

RANKING FRAMEWORK
for
PENNVEST STORMWATER PROJECTS

FINAL
2025

Prepared by
Bureau of Clean Water
Division of Municipal Facilities



Pennsylvania
**Department of
Environmental Protection**

BACKGROUND

States develop and implement a project rating system to prioritize projects for Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) funding. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST) use the methodology in this document to perform that function. PENNVEST also has state-sourced funds to award in addition to the federal monies. This rating system is designed to prioritize those funds as well.

DEP generates a priority list which is ranked to reflect DEP priority points. PENNVEST adds additional points.

PROCESS FOR RATING SYSTEM REVISIONS

This ranking system is included as an attachment to the CWSRF Intended Use Plan (IUP) as part of the capitalization grant application for federal funding. As part of the IUP, this ranking system is available for public review and comment and is posted on the DEP website. Before any revisions can be made to this ranking system it must be reviewed and approved by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the PENNVEST Board before implementation to ensure consistency with federal and state requirements.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Ratings are done after all the DEP permits necessary for the project have been issued. One month before each Board meeting DEP submits a final list of recommended projects and scores to PENNVEST. The PENNVEST Board approves projects for funding.

DEP PRIORITY RATING FACTORS

- (a) The maximum points for each factor are:
 - (1) Public Health – 40 points
 - (2) Aquatic Health – 20 points
 - (3) Infrastructure Health – 20 points
 - (4) Compliance – 15 points
 - (5) Community Health – 8 points
- (b) A project's total priority points are the sum of the points assigned in each of the individual rating factors. The maximum point total is 103.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE DEP RATING PROCESS

DEP Project Manager completes a PENNVEST Rating Form with tentative ratings during application review. The Project Manager enters a summary of the final rating on the PENNVEST website.

PENNVEST ADDITIONAL RATING FACTORS

To develop a final score for each project, PENNVEST adds the following points to the project scores DEP develops. The total points that can be added to DEP's rating for each project are 70 points.

- (a) Economic Development – The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) provides this ranking based on:
 - (1) High (20 points) – The project has a direct link to job creation or preservation and private investment.
 - (2) Medium (15 points) – An indirect link to job creation or preservation and private investment exists.
 - (3) Low (5 points) – Project implementation.
- (b) Distressed Community – DCED evaluates communities across the Commonwealth for financial well-being. Communities on the Distressed Communities list are identified in order to have access for consideration for assistance from various state agencies in order to get the communities back to normal status. If the project is in a community that is considered distressed, 10 points are added to the project.
- (c) Infill – PENNVEST adds 10 points to those projects that serve a city, borough or township of the first class. Redevelopment of existing population centers is a priority.
- (d) Brownfield – PENNVEST adds 15 points to those projects that serve a designated Brownfield site as identified by DEP.
- (e) Community Action Team (CAT) Projects – DCED adds 10 points to those projects that are in a CAT community. The CAT community system is an effort to focus financial and technical resources to specific communities identified by the CAT Team. Members of the CAT Team include DCED, DEP, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Public Utility Commission and other local and state agencies.
- (f) Comprehensive Planning – DCED adds 5 points to those projects that are within communities with a comprehensive plan, where the community plan is consistent with the adopted county comprehensive plan.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purpose of this rating system, the following terms are defined as follows:

- (a) Green Infrastructure – Practices that manage and treat stormwater and that maintain and restore natural hydrology by infiltrating, evapotranspiring, or capturing and using stormwater.
- (b) Karst Topography – A landscape formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks such as limestone, dolomite, and gypsum. It is characterized by underground drainage systems with sinkholes, dolines, and caves
- (c) NPDES Violation - Lack of intention or ability to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit – the national system for the issuance of permits under section 402 of the Federal Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C.A. § 1342) including a state or interstate program which has been approved in whole or in part by the EPA.
- (d) Proactive Asset Management – Preventing a crisis through maintaining or improving the resources, rights and properties owned by an entity.
- (e) Stormwater – Drainage runoff from the surface of the land resulting from precipitation or snow or ice melt
- (f) Stormwater Facility – A structure to capture, hold, treat or convey stormwater runoff to reduce peak rates or volumes of runoff
- (g) Stormwater Project – The eligible costs associated with a system or group of facilities considered an operation unit constructed to address existing drainage problems by reducing peak rates or volumes of stormwater runoff
- (h) Useful Life – The period of time for which a facility operates and serves its intended purpose
- (i) Worn Out – Infrastructure is understood to be worn out when it has had frequent breakdowns or other failures to achieve design performance resulting in excessive repair cost or regulatory compliance problems.

