

# New Tier 4 Cost Share Implementation Track in the Agricultural Environmental Management Program

By Amber Luke, Natural Resources Technician



Tier 4 Cost Share Project- Streambank Stabilization

The Agricultural Environmental Management Program (AEM) is a voluntary program that is administered by the Soil and Water Districts across New York State. The goal of AEM is to help farmers make cost-effective and science-based decisions while meeting farm goals and conserving New York State's natural resources. Farms work with the Soil and Water District to go through a 5-Tier process to identify and implement projects that address resource concerns.

#### AEM 5-Tier Process:

Tier 1-Inventory Questionnaire

Tier 2-Assessment Worksheets

Tier 3-Planning

**Tier 4-Implementation**

Tier 5-Evaluation

#### Tier 4- Implementation Request for Applications

New this year Washington County Soil and Water will be releasing a Request for Applications for the Round 18 AEM Tier 4 Cost Share money. We invite eligible applicants to submit an application for this funding. This will be a competitive program where applicants will be ranked locally within Washington County due to a limited amount of money available.

#### Eligibility for Tier 4- Funding:

- You have completed a Tier 1 and a Tier 2 through the AEM process.
- You have completed or are working with the district to complete an eligible Tier 3 Plan (Conservation Plan, CNMP or a CAFO Plan.)
- Complete Application for funding submitted to the Washington County SWCD by October 16th, 2023.

All eligible farms must propose to implement projects that fit with the Agricultural Best Management Practice Systems Catalogue and reduce, control, or prevent pollution from agricultural activities. These activities must be identified as a resource concern through the AEM Tier process. In addition, farms will be required to provide percent match towards the project. Applications will be ranked against the same criteria and funded participants will be notified in writing after applications are reviewed. All funding will be reimbursement based, so any applicant will not be paid

until the project is deemed complete by the SWCD or a private engineer. Due to 2-year timeline of our AEM program each project will need to be implemented within a 2-year time-period as well, if it is not completed in a timely manner no reimbursement will be given as there will be no extensions given. Applications will be made available on the Washington County SWCD Website and at the office.

If you have any questions about eligible practices or if you are interested in the Tier 4 Cost Share funding but you have not participated in the AEM program with the Soil and Water District don't worry you can start the AEM process at any time. Feel free to send an email to [amber.luke@ny.nacdn.net](mailto:amber.luke@ny.nacdn.net).



Tier 4 Cost Share Project- Forage planting along a stream acting as a buffer



Tier 4 Cost Share Project-Cover Crops



## **Request for Applications (RFA)**

Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Tier 4 Implementation Funding

Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District

AEM Base Program- Round 18  
(January 1, 2024- November 1, 2025)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This Request for Applications (RFA) applies to proposals submitted for funding consideration from the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program.

Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) invites farms located in Washington County to submit applications for funding under the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Tier 4 Implementation Funding. Program funds are available for non-point source implementation projects that address a water quality concern. All projects must plan to implement projects that will reduce, control, or prevent pollution from agricultural activities.

### 1.2 Eligibility of Applicants

Proposals for funding will be accepted from farms that have actively participated in the AEM program working with the Washington County SWCD to complete a Tier I and a Tier II. If you are interested in this funding but have not worked with the Washington County SWCD to complete a Tier I and Tier II please reach out to the district.

## 2. FUNDING CRITERIA

### 2.1 Eligible Projects

Applicants must be proposing to implement projects identified in a conservation plan (Tier 3A), Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP), or CAFO plan in order to be eligible for funding. All projects **MUST** be able to be completed within the 2-year timeframe (January 1, 2024-November 1, 2025). The Washington County SWCD holds the right to decline any application due to the size, scope and ability for anyone to complete the project in the above stated timeframe.

**Requests for Applications should be for a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$100,000. All Best Management Practices must be designed and built to NRCS specifications.**

### 2.2 Dispersal of Funds

Funding will be dispersed following the state procurement policy. The applicant will be required to solicit 3 bids prior to construction and sign a landowner agreement with the Washington County SWCD prior to construction. Funding will be on a reimbursement basis meaning the applicant must be able to cash flow the project and show proof of payment (cancelled checks/invoices) prior to being paid.

## 3. PROPOSAL FORMAT, CONTENTS and SUBMISSION

### 3.1 RFA Timeline

Release of Request for Applications	September 1, 2023
Deadline for Application Submission	October 16, 2023
Award Announcement	January 1, 2024

### 3.2 Submission Requirements

Request for Applications for the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Tier 4 Implementation Funding must be received by the Washington County SWCD no later than **4:00 pm on Monday October 16, 2023**.

Applicants are responsible for the timely submission of applications. RFA's will not be accepted after the deadline. Applicants may submit application via mail, email or by dropping off at the Washington County SWCD office.

Complete applications include: \*Required components

- Complete Application Form\*
- Project designs (if applicable)
- Any supporting documentation applicant would like to include.

