



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FRANKLIN SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
AND COLUMBUS WATER & POWER
2025-2026 WATERSHED PARTNER SERVICE AGREEMENT PROGRAM
[08/01/2026]

A. PURPOSE

Columbus Water & Power (previously Columbus Department of Public Utilities) recognizes watershed organizations and other conservation entities which provide essential services to both the City of Columbus and CWP's Contract Communities within its service area. These organizations support CWP's efforts to address water quality concerns through community engagement and education, monitoring, and the planning, funding, and implementation of projects – particularly those involving innovative stormwater management practices, such as green infrastructure. These practices help reduce pollution and minimize stormwater entry into storm, sanitary, or combined sewers. Additionally, these organizations advance the mission of the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District's (FSWCD) by promoting responsible land use decisions that conserve, protect, and improve soil and water resources through partnerships, technical guidance, and education.

B. NEED

Through FSWCD, CWP seeks to fund Service Agreements with watershed organizations and other legally recognized conservation entities demonstrating the ability to deliver public education relevant to CWP/FSWCD, and to implement projects that apply pollution prevention techniques and stormwater best management practices. These projects should aim to improve water quality, promote climate resiliency, and support water-quality-focused education and outreach. Please note: **only projects implemented within the City of Columbus limits will be accepted at this time.**

C. SERVICE AGREEMENTS

The service agreement amount will be based on the eligible services offered and is limited to eligible watershed organizations and other legally recognized conservation entities. The total value of these services across all group awards shall not exceed \$50,000 annually. Each service will be individually defined. Individual groups may apply for up to \$25,000 in services, and may submit additional line items for up to \$50,000 total to ensure total distribution of funds. The selection of services is solely at FSWCD/CWP's discretion and FSWCD is not obligated to purchase services from any watershed organization nor is FSWCD obligated to purchase specific services from any specific organization. For example, FSWCD may contract with a watershed organization outside a particular watershed if that organization is best able to provide such services to the

FSWCD. Payment for services contracted under a service agreement will be reviewed quarterly with watershed organizations receiving payment upon review and approval of submitted documentation.

D. ELIGIBLE WATERSHED ORGANIZATIONS

Watershed organizations with 501(c)(3) status that primarily provide service to the tributary watersheds and other legally recognized conservation entities within Columbus City limits are eligible to propose services to FSWCD as detailed in this Request for Proposals.

For the purpose of this call for funding, “watershed organization” means any 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on preserving and improving the quality of rivers, streams, and their watersheds in the Columbus region. Sustainability or conservation focused 501(c)(3) organizations or other legally recognized conservation entities may also qualify for funding if the project proposal falls under one of the categories of eligible purposes set forth in Section E, below.

A watershed organization that does not have 501(c)(3) status may still propose services to FSWCD as long as attainment of the status is proposed as a service and completed first. Eligible organizations must demonstrate how attaining this status will enhance their ability to improve water quality/promote storm water and water quality awareness. Subsequent purchase of other services will be contingent on successfully attaining 501(c)(3) status and at the discretion FSWCD.

E. ELIGIBLE SERVICES

FSWCD seeks to contract with eligible conservation and watershed organizations for the following services and projects. All services and projects must be performed within the City of Columbus limits to be eligible. Proposals should clearly state which of the following categories of eligible services applies:

1. Water quality monitoring, including levels 2 or 3 credible data collection.
2. Restoration of streams, wetlands, and other degraded landscapes to address flooding, streambank erosion, and water quality problems.
3. Preservation and conservation of open spaces through land acquisition and conservation services.
4. Invasives removal activities and tree planting within riparian corridors.
5. Educational programming, workshops, or watershed management assistance to promote conservation, pollution prevention, and other water quality improvement practices.
6. Implementation of innovative stormwater and watershed management practices, such as de-paving, tree planting, or green infrastructure projects, that reduce pollution and increase water quality.

