

Government Funding Opportunities for Stormwater Management in Santa Fe



Preface

Long-term stormwater planning promotes effective stormwater management while also supporting a community's broader vision and goals, such as flooding reduction, increased neighborhood aesthetics, improved recreational opportunities through water quality improvement, and public health protection. Long-term stormwater planning can also support a community's resilience, economic growth, infrastructure improvement, environmental compliance and overall quality of life. Establishing a vision and well-constructed plan for accomplishing stormwater program goals can also help open the door to new sources of funding by strategically identifying long-term community goals and better aligning activities with a comprehensive water resource management focus. Communities may be able to save money and find multiple benefits by looking comprehensively at multiple long-term planning efforts to incorporate stormwater early into planned projects.

Santa Fe, New Mexico, is one of four communities that participated in a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) voluntary technical assistance effort to improve long-term stormwater planning. These communities worked with EPA to explore ways to sync planned and future activities with long-term stormwater planning, using the general process outlined in EPA's *draft [Community Solutions for Stormwater Management: A Guide for Voluntary Long-Term Planning](#)*.

Often, stormwater is dealt with in a reactive way. Problems are fixed when they arise, with little thought to long-term solutions that will keep them from happening again. More forward-looking solutions are not identified and implemented. Santa Fe decided to work on this long-term stormwater planning effort to break this cycle and be more proactive in seeking ways to save the community money and improve the community and its waters. With this new approach, Santa Fe is committing to looking for long-term, real improvements for Santa Feans that are based on the community's identified needs, wants and vision.

Through the technical assistance effort, the city and EPA have worked together to identify and address several of the city's long-term stormwater goals, including developing a guidebook for design and implementing green infrastructure on roadway projects as well as information on pursuing government funding opportunities.



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Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols

BMP	best management practice
BUILD	Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program
CPB	Construction Programs Bureau
CWSRF	Clean Water State Revolving Fund
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GPR	Green Project Reserve
HSIP	Highway Safety Improvement Program
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
LID	low-impact development
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MS4	municipal separate storm sewer system
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NMDOT	New Mexico Department of Transportation
NMED	New Mexico Environment Department
NMFA	New Mexico Finance Authority
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
POTW	publicly owned treatment works
RFP	request for proposals
SAP	Special Appropriations Program
SSCAFCA	Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority
SSFC	Sustainable Santa Fe Commission
SWQB	Surface Water Quality Bureau
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program
TIGER	Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMDL	total maximum daily load
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
WBP	watershed-based plan
WIFIA	Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act
WPF	Water Project Fund
WTB	Water Trust Board

Introduction

In December 2016, EPA and the City of Santa Fe began working together on an effort focusing on long-term stormwater planning to determine the city's long-term stormwater planning priorities and goals. This process included a series of meetings and conversations with city staff as well as external stakeholders to get input early on in the process that helped shape the vision of this effort. In September 2017, a core group of stakeholders consisting of EPA, City of Santa Fe municipal staff and contractors, and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) met to discuss objectives and priorities for the city's long-term stormwater planning effort. Participants engaged in site visits and a tour that highlighted Santa Fe's stormwater challenges and opportunities. The city and EPA also hosted a public forum where members of the community were invited to provide input to shape Santa Fe's long-term stormwater planning goals. An additional meeting was held with representatives from various city departments to discuss Santa Fe's stormwater-related challenges, discuss a long-term stormwater vision and begin developing long-term goals (Figure 1).



September 2017 public forum participants.

Source: PG Environmental

Through this stakeholder engagement—a continuous process—residents and employees of the city expressed that all water in Santa Fe needs to be treated as a resource and the lifeblood of the community. There was a strong desire for increased stormwater capture and infiltration to maximize water table replenishment and an emphasis on low-impact development (LID), green infrastructure, and other stormwater controls that reduce the impacts of stormwater on the environment and public safety.



Generate **reliable funding** dedicated to the city's stormwater program.

Incorporate **low-impact development and green infrastructure** dedicated to the city's stormwater program.

Align stormwater efforts with the city's broader functions and responsibilities, including sustainability goals and targets.

Effectively **plan, construct and maintain stormwater assets** over the long term to enhance opportunities to seamlessly incorporate stormwater into city projects.

Define the stormwater **program structure and organizational hierarchy**.

Continue **regional planning** efforts with Santa Fe County and the New Mexico Department of Transportation regarding the upcoming issuance of the NPDES-MS4 permit.



Figure 1. Santa Fe's Long-term Stormwater Planning Goals

A sustainable stormwater program requires staff, financial resources, and an in-depth understanding of the true costs of providing services. Additionally, communities including Santa Fe need to plan for and finance capital improvements and other priority projects to benefit the community and provide essential services. Common funding options include dedicated revenue sources (e.g., stormwater fee) and outside financing (e.g., grants, loans). One of Santa Fe's long-term stormwater planning goals is to establish sustainable financing for its stormwater program and long-term priorities.

Santa Fe began pursuing this goal in the fall of 2017 with the help of its in-house consultant, Tetra Tech. The city conducted an in-depth evaluation of the city's stormwater program organization and resources, including an assessment of stormwater fee implementation. The results are incorporated into *Santa Fe's Stormwater Management Strategic Plan*.