Mailing Address:

**Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District  
2530 State Route 40  
Greenwich, NY 12834**

Email:

Corrina Aldrich- District Manager- [corrina.aldrich@ny.nacdnet.net](mailto:corrina.aldrich@ny.nacdnet.net)  
Amber Luke- Natural Resources Technician- [amber.luke@ny.nacdnet.net](mailto:amber.luke@ny.nacdnet.net)

## 4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

### 4.1 Preference Points

Ranking is based on the Proposal Rating Sheet. All applications will be ranked by their grand total score from the highest to lowest for awards. The Washington County Board of Directors shall give preference points to proposals located within a watershed or sub-watershed of a priority waterbody as identified by the AEM strategic plan. Preference points will also be given to water courses listed on the Priority Waterbodies List (PWL) from DEC which have agriculture listed as primary containment.

Consideration will be given to the following factors when ranking applications:

- Project clearly addresses identified need or opportunity.
- Adequate scope of work and time frame.
- Project is cost effective.
- Is the farm a Non-CAFO farm?

The Washington County SWCD may conduct site reviews of the proposed project areas as a part of the selection process.

The Washington County SWCD Board will rank each project for funding and through adoption of a written resolution, will authorize funding for projects based on the ranking until the available funds are exhausted. Washington County SWCD will notify in writing farms selected for funding.

**Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Tier 4 Implementation Funding**

**Proposal Rating Sheet – Maximum Total Points = 50**

**Project Clearly Addresses Identified Need or Opportunity (Maximum Score = 30 points)**

-BMP has been documented on an AEM Tier 3A (or equivalent) plan - 5 pts. -BMP documented in a CAFO plan- 3 pts.	
BMP addresses objectives within a documented watershed within the AEM strategy – 5 pts.	
Project addresses a significant identified need or opportunity, including compliance issues – 5 pts.	
Project proximity to the water resource -0-100 ft. – 5 pts. -100-200 ft. – 3 pts. -200 ft.+ – 2 pts.	
Project proposes to implement BMPs on farms that are not Repeat BMP Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no repeat BMPs – 5 pts.</li> <li>• some repeat BMPs – 3 pts.</li> <li>• repeat BMPs only – 1 pt.</li> </ul>	
There is good outside documentation of the problem/need. (including priority water body list, . . . ) – 5 pts.	

**Adequate Scope of Work, Past Practice History and Time Frame (Maximum Score = 10 points)**

Project plan, timeline and cost share capabilities have been provided – up to 4 pts.	
Preliminary design work or estimates have been completed – up to 4 pts.	
Are previously installed practices through USDA NRCS or SWCD being maintained <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintained and installed to specs OR N/A– 2 pts.</li> <li>• Maintained and installed with minor issues – 1 pt.</li> <li>• Practices missing or abused – deduct 1 pt.</li> <li>• Lack of management causing water quality issues – deduct 2 pts.</li> </ul>	

Primary Goal Points – awarded to the total score (Maximum Score = 10 points)

To proposals that address sources of public drinking water – up to 5 pts.	
To projects proposing to exclude livestock (access control) from watercourses and/or implement conservation buffers – up to 5 pts.	

Total Score out of 50: \_\_\_\_\_

**Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Tier 4 Implementation  
Funding**

**Project Application Form**

If you have any questions when completing this form, please consult with SWCD staff.

**Applications DUE by October 16, 2023**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Specific Project Information** (Applicant must be able to fully implement the project by November 1, 2025)

Proposed Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipated Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Funding Amount Being Requested: (Must be between \$10,000 and \$100,000) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Has your farm been inventoried and assessed using the AEM Tier I and Tier II process? (If no, you are not eligible to participate in this round of funding. Please do not continue)

Yes  No

2. Has your farm worked on or is working with the SWCD to complete a conservation plan (Tier 3A) that addresses the project you are applying to implement? (If no, you are not eligible to participate in this round of funding. Please do not continue).

Yes  No

3. Has your farm received funding through the district before? (Ag NPS, CRF, AEM) (If so, please list practices installed)

Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_

4. List the watershed, stream or public water supply this application will address?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Will the proposed project address more than pollution source from the farm? (If yes, please describe.)

Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_



6. Is the proposed project needed to implement CNMP's for compliance with the SPDES Permit?

- Yes  No

7. Are you planning on implementing conservation buffers as a part of the proposed project? (Please estimate the number of liner feet to be installed.)

- Yes  No

8. Are you committing to exclude all livestock from watercourses?

- Yes  No  N/A

9. Does the project require a Professional Engineer? (Please indicate whether or not test pits or a preliminary design have been completed.)

- Yes  No  I don't know

10. Which is the lowest cost share percentage you would be willing to apply for?

- 75% State/25% Landowner  60% State/40% Landowner  
 70% State/30% Landowner  Other (please describe)

**PROJECT NARRATIVE: Please briefly describe the proposed project. Please include the water quality concern to be addressed and how the proposed project will address the water quality concern.**

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Please Return Application Packet to the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District at 2530 State Route 40, Greenwich, NY 12834