PUBLIC HEALTH (Maximum total 40 points)

Projects which provide public health and safety benefits will be rated in one of the following categories:

A. Projects that eliminate a critical ongoing safety or health hazard (40 points)

40 points will be awarded to projects that eliminate an acute problem that currently poses an imminent hazard to life, health, or safety

Examples:

- Traffic or residential flooding hazards due to imminent structural failure of roadways or buildings at deteriorated stormwater culverts or sinkholes
- Infrastructure failures which prevent access by emergency vehicles or school buses
- Commercial or residential flooding conditions which affect first floor areas or which result in damages to electrical and heating systems or foundations

B. Projects that eliminate a chronic safety or health hazard (20 points)

• points will be awarded to projects that eliminate a problem which poses a frequently recurring hazard to safety, health or property with a potential threat to life.

Examples:

- Traffic hazards and/or repeated maintenance costs resulting from stormwater drainage problems such as winter icing conditions, erosion of roadway shoulders, or roadway washouts at cross drains
- Basement flooding in commercial and residential areas
- Stormwater separation from wastewater collection systems
- Backup of untreated wastewater into basements

C. Projects that eliminate a potential safety or health hazard associated with periodic flooding (10 points)

10 points will be awarded to projects that eliminate a recurring stormwater problem having low potential of threat to life safety and health

Examples:

- Nuisance flooding and poor drainage of residential backyards
- Poor drainage conditions on roadways

AQUATIC HEALTH (Maximum total 20 Points)

Projects with water quality benefits will be rated by the accumulation of up to 20 points from the following categories:

A. Water Quality (Maximum 10 points)

10 points will be awarded to projects that directly correct water quality problems.

Examples:

- Projects that incorporate Green Infrastructure to infiltrate runoff and improve water quality
- Projects to prevent flooding of water or reduce by-passing at wastewater treatment facilities
- Construction of drainage facilities to improve water quality of stormwater runoff

5 points will be awarded to projects that provide secondary benefits which improve or prevent a water quality problem.

Examples:

- Elimination of an erosion problem
- Reduced use of salt for roadway maintenance
- Reduction of stormwater inflow to wastewater collection systems by eliminating residential downspout or sump pump connections

B Project Location

5 points will be awarded to projects that are located in areas of karst topography and susceptible to sinkhole development.

5 points will be awarded to projects that are located in areas having no natural watercourse within the municipal boundaries encompassing the project.

INFRASTRUCTURE HEALTH (Maximum total 20 points)

The Infrastructure Health rating is a function of scores provided for the following categories:

A. Stormwater System Adequacy (maximum 15 points)

15 points will be awarded for projects where the system is at the end of its useful life.

5 points will be awarded for projects where the system is undersized and cannot adequately collect and convey the amount of stormwater runoff

Notes:

1. Projects satisfy the “end-of-useful life” test if the applicant provides a compelling argument that the infrastructure is worn out. The argument must include data such as breakdown frequency, excessive maintenance cost, or whatever information is relevant, given the nature of the project, to explain why the infrastructure is considered worn out.
2. Problems caused by inadequate operation/maintenance of a stormwater system may not contribute to a rating. Problems that contribute to the rating can only be those that are solved through construction.

B. Proactive Asset Management (maximum 5 points)

The focus of this section is to promote better management.

2 points will be awarded for monitoring and enforcement of illegal dumping into the system.

2 points will be awarded for knowing and recording location, age, and condition of all major assets.

1 point will be awarded for having an estimated date and cost for renewal of all major assets.

COMPLIANCE (Maximum total 15 points)

15 points will be awarded if the project will improve compliance with existing laws, rules or regulations, when no compliance order, decree or agreement has been issued, and there is no deadline date specified in regulation.

10 points will be awarded if the project will comply with a compliance order, decree or agreement or a deadline specified in regulation; this may or may not include an NPDES Violation

COMMUNITY HEALTH (Maximum total 8 points)

The Community Health rating is a function of scores provided for the following categories:

A. Green Infrastructure (Maximum total 5 points)

5 points will be awarded if the project employs any green infrastructure designed to infiltrate, evapotranspire, or capture and reuse some amount of stormwater runoff

B. Population Affected (Maximum total 3 points)

3 points will be awarded if the sponsoring municipality has a population of 12,000 residents or less in latest census