

FUNDING RESOURCE PRIORITIZATION TOOL AND STRATEGY

PREPARED FOR NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT

June 2026

delta institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delta Institute's (Delta) Environmental Finance Center (EFC) has developed this Funding Resource Tool and Strategy Memo on behalf of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) Regional Stormwater Management Program. This memo supplements and provides key background information about the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool, which Delta developed to assist NEORSD with identifying, organizing, and strategically pursuing external funding opportunities for its Regional Stormwater Management Program.

The Regional Stormwater Management Program comprises a diverse and growing portfolio of projects aimed at reducing flood risk, improving water quality, and enhancing watershed function across 57 member communities, covering 374 square miles and including 489 miles of regional stormwater system. NEORSD stormwater project types generally include culvert replacements and upgrades (i.e., gray infrastructure); detention basin construction, rehabilitation, and upgrades; floodplain expansion; stream restoration and bank stabilization; and dam safety. While NEORSD generates revenue annually through stormwater fees based on impervious surface area, available funding for construction is limited relative to the scale and complexity of planned projects. As a result, external funding sources and partnership opportunities are important for advancing priority projects within NEORSD's capital project planning framework.

To assist NEORSD with identifying external funding resources to support planned stormwater projects, Delta conducted a targeted review of 60 federal, state, regional, and philanthropic funding programs. Delta screened these funding programs based on their availability, eligibility criteria, and alignment with NEORSD stormwater project types to develop a final list of 32 potential external funding resources.

Delta compiled the 32 funding programs into a Funding Resource Prioritization Tool that compiles key details about the programs to support early-stage decision-making and funding strategies. The tool also provides a centralized, actionable method for tracking and evaluating funding opportunities. The tool is organized into two sections: Funding Program Information and Decision-Making Criteria. The first section provides standardized details about each funding opportunity, including funding availability, match requirements, timelines, and eligibility considerations. The second section supports internal evaluation by identifying project eligibility, application strategy, and potential partner types.

The Funding Resource Prioritization Tool and this summary memo are intended to serve as practical, living resources that NEORSD can use to track funding programs, coordinate application efforts, and develop proactive strategies for securing external funding for stormwater projects.

About Delta Institute's EPA Region 5 Environmental Finance Center

As one of the US EPA Region 5 EFCs, Delta Institute is providing targeted technical assistance centered around funding for projects that achieve the goals of either the Clean Water Act or the Safe Drinking Water Act. These projects focus on water infrastructure for local governments, states, Tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations. Delta is engaging with Region 5 communities that have struggled to access federal water infrastructure funding.

Over five years of EFC operations, we plan that more than **200 communities will benefit from our eligible clean water and drinking water finance technical assistance services**. Learn more at delta-institute.org/epa-region-5-water-infrastructure/.

Acknowledgements

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1.0 – INTRODUCTION

Delta Institute's (Delta) Environmental Finance Center (EFC) has developed this Funding Resource Tool and Strategy Memo on behalf of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEOSRD) Regional Stormwater Management Program. This formal memo supplements and provides key background information about the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool that Delta created in collaboration with NEORSD. The Funding Resource Prioritization Tool is a spreadsheet-based decision support tool that:

- Identifies 32 unique external funding opportunities that may be relevant for stormwater and stream restoration projects led by NEORSD and its partners;
- Compiles key details about the funding programs that may help with early-stage decision-making and funding strategies; and,
- Provides a centralized, actionable method for tracking and evaluating funding opportunities.

The Funding Resource Prioritization Tool is designed for ongoing use and updates by NEORSD and is provided as an attachment to this memo. Delta hopes that the tool and this memo serve as actionable resources for NEORSD to inform funding strategy development for stormwater and stream restoration projects.

1.1 – Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District Background

NEORSD serves the City of Cleveland and 61 surrounding communities, managing both wastewater and regional stormwater infrastructure. NEORSD originally formed in 1972 as the Cleveland Regional Sewer District to provide regional wastewater treatment services. Beginning in the late 1970s, NEORSD began investigating stormwater issues, and in 2010, the Regional Stormwater Management Program was formed to address flooding, erosion, and water quality concerns at a local and regional scale. Billing for the stormwater program based on an impervious surface fee began in 2016. The stormwater program comprises 57 of the 62 member communities, covers 374 square miles with an impervious surface area of 35%, and includes 489 miles of regional stormwater system.

