

Business Item

Environment Committee



Committee Meeting Date: January 23, 2024

For the Metropolitan Council: February 14, 2024

Business Item: 2024-30

2024-2026 Water Efficiency Grant Program

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minnesota Session Law 2023, Chapter 40, Article 2, Section 8(b)

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Division/Department: Environmental Services / Water Resources

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approves Business Item 2024-30 on the process for the 2024-2026 Water Efficiency Grant Program and authorizes staff to advertise the availability of grant funding and solicit applications.

Background

The Metropolitan Council (Met Council) will implement a Water Efficiency Grant Program effective July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2026. 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.

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to municipalities that manage municipal water systems. The Met Council will provide 80% of the program cost; the municipality must provide the remaining 20%. Municipalities will use the combined Met Council and municipality funds to operate their own grant or rebate programs. Grants will be made available in amounts with a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$50,000. Grantees will be required to provide estimated water savings achieved through this program for Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment reporting purposes. Grant monies not used by municipalities can be transferred to other municipalities.

Rationale

Water demand in the Twin Cities metropolitan area is increasing in concert with population increase. This increase in water demand is placing greater stress on the aquifers that provide potable water to 75% of the residents in the metropolitan area and contributing to the need for additional water supply wells. The Water Efficiency Grant Program will provide financial aid to communities to replace old and inefficient toilets, clothes washers, showerheads, irrigation controllers, irrigation spray sprinkler bodies, and dishwashers with more efficient WaterSense and Energy Star-labeled replacements. The Water Efficiency Grant Program will also provide financial aid to communities to fund irrigation system audits by an Irrigation Professional certified by a US EPA WaterSense program. This will help reduce stress on our aquifers and potentially reduce the

number of new water supply wells needed in the future.

Thrive Lens Analysis

This action supports the Thrive MSP 2040 stewardship and sustainability outcomes and the water sustainability goal of the Water Resources Policy Plan. Increased water efficiency will help protect our aquifers and save money for both residents and utilities.

Funding

The Water Efficiency Grant Program is funded by Minnesota Session Law 2023, Chapter 40, Article 2, Section 8(b): \$750,000 the first year and \$750,000 the second year are for the water demand reduction grants to assist municipalities in the metropolitan area with implementing water demand reduction measures to ensure the reliability and protection of drinking water supplies.

Small Business Inclusion

NA

