,000 |
| E | Total program budget (sum of traditional grant program subtotal and low-income cost assistance funds): | \$25,000 |

**in cases where municipalities have opted in to the low-income cost assistance element, the percent covered by Met Council may exceed 80%*

Eligibility

Requirements for applying municipalities

This grant program is limited to municipalities in the seven-county metropolitan area that operate or are served by a municipal public water supply system.

Grants are only for water efficiency programs offering rebates or grants to property owners and their renters who are customers of the municipal water supply system and who replace specified water-using devices with approved devices that use substantially less water (or conduct other grant activities such as irrigation audits or, for municipalities, turfgrass conversion). In municipalities where only some neighborhoods or areas are served by a municipal public water supply system, only those served by the municipal public water supply system are eligible.

Municipalities eligible per above must apply to participate and, if approved, sign a Met Council Grant Agreement, before any eligible rebates or grants can be submitted for reimbursement. Agreements shall require that municipalities:

- Entirely pass through grants received (as is being done by Met Council)
- Verify purchase of devices or other grant activities to receive grants
- Retain records and cooperate with any audits
- Conduct all communications with property owners and ensure all written communications to property owners include both the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment and the Metropolitan Council's logo
- Provide quantitative information for state reporting purposes

Eligible grant activities

The table below walks through the approved grant activities in the WEGP. Included in the table is information related to the property type (residential, commercial, municipal) where grant activities occur as well as information about estimated water savings. Expenses eligible for reimbursement are the out-of-pocket cost of the device and its installation only, not to include any owner labor costs. In addition, new construction and new developments are ineligible as this program is intended as a current infrastructure replacement program.

| | | Eligible grant activity (with hyperlink to product lookup tool) | Estimated water savings | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| Indoor water use | Toilets | Residential toilet replacement with a WaterSense labeled residential toilet | 13,000 gallons per year (source) | |
| | | Commercial / Municipal toilet replacement with a WaterSense labeled commercial toilet | 790 gallons when replacing a 1.6gpf model and 5,500 when replacing a 3.5gpf model | |
| | | Commercial / Municipal urinal replacement with a WaterSense labeled urinal | 4,600 gallons per year (source) | |
| | Clothes washing machines | Residential clothes washing machine replacement with an Energy Star labeled residential clothes washer | 2,700 gallons per year (based on WRF average clothes washer use and Energy Star estimated percent savings) | |
| | | Commercial clothes washing machine replacement with an Energy Star labeled commercial clothes washer | 45% less water than standard models (source) | |
| | Dishwashers | Residential dishwasher replacement with an Energy Star labeled residential dishwasher | 8,400 gallons per year (source) | |
| | | Commercial dishwasher replacement with an Energy Star labeled commercial clothes washer | 5,600 gallons per year (source) | |
| | | | Showerhead replacement with a WaterSense labeled showerhead | 2,700 gallons per year (source) |
| | | | Faucet replacement or faucet accessory with a WaterSense labeled faucet or faucet accessory | 700 gallons per year (source) |

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Outdoor water use | Irrigation system audit by an Irrigation Professional certified by a US EPA WaterSense program | | See report from Irrigation Professional who conducted audit |
| | Irrigation controllers <i>(Met Council strongly encourages an irrigation system audit before the installation of a new smart controller)</i> | Irrigation controller replacement with a WaterSense labeled weather-based controller (this type of controller is most common) | 7,600 gallons per year (source) |
| | | Irrigation controller replacement with a WaterSense labeled soil moisture-based controller | 15,000 gallons per year (source) |
| | Irrigation spray sprinkler body replacement with a WaterSense labeled spray sprinkler body <i>(Met Council strongly encourages an irrigation system audit before the installation of new spray sprinkler bodies)</i> | | 5,600 per year (for an average household using 50,500 gallons outdoors, operating at or above 60 pounds per square inch) (source) |
| | Turfgrass conversion/replacement to a low-input, drought-tolerant landscape at municipal properties <i>(Municipal properties only)</i> | | Refer to municipality's pre- and post-replacement water use to calculate water savings. If unable to measure specific water use, municipality will provide estimated annual water savings with explanation of calculation. |

Please note, the Met Council strongly encourages an irrigation system audit be conducted before the replacement of an irrigation controller or spray sprinkler bodies. An initial audit ensures the user has information for proper set-up and operation of their irrigation system.

