

Water Table - Phase II: Funding Subcommittee

March 14 2024

Funding Subcommittee Potential Action Items

The Funding Subcommittee meets quarterly to share information, build relationships across sectors, and generate and advance initiatives resulting in more efficient, effective, and equitable funding to improve water quality. Website: <https://www.dvrpc.org/waterquality/watertable/>.

The following ideas were suggested during Water Table and related discussions as ideas that the Funding Subcommittee could help advance.

Short Term (6-12 months)

- 1 Create a clearinghouse of grant programs and awards and a system to keep it up-to-date and accessible.
- 2 Expand understanding of funding distribution to underserved communities by inviting in speakers from American Rivers, EPIC, etc.
- 3 Groundtruth areas in the region, and Phila that are currently defined as being underserved.
- 4 Educate stakeholders about the Delaware River Estuary Clean Waters for All Act - a proposed geographic management program within the EPA to improve and protect the health of the Delaware River Estuary and to promote water equity for all communities who depend upon these resources - aka - Geographic Program Act.
- 5 Arrange guided tours for local elected officials of local water infrastructure within their communities to understand what type of infrastructure the community has, where it is located, how it functions, and what improvements and upgrades it needs. Arrange meetings with local utility staff at least annually.
- 6 Create marketing materials about the sense of urgency to address water system improvements.

Medium Term (1-3 years)

- 1 Increase awareness, attention, and funding to address emerging contaminants.
- 2 Work with funders, such as PennVest, to develop less complex funding structures for GSI, and to foster more GSI projects by utilities.
- 3 Work with select disadvantaged communities on empowering themselves to drive their project priorities.
- 4 Build on connections between transportation funding programs, such as the Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Program (<https://www.dvrpc.org/tap/>), and water system needs, such as stormwater management.
- 5 Funders create and publicize up-to-date pre-recorded information sessions and live Q&A webinars for potential applicants to learn about funding programs. Sessions would be best digested if organized by specific type of infrastructure needs, i.e. lead pipe replacements, green stormwater management practices, and emerging contaminants, so candidates can attend the session that would be most appropriate for their needs.
- 6 Acknowledge and prioritize the need for climate mitigation and resilience measures in project designs, and allow and encourage such funding.

Long Term (3+ years)

- 1 Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for water systems in PA and in NJ: start with compiling a list of recommendations from Act 167 Plans, MS4s, PRPs, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Flooding Studies, etc., in a given geography.
- 2 Coordinate smaller water system grant providers, i.e. Aqua, American Water, PECO, etc., to coordinate grant awards for bigger, more systemic impact, versus dispersed impact.
- 3 Support more communities to enact SW fees or authorities.
- 4 Promote new initiatives, like a Water Fund, similar to a carbon trading market, to solve upstream-downstream problems.
- 5 Create a streamlined pre-application system for multiple state-administered funding programs (e.g. a funder coordinated pre-application process that all applications are submitted through and are jointly evaluated by the funders for best fit). The "common pre-application" would require supplemental information as needed for final awards. The purpose is to avoid duplication of efforts and promote more impactful, targeted projects. For example, bring state agencies (PennVest, DEP, DCED, DCNR) that fund water system improvements together to review applications and decide which is the best program to award the project vs. having multiple applications to multiple agencies - see footnote page 25 in Funding Navigator report (<https://www.dvrpc.org/reports/23005.pdf>), citing Arkansas model.
- 6 Promote and execute more multi-municipal MS4 coordination.

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