NEORSD implements a variety of stormwater planning, design, and construction projects. To inform capital project prioritization and development, NEORSD has developed master plans for the major watersheds within the service area to identify flooding and erosion issues. NEORSD typically targets a 100-year level of service for projects. Through its planning efforts, NEORSD has identified over $1.4 billion worth of stormwater projects through 2060. NEORSD employs several project development strategies – NEORSD-led design and construction; project support for member municipalities; and assistance and matching funds for watershed groups. More details about NEORSD stormwater projects, including typical project types, project sizes, and examples, are provided in *Section 2*.

The Regional Stormwater Management Program primarily funds projects on a cash basis, operating without financing. NEORSD receives program revenue through impervious surface fees. Given the large portfolio of active and planned stormwater projects, NEORSD is looking to supplement impervious surface fee revenue with outside funding to advance projects and leverage stormwater funding.

1.2 – Technical Assistance Request

NEORSD submitted a technical assistance request to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) on December 18, 2024, and US EPA approved the request for Delta EFC on January 23, 2025. In the request, NEORSD sought assistance in navigating external funding opportunities to support Regional Stormwater Management Program construction projects. During discovery meetings in February and August 2025, NEORSD staff expressed interest in developing a forward-looking funding strategy, focused on NEORSD's five-year stormwater project planning horizon.

Based on the technical assistance request and discovery meetings, Delta EFC developed a technical assistance scope of work focused on the following objectives:

- Identifying and documenting state, federal, and other external funding resources that can support NEORSD's planned stormwater construction projects.
- Assisting NEORSD with developing a suite of proactive and actionable funding strategies based on the external funding resources and NEORSD's 5-year stormwater project plan.

1.3 – Methodology

Delta conducted this technical assistance through a structured approach to identify and align funding opportunities with NEORSD's Regional Stormwater Management Program. Delta reviewed background materials shared by NEORSD and held coordination meetings with NEORSD staff to learn about the Regional Stormwater Management Program, the stormwater project planning process and portfolio, and NEORSD's project funding mechanisms. The Regional Stormwater Management Program background materials included the stormwater project list, five-year planning framework, and project prioritization approach. This information informed Delta's understanding of the types, scale, and timing of projects that may require external funding. Delta then conducted a targeted scan of 60 federal, state, regional, and philanthropic funding programs and screened programs based on their availability, eligibility criteria, and alignment with NEORSD stormwater project types. Delta presented a preliminary list of funding programs to NEORSD staff in February 2026 and incorporated feedback into the final funding list. Finally, Delta synthesized this information into the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool.

2.0 – OVERVIEW OF NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT PROJECTS

To provide context for the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool, this section presents a summary of the NEORSD stormwater project planning process and a high-level overview of the types of stormwater projects that NEORSD develops.

2.1 – Stormwater Project Planning Process

NEORSD maintains a stormwater construction plan that includes costs for operating projects

and capital projects. To prioritize projects and identify funding needs, NEORSD develops 5-year and 10-year stormwater project plans that are updated annually. Projects are prioritized based on several factors, including safety and project benefit (e.g., improving stormwater management level of service). Every year, NEORSD carries out a project nomination process and updates the 5-year and 10-year stormwater project plans to assess which projects should advance in the development process (e.g., from design to construction). During the nomination process, NEORSD reassesses project priorities and may elevate or demote certain projects.

As discussed in *Section 1*, NEORSD employs several project development strategies – including NEORSD-led design and construction; project support for member municipalities; and assistance and matching funds for watershed groups. Both nonprofit watershed groups and member municipalities partner with NEORSD. If a watershed partner can secure funding or manage a project, that partner may take over project implementation, especially if the project is not a near-term priority for NEORSD. In these cases, NEORSD may provide in-kind technical assistance or matching funds to the project partner. A partner may identify an existing NEORSD project from stormwater construction plan or a community or watershed group may present their own project to NEORSD. NEORSD has sometimes partnered with municipalities or watershed groups on recreational components of projects (e.g., trails for a restored creek).