EPA has worked with the city to develop this complementary document to help identify potentially relevant government funding in the form of grants or loans for stormwater projects and priorities in Santa Fe.

What's in This Document?

This document focuses on federal funding opportunities for projects and improvements that incorporate stormwater management strategies, such as green infrastructure and LID. It is also designed as a resource the city can use in identifying existing programs, plans and projects that would align well with stormwater management priorities. This holistic approach can make Santa Fe eligible for more funding opportunities by using stormwater management to fulfill key funding program criteria as part of larger projects (e.g., transportation or other broad-scope community improvements). The document provides the following guidance:

- Integrating stormwater management into existing city planning efforts (Section 1).
- Leveraging strategic partnerships (Section 2).
- Identifying funding opportunities (Section 3).
- Learning from past experience (Section 4).
- A case study of the Santa Fe Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) (Appendix A).
- A case study of the Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority (Appendix B).
- A summary of potential federal funding opportunities (Appendix C).

This document can be shared with city department supervisors and decision-makers, as well as key external stakeholders, to demonstrate the advantage of pursuing stormwater management projects to improve public infrastructure, the environment and overall quality of life for the residents of Santa Fe.

Integrate Stormwater Management into Existing City Planning Efforts

To set up for success in obtaining project funding from outside sources, the city should integrate stormwater management into its current community and infrastructure planning. Stormwater management by itself may not be the central focus of, or meet all the qualifying criteria for, certain grant and loan programs. However, applicants can often still qualify for funding by strategically incorporating stormwater components into the scope of broader projects such as transportation and safety improvements, hazard mitigation, or community and quality of life enhancements. Projects that contribute to master planning efforts and larger-scale community improvements often receive higher consideration and ranking when applying for government grants and loans. Also, having challenges and potential solutions identified and documented in other existing documents can help show that the community is engaged and dedicated to fixing problems that arise.

A community can and should take several key actions to encourage local planners and developers to incorporate stormwater management practices into projects, thus increasing the likelihood of receiving outside funding:

- Ensure that local ordinances and design standards support stormwater management practices, including green infrastructure/LID.
- Increase interdepartmental communication related to project planning; identify opportunities to collaborate.
- Include stormwater management priorities in capital improvement planning.
- Educate local decision-makers and the local design community about the city's stormwater management priorities and the benefits of implementing these types of projects.

In Santa Fe, stakeholders specifically highlighted interdepartmental coordination and cooperation as an area for improvement. Decision-makers who do not typically work with stormwater management planning can benefit from education on the benefits and applicability of stormwater management in project design. Incorporating stormwater management into projects as a component—instead of a stand-alone piece—can often save limited public funding. Stormwater practices can also add value to projects and help secure funding from outside sources. Planners and engineers who do not specialize in stormwater design may overlook, or not be as aware of, the social and economic benefits that various stormwater management approaches can bring to a project and ultimately the community. Coordinated engagement and outreach, both within the city and to external partners, will increase the extent to which stormwater management practices are incorporated into project design, which will in turn create a larger pool of projects to choose from when pursuing funding.



The Santa Fe Railyard was a collaborative city project with several stormwater management features.

Source: PG Environmental

“Stormwater projects work best when communities think about stormwater early in the design phase rather than later after homes and businesses are built. And the most successful plans start with a vision for the community forged by a collaborative process.”

—Long-Term Stormwater Plans: Community Solutions for Clean Water and A Greener Future (EPA, 2017b)

The City of Santa Fe is currently engaged in many long-term and master planning efforts across several departments. Some of these efforts could be leveraged to promote the use of stormwater management practices in the city and to obtain external funding to do so. City departments such as Land Use (see City of Santa Fe, 2017b) and Parks & Recreation (see City of Santa Fe, 2017c) are adept at long-term planning and have already recognized the importance of responsible stormwater management. Other departments, such as Public Works and Transportation, have a long history of working with federal and state programs to fund infrastructure projects. The people in each of these departments provide unique perspectives and knowledge in their fields. This is an opportunity to partner and coordinate, and could represent new potential avenues for project funding.

“Over 20,000 acre-feet of rain water falls within Santa Fe city limits during a typical year. That is more than the average annual usage for all urban use in the city. This runoff can be used to support plants and trees, reduce potable water demand and recharge the overtaxed ground water supplies. Uncontrolled runoff causes erosion and causes maintenance problems in the millions of dollars.”

—*Land Use & Urban Design Plan* (City of Santa Fe, 2017b)

“The City’s efforts to improve stormwater management provides an opportunity to capture water for park landscapes and to incorporate Low-Impact-Development (LID), measure water use and look for efficiencies.”

—*Open Space, Trails & Recreation Master Plan, 2017* (City of Santa Fe, 2017c)

Transportation projects are an especially promising mechanism for pursuing government grants and loans, as managing runoff from impervious roadways is necessary for flood control and safety, and new facility projects typically include some consideration for drainage improvements (quantity or quality). Further, green infrastructure and LID designs that incorporate natural and native vegetation can improve the aesthetics of new streetscapes, attracting pedestrians and businesses. By communicating and aligning stormwater management priorities with bigger-picture city planning, Santa Fe can improve its odds of securing external funding.