7. Development of NPS-IS Nine-Element Nonpoint Source Implementation Strategic Plans (NPS-IS) for HUC-12s.
8. Coordination and implementation of climate resiliency measures, projects, and programs that have a nexus to water quality.
9. Promotion of pollution prevention techniques and best practices to control stormwater runoff and minimize illicit discharges through the implementation of stormwater management practices.
10. Public art that engages and educates residents on water-quality issues. Public art should be accompanied by educational content and attribution of the funding to FSWCD and CWP either through prominent QR code or educational signage.
11. AmeriCorps member matching funds as required by program, if work assigned to the member will directly advance a service or project that is an eligible service under one or more of the categories above.
12. Attainment of 501(c)(3) status, as long as attainment of this status is completed prior to the purchase of any other proposed services. A watershed group seeking funding for attaining this status must provide an explanation of how attaining this status will enhance their ability to improve water quality/promote storm water and water quality awareness.

F. NON-ELIGIBLE SERVICES

The following services and projects are **not** considered eligible for funding:

1. Sales tax
2. Administrative or salary costs, unrelated to AmeriCorps position
3. Gifts or food
4. Overhead costs, including insurance and other nominal annual operational costs
5. Educational signage totaling more than 20% of the total grant
6. Contractor, design, or consulting fees totaling more than 20% of the total grant
7. Anything else deemed inappropriate or not in furtherance of an eligible purpose by FSWCD staff

G. WATERSHED ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBILITIES, FAILURE TO COMPLY AND LIMITATIONS OF FSWCD SUPPORT

Upon signing a service agreement with FSWCD, watershed organizations will be required to:

- Recognize CWP and FSWCD in presentations, publications, annual reports, websites, and other documents as appropriate.

- Complete work as detailed in the proposal submitted in response to this Call for Proposals.
- Complete and submit required progress and financial reports. Templates for these reports will be provided by FSWCD.
- Meet with FSWCD staff when requested to review progress.

Failure to meet any of these requirements may result in the termination of the service agreement.

Entering into a service agreement with FSWCD shall not be construed as FSWCD's support for the watershed organization or conservation entities's overall activities. Watershed organizations or other legally recognized conservation entities shall not use FSWCD or CWP's name or logo in connection with activities outside the scope of an approved agreement without prior approval of the FSWCD Watershed Resource Specialist.

H. SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the need for eligible services and criteria outlined below. Only proposals that fully address all criteria will be eligible for funding. CWP will review proposals and award points in each category based on the quality and completeness of the responses (1 to 5 per category). Service agreements will be offered for services that are the most advantageous to CWP at their discretion.

1. Eligibility/Capacity of Applicant

Provide sufficient detail to substantiate that proposal is a submission by an Eligible Applicant per Section D. Including:

- Board rosters
- Three (3) letters of support from local governments
- Other information sufficient to substantiate that they are considered a representative organization dedicated specifically to the improvement of the designated watershed

Describe the organizational structure, staffing, and membership. Including:

- Most recent audited financial statement or IRS Form-990
- Current annual operating budget

2. Connection to FSWCD/CWP Missions, RFP Criteria

Complete separate Watershed Partner Proposed Service Worksheet in the application for each service the organization proposes to provide.

- Submit only one (1) page per service
- Note that landowner permission must be obtained for proposed services.

Ensure the proposed service highlights how it connects to the FSWCD and CWP missions, as well as the project criteria in Section E. Provide status of any relevant watershed planning tools such as Nine-Element Nonpoint Source Implementation Strategic (NPS-IS) Plans, Balanced Growth Plans, Total

Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies and if the proposed service may address watershed concerns noted in the plans.

3. Cost Efficiency

Use the budget section of the application to highlight how funds will be spent efficiently and effectively to forward the project goals.

4. Underserved Communities

Indicate whether the proposed service will be delivered in a historically underserved community, such as:

- Celebrate One Neighborhoods
- Urban Mobile Food Pantry (UMFP) Priority Equity Areas
- Areas identified by the CDC Social Vulnerability Index
- Or locally recognized underserved areas

I. APPLICATION

The application for the Watershed Partner Service Agreement is located at:
www.franklinswcd.org/columbus-watershed-partners.

J. QUESTIONS AND IMPORTANT DATES

Please direct all questions regarding this funding opportunity to Henry Stahl, Watershed Resource Specialist of FSWCD:

Henry Stahl
614-813-8443
hstahl@franklinswcd.org

Important Dates:

1. Call for Proposals available from FSWCD: [08/01/2026]
2. Proposals due: [08/31/2026]*
3. Project awards anticipated: [09/15/2026]
4. Service Start Date: [10/01/2026]

**Anticipate a notice of proposal receipt upon submission*