2.2 – Stormwater Project Types

NEORSD implements a diverse range of stormwater management projects designed to address flooding risks, improve infrastructure performance, and enhance watershed function. These projects vary widely in scale, complexity, and purpose, with total costs ranging from several hundred thousand dollars to more than $30 million.

The general categories of stormwater projects implemented by NEORSD include the following:

- Culvert replacements and upgrades (i.e., gray infrastructure)
- Detention basin construction, rehabilitation, and upgrades
- Floodplain expansion
- Stream restoration and bank stabilization
- Dam safety improvements

Note that these categories are not NEORSD designations. Rather, Delta used the categories to identify possibly relevant funding sources based on project type. Five project examples from NEORSD's active project and project nominations lists are provided in *Table 1* below to demonstrate the different types of projects. The example projects generally reflect the range of types for which NEORSD is seeking external funding opportunities.

Table 1. NEORSD Stormwater Project Examples

Project Name	Project Description	Primary Project Type	Budget (Design and Construction)	Planned Construction
Doan Brook Restoration near Horseshoe Lake Park	Removal of failing dam structure to improve hydrology and reduce long-term risk, stream restoration through former dam pool	Dam safety improvement, stream restoration, water quality improvement	$28.6 million	To Be Determined
Baldwin Creek Renewal of Culverted Streams BD00296	Culvert renewal to reduce flooding risk	Culvert / gray infrastructure	$4.0 million	2026 Q4
Big Creek Restoration near Ridge Road (Parma)	Stream restoration to improve flood conveyance and water quality	Stream restoration	$12.0 million	2028 Q2

Note that the planned construction dates in *Table 1* are rough estimates that are primarily intended for budget planning purposes, especially for dates occurring after 2030.

3.0 – FUNDING RESOURCE PRIORITIZATION TOOL

The Funding Resource Prioritization Tool is a spreadsheet-based decision support tool that is intended to be modified on a regular basis by NEORSD and is provided as an attachment to this memo. The tool compiles a curated list of external funding programs that may support NEORSD stormwater, watershed, and flood mitigation projects and includes decision-making criteria to assist NEORSD staff with early-stage planning for project funding. This section provides an overview of the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool, including a discussion of the tool's purpose and the tool's structure.

3.1 – Purpose of the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool

Delta developed the comprehensive Funding Resource Prioritization tool to support NEORSD with identifying and pursuing external funding opportunities. The primary purpose of the tool is to provide NEORSD staff with a centralized, easy-to-use resource for tracking and evaluating funding opportunities and for aligning opportunities with specific stormwater projects. The tool identifies 32 unique external funding opportunities and compiles key details about the funding programs that may help NEORSD and project partners with early-stage decision-making and funding strategies. The tool also aims to provide more visibility into funding programs cycles and insights concerning when NEORSD should lead or partner on funding applications, depending on program eligibility requirements.

3.2 – Funding Prioritization Tool Structure

The Funding Resource Prioritization Tool is organized by funding program and has two sections: Funding Program Information and Decision-Making Criteria. The spreadsheet includes filters to help NEORSD staff target certain types of programs. The funding programs included in the tool are presented as "snapshots in time" as funding agency appropriations and priorities vary from year to year. As a result, the funding information in the tool is subject to change, and the tool is intended to be updated periodically to account for those changes.

3.2.1 – Funding Program Information

The first section of the spreadsheet provides key information about each funding program, enabling NEORSD staff to assess program scope, funding scale, eligibility requirements, and timing without reviewing the full program guidance documents. The Funding Program Information columns include the following:

- Grantor / Funding Agency: The entity that administers the funding program (e.g., federal agencies, state programs, and foundations).
- Program Name: Specific title of the funding opportunity, including a link to the program webpage.
- Program Description: A summary of the funding program's purpose and supported activities.
- Total Funding Available and Award Range: The scale of funding available at the program level and the typical award size or size range per project.
- Funding Type: Identification of whether the program provides grants, loans, technical assistance, or a combination.
- Funding Source: Identification of where the funding originates (e.g., federal, state, or federal with state or non-profit administration). This information may be informative for estimating funding administration requirements.
- Match Requirement: Any required or recommended cost share that NEORSD or a project partner must provide.
- Last Known Proposal Deadline: The deadline for the most recent funding cycle to assist with planning for when future funding cycles may be announced.
  Eligibility Criteria and Other Requirements: Summary of the types of allowable applicants and projects, as well as other key funding requirements to be aware of.