Quarterly reporting

Reporting requirements and payment process

Utilizing a reporting form provided by Met Council, the following information about each grant activity must be reported on a quarterly basis:

- Property address and property type (residential, commercial, municipal)
- Low-income assistance (Y/N) (if applicable)
- Grant activity (device replacement, audit, or municipal turfgrass conversion)
- Brand/model info of new device
- Purchase date (must be on or after effective date of grant agreement)
- Cost per device/approved grant activity
- Number of devices/activities
- Rebate or grant per device
- Estimated annual gallons of water saved per device installation/approved grant activity
- Optional notes column for explaining water use calculations if different from those provided
- Municipality matching funds disbursed
- Number of unmet funding requests from property owners, if any

Municipalities are required to submit a signed and dated quarterly reporting form as well as a PDF(s) of receipts corresponding to each entry in the quarterly reporting form.

Upon review and confirmation of the above information, Met Council will process a grant payment in the amount of 80% of approved total rebates or grants for the reporting period (in cases where municipalities have opted in to the low-income cost assistance element, the percent covered by Met Council may exceed 80%).

Met Council will provide confirmation of grant balances available upon request and reserves the right to amend grant agreements, in collaboration with grantee municipality, if quarterly reporting indicates rebate or grant programs will not fully utilize grant awards within the grant period.

Determining estimated water savings

Annual water savings estimates may come from a variety of sources. Manufacturers may include water savings estimates in their device descriptions or specifications, irrigation professionals report estimated savings after performing an irrigation system audit, and some past participants of the WEGP have calculated specific water savings estimates based on factors such as household size.

Unless a city has specifically calculated estimated water savings or is referring to manufacturer or audit estimates, the recommended sources for estimated water savings are WaterSense and Energy Star. Water savings estimates from WaterSense and Energy Star are included in the table of eligible grant activities.

In quarterly reports, municipalities will be asked to note the source of their estimates if they differ from the estimates provided above. In the case of irrigation system audits and turfgrass conversion on municipal properties, estimates have not been provided by Met Council as these metrics will be calculated by an Irrigation Professional or the municipality, respectively. In any situation where it is possible to report actual water savings, this is preferred.

3. Application process

Application requirements

The application window for the 2026-2028 Water Efficiency Grant Program will open on Friday, March 13, 2026. Applications are due by Monday, April 13, 2026. The application form will be available on the Met Council website.

Required information in the application form includes:

- the municipality's rebate or grant program design and work plan
- proposed examples of communications to property owners
- requested total grant amount
- estimated annual amount of water saved by the applying municipality
- Application form is available at: <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Funding-Finance/Available-Funding-Grants.aspx>
- Submit completed application to: henry.mccarthy@metc.state.mn.us
- Metropolitan Council will notify municipalities of grant awards in approximately May 2026

Evaluating applications

Program proposals will be evaluated based on the answers provided in the application form as well as the attached work plan. Strong applications will include clear answers to the questions in the application form and a thoughtful work plan that outlines strategies for structuring, administering, and promoting (if applicable) the program. For municipalities intending to conduct grant activities on municipal property, applications should include intended plans for device/landscape installation and estimated hours/cost of labor (whether being done by the municipality or a contractor).

In the event that funds requested exceed funds available, the following criteria will be used to determine the amount granted to a given municipality:

- Municipal residential per capita water use
- Municipal ratio of peak month to winter month water use
- Estimated water savings from proposed program

Additionally, municipalities may be asked to provide additional information and/or be awarded less than their requested grant amount if their application is lacking detail, a clear work plan, etc. In future grant cycles, a past participant's record of spending down their award may be used to inform award amounts.