Massachusetts’ Lead Removal and Reduction Programs

How Massachusetts is Implementing Federal Programs to Reduce Lead Exposure in Drinking Water

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Lead Removal and Reduction Programs

• Massachusetts is taking advantage of two federal programs to help reduce lead in drinking water.

• The first is the Water Infrastructure Fund Transfer Act (WIFTA).
  • The law allows the state revolving fund (SRF) to transfer from the Clean Water SRF (CWSRF) to the Drinking Water SRF (DWSRF) an amount up to 5% of CWSRF federal grants.
  • The funds must be used as additional subsidy for projects that address lead in drinking water.

• The second is the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act.
  • Massachusetts was awarded $3 million in grant funding through the “Reduction in Lead Exposure Via Drinking Water”.

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WIFTA Implementation

• Massachusetts has older water infrastructure which includes lead service lines (LSLs).

• Over the past five years, the DWSRF has financed on average $10 million a year of projects addressing lead.

• However, we know there a need not being met based on projects applying for financing but not moving to construction and a survey conducted with public drinking water systems.

• The Trust is hoping to use WIFTA to target more subsidy to these types of projects.
WIFTA Implementation (Continued)

• The most important decision was how much funding to transfer.
  • The Trust calculated what could be moved from the CWSRF without hindering the lending capacity and it was decided $30 would be moved to the DWSRF.
  • Based on past applications and the requirement to commit funds within three years, $30 million should be able to be a meaningful subsidy within the project commitment timeframe.

• Additionally, since communities have different needs when it comes to lead, the project eligibility is open to:
  • Planning and design;
  • Corrosion control, and;
  • Capital improvements for replacement of lead pipes and full LSL replacement.

• Finally, the subsidy is open to all communities, not only Disadvantaged Communities.
WIIN Grant Funding

• In 2016, the Trust launched the Assistance Program for Lead in School Drinking Water.
  • The program provided $2.75 million for testing public school water fixtures for lead and copper.
  • Over 67,000 samples were collected at nearly 1,000 schools and identified 65% of schools had lead detected above 15 ppb and 95% had at least one detection above 1 ppb.
  • The program required the schools to notify students, parents and teachers of the testing results.
  • The data was made public and posted to a state website.

• From the data collected, it was clear that there an issue that needed to be addressed.
In January, the Trust launched the School Water Improvement Grant Program (SWIG).

- Funded with a state appropriation, any school with water fixtures that tested above 1 ppb in our testing program were eligible to replace the fixture with a water bottle fixtures that would filter lead.
- For each fixture that was eligible to be replaced, the school receives $3,000 for the purchase, installation, testing and maintenance.

The pilot application was open from February to March 2020, and the Trust awarded:

- $954,000 in total grants
- 318 water bottle filling stations purchased
- 69,192 student enrolled in the schools receiving grants
- 37 school districts received awards
- 128 schools were part of the school districts

The program has been receiving positive feedback, however, many of the grants have to be extended due to issues from the COVID-19 pandemic.
WIIN Grant Funding (Continued)

• When the WIIN Reduction in Lead Exposure Via Drinking Water grant opened the Trust saw an opportunity to expand the existing program and incentivize testing in new areas.
  • The SWIG program was designed to serve public schools but there was a need that was not being served, private schools, early education and childcare facilities in disadvantaged communities.

• The new program, called Enhanced SWIG (ESWIG), was awarded $3 million from EPA with a $750,000 state matching component, a total of $3.75 million.
WIIN Grant Funding (Continued)

• The ESWIG program will focus on private education facilities located in Disadvantaged Communities and including the following criteria:
  • located within an Economic Opportunity Zone;
  • locations served by a public water system that had a lead AL Exceedance within the past four years;
  • facilities located in communities with confirmed or probable lead service lines;
  • schools and programs that primarily care for the most vulnerable population (children 6 years and under);
  • older facilities that are more likely to contain lead plumbing (e.g. facilities built before 1988);
  • established and sustainable childcare programs without factors indicating that the building may not be serving as a childcare facility in the future;
  • facilities located in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities;
  • facilities with drinking water test results that confirm the level of lead greater than 1 ppb;
  • facilities located in communities with elevated child blood lead levels as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
• The ESWIG program will be available to an estimated 107 private elementary schools and 379 private group early education centers that serve over 75 student.

• The goal is the following:
  • 1,250 filling stations;
  • Serving 68,957 students; and,
  • Bring these facilities into the state testing program to develop a comprehensive picture of lead issues in schools in the Commonwealth.

• The Trust has received notification of the award but is still waiting on the grant.
Lead Remediation in Massachusetts

• The Trust is hopeful that the WIFTA and WIIN legislation will provide the subsidy necessary to move more projects to construction.

• WIFTA was a positive change to the SRFs allowing for the movement between funds, and most importantly, only if states deemed it necessary and in an amount they determined.

• The WIIN grant is allowing us to expand our current program to Massachusetts education facilities who might not otherwise be able to access the program.
Get In Touch

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