

Frequently Asked Questions

Award Program Overview

What is The Blue Star Award program?

A positive public recognition program for Minnesota communities that are taking a leadership role in protecting water quality through stormwater runoff management.

How does it work?

Communities register on the www.bluestarmn.org website and conduct their own online self-assessment. Those that score high enough automatically earn the Blue Star Award.

Can entities other than cities & townships (like counties or watershed districts) register for the Blue Star Award?

No. The Blue Star Award is available only to Minnesota cities and townships.

What assessment score do we need to earn the Blue Star Award?

The Blue Star Assessment is designed to be flexible, so communities can earn the award regardless of population, MS4 permit status, development status, and natural resource condition.

To earn the Blue Star Award:

- MS4 Communities must earn at least 60% of possible assessment points
- Non-MS4 Communities must earn at least 50% of possible assessment points
- Not all questions apply to all communities. Questions that do not apply to your community can be dropped, and your percentage is calculated based on the remaining questions.

Does it cost anything to participate in the Blue Star Program?

The Blue Star Award Program is 100% free.

How long is our Blue Star Award valid?

Blue Star Award status lasts for five years from the date of recognition. After five years, a community will be asked to update their assessment to maintain their Blue Star status.

What do we get for winning the award?

Winners receive the Blue Star Award along with color posters, buttons, certificates, and other materials indicating their award status. In addition, winners have access to a host of editable outreach publicity materials: press releases, newsletter copy, utility bill inserts, website articles and other resources to help publicize their award.

Blue Star Award Program staff are available to work with winning communities to promote your achievement to local residents and to local media outlets, and well as schedule an award presentation ceremony to elected leadership.

Are there any penalties if my community doesn't score well? Is this a regulatory program?

No. This is a 100% voluntary program and there are no penalties or regulatory consequences if a community does not win the award. Information on communities that have not yet won the award is NEVER made available to the public.



However, Blue Star Award winning communities are listed on the Blue Star website, and award-winning communities are encouraged to share their success with their peers via the Blue Star Leaderboard.

Taking the Blue Star Assessment

How do we register to take the Blue Star Assessment?

You can register your community and take the assessment online at www.bluestarmn.org

How long does the Blue Star Assessment take?

The Blue Star Assessment takes as little as an hour to complete. You can stop and save the assessment in progress, allowing you to complete it at your convenience. Our new "flag question" feature allows users to flag questions for future follow-up.

We don't have our own stormwater standards. Stormwater issues are administered by our local watershed district or watershed management organization. How do I score my community? Some of the assessment questions may address policies or ordinances required by a watershed district or other unit of government that overlays part or all of your community. For this assessment, your community scores points for applicable stormwater standards set forth by watersheds and other units of government in addition to codes or ordinances you have at the local level.

My community is part of several watersheds, each with its own different set of stormwater regulations. Which set of regulations do I use?

Some communities may straddle multiple watersheds with different standards. Other communities may have special standards for certain parts of town. In this case, please use whichever set of standards you feel best reflects your community as a whole. If a single set of standards applies to more than 50% of your community, communities should use that standard as the basis for your self-assessment.

Can I get points/credit for education programs that are administered by the County or Watershed in which my community resides?

It depends. Education efforts taken independently by other units of government don't count for your community, even if they reach your residents. However, some communities are members of local coalitions, like the Washington Conservation District's "[East Metro Water Resource Education Program](#)" that allow communities to pool resources and send materials out to all their residents together. In this case, the communities are formal program partners, and therefore they can take credit for program's activities on their self-assessments.

We won the Blue Star Award. So where's our Award?

We'll mail you the award in about two weeks, along with personalized posters and other materials you can display in your community. Blue Star program staff will contact you to schedule an award presentation to your elected officials.

Guidance & Help

I'm having trouble with the assessment. Can I get some assistance?

Sure.

If you have questions as you work toward certification, we are here to help you. Email info@bluestarmn.org with "help" in the subject line and we'll be happy to assist you.

How can I get a hardcopy of the Blue Star Assessment?

For registered communities, a PDF version of the Blue Star Assessment questions is available in the right hand column on your dashboard.

Who are the Blue Star Award program partners?

The Blue Star Program is brought to you by Friends of the Mississippi River in partnership with Emmons & Olivier Resource Inc. The program was designed and developed with the assistance of The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, The Minnesota Green Step Cities Program, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Project NEMO, The City of Blaine, The City of Woodbury, The City of Lino Lakes, The City of Inver Grove Heights, and The Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation.

The GreenStep Cities Program

The website mentions the MPCA's GreenStep Cities Program. What is that?

The MPCA's Green Step program offers cities an opportunity to conduct self-assessments on a broad range of environmental sustainability indicators. Cities that achieve a high score will be officially recognized by the State as "GreenStep" cities through the MPCA's sustainable communities program.

The GreenStep Program will incorporate the Blue Star assessment & recognition protocol as the GreenStep Program's flagship municipal stormwater management assessment methodology.

To learn more about the GreenStep Cities Program visit: <http://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/>

I've got a question that isn't covered here. Who can I speak with?

If you have questions that we didn't cover here - we are available to assist you. Email info@bluestarmn.org with "help" in the subject line and we'll be happy to assist you. Alternately, you can contact staff directly with the information provided below.

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