3.2.2 – Decision-Making Criteria

The second section of the spreadsheet focuses on internal evaluation criteria to help NEORSD determine whether a funding program aligns with a specific stormwater project. These columns are designed to assist with screening funding programs and with early-stage decision-making about funding applications NEORSD might target for individual stormwater projects. The Decision-Making Criteria columns include the following:

- Funding Cycle Frequency and Typical Application Window: Information on whether a funding program operates on an annual, rolling, or other periodic basis and when applications are typically due (based on previous deadlines).

- Expected Funding Timeline: Estimated time between application submission and award.
- Eligible Applicants: Simplified categories (e.g., government, nonprofit, academic) to indicate which types of entities can apply for a program.
- Can NEORSD Apply Directly: Indicates whether NEORSD is eligible to apply to the program directly or whether NEORSD may need to partner with or apply through another organization (e.g., the state of Ohio, a member municipality, or a non-profit).
- Project Phase: Indicates which stage of project development the funding supports, such as planning, design, construction, or a combination of phases.

The Decision-Making Criteria section also includes multiple "Yes" or "No" project eligibility columns that indicate which project types each funding program supports. These categories reflect the primary types of projects implemented by NEORSD and include the following:

- Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI): Nature-based solutions, such as bioswales, rain gardens, and infiltration practices.
- Gray Infrastructure: Traditional stormwater infrastructure, such as culverts and storm sewers.
- Stream Restoration: Projects focused on channel stabilization, habitat restoration, and floodplain reconnection.
- Dam Removal: Removal or modification of barriers to improve hydrology and aquatic connectivity.
- Land Acquisition: Purchase of property or easements to support flood mitigation or restoration

NEORSD might use these columns to identify funding programs for specific stream restoration or dam removal projects, for example.

Additionally, the Decision-Making Criteria section includes an Application Strategy column that considers funding program eligibility requirements, the program's timeline, and NEORSD's potential interest. The column includes the following potential strategies:

- NEORSD as Lead Applicant: NEORSD is eligible and might be positioned to apply directly for funding.
- Partner with Another Organization: A partner organization (e.g., municipality or nonprofit watershed group) may be better suited to lead the application, with NEORSD support.
- Monitor for Future Opportunity: The program may be relevant but not an immediate priority due to timing, competitiveness, or project readiness.
- Not a Priority for NEORSD: The program is unlikely to align with NEORSD's current funding strategy or project types.

Lastly, because several funding programs in the tool might be more appropriate for NEORSD's project partners, the Decision-Making Criteria section includes an Ideal Partner Type column to help NEORSD identify potential collaborators. This information reflects NEORSD's implementation approach involving partnership with external organizations that may secure funding or manage projects. Potential partner types include the following:

- Municipalities: Local governments within NEORSD's service area.
- Nonprofits and Watershed Organizations: Includes watershed groups, environmental nonprofits, and other nonprofit community organizations.

- Park Districts and Land Trusts: Organizations involved in land conservation and recreation.
- State and Federal Agencies: Agencies that may serve as co-applicants or sponsors.

4.0 – Conclusion

As discussed in *Section 2* and *Section 3*, NEORSD stormwater projects can generally be organized within certain categories based on their scope (e.g., culvert replacements or stream restoration), so the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool is organized by funding program and includes filters for narrowing the pool of possible funding resources. NEORSD might use the tool to determine which programs may be most appropriate for specific project types, given project scope, cost, and timeline. The tool may also assist NEORSD with determining when to engage municipal or nonprofit project partners for pursuing funding for certain projects. While Delta aimed to be as comprehensive as possible with the funding programs included in the tool, Delta developed the tool with future edits by NEORSD in mind. Additionally, funding programs change over time. NEORSD can add, remove, and modify funding programs, as needed.

Delta hopes that the Funding Resource Prioritization Tool and this memo serve as actionable resources for NEORSD to inform proactive funding strategy development for stormwater and stream restoration projects.

Please Keep in Touch

Please contact Delta Institute regarding any questions or follow-up items stemming from these technical assistance recommendations. Thank you for your partnership.

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