



## MONTANA LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND GRANT PROGRAM 2021 Application Guidelines

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## 2021 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program is a federal grant program administered by the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) State Parks Division. The LWCF Program provides matching grant funds to state, tribal, and local government entities to develop outdoor recreation. Example projects include park improvements, ball fields, picnic shelters, municipal pools, etc. Montana's LWCF Program has funded over 700 projects throughout Montana since its creation in 1964.

### Application Period

**The 2021 LWCF Program application period is open November 2020 through November 2021.**

Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis according to the deadlines listed in the following section.

### Anticipated Project Period of Performance

#### Expected Project Approval and Start Dates

Successful applications must go through a throughout approval process with the National Park Service. **Depending on when the application is submitted, it may take as manly as six to eight months for the LWCF project to be fully approved and cleared to break ground.** The LWCF project period of performance cannot begin until the grantee is issued and signs its LWCF Contract Agreement with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

#### Expected Project Close Dates

The expected deadline for grantees to expend their 2021 LWCF Program funds is October 15, 2023, with the final reimbursement request and Final Report due on December 31, 2023. Actual LWCF project end dates will be clearly identified in the grantee's LWCF Contract Agreement.

### About LWCF Program Awards

#### Reimbursement Program

An entity may receive LWCF reimbursement only **after** the entity has expended funds on an LWCF-eligible expense and submitted adequate documentation. Project expenses incurred before the LWCF project start date (when the Contract Agreement is signed) are ineligible for reimbursement.

## Match Requirement

*Match on Direct Costs (must equal at least the LWCF grant request)*

At the time of application, the grantee must be able to commit matching funds equaling at least the LWCF grant request amount. This represents the applicant's match requirement on direct project costs.

*Match on Indirect Costs (must equal at least 5% of the LWCF grant request)*

The grantee project must also commit additional funds to match indirect costs, totaling 5% of LWCF grant request. Applicants may exceed the match requirement.

## The Funding Selection Process

All award decisions will be made based on the timeline provided in the next Section. Application requirements and criteria are in the [Application Review and Scoring](#) section.

### Eligible Applicants

Eligible LWCF Program applicants may include incorporated cities or towns, counties, school districts, state agencies, and tribal governments. The organization applying to the LWCF Program must be the organization that will expend the funds and manage the grant. The LWCF Program does not allow Tri-Party Agreements.

### Tips for Applying

- Read these Guidelines carefully and follow all instructions on the LWCF Program application. Both the application and Guidelines have changed substantially from previous years.
- Focus on details specific to your LWCF project (especially budget elements) and limit background narratives.
- Ask someone from outside your organization to proofread your final application for completeness and clarity. A reviewer should be able to easily pick out your project goals and budget/match items.
- Engage the LWCF Program Manager early in the application process. The required Pre-Application Review meeting with the Program Manager will greatly assist you with understanding and meeting all program requirements.

## APPLYING FOR A LWCF PROGRAM GRANT

### Pre-Application Requirements

Before beginning or submitting a Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program application, all prospective applicants must complete the following steps:

1. Read these LWCF Program Application Guidelines.
2. Submit a Pre-Application Project Proposal to the LWCF Program Manager (form is found on the Montana LWCF Program Website: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/recreation/lwcf.html>).
3. Schedule and undergo a short Pre-Application Meeting with the LWCF Program Manager. This step should be completed at least one month before submitting an LWCF application.

### Application Instructions

After completing the pre-application steps above, your organization is eligible to apply for 2021 LWCF Program funding. To apply to the LWCF Program, fully complete the 2021 LWCF Program Application (form is found on the Montana LWCF Program Website: <http://stateparks.mt.gov/recreation/lwcf.html>).

Your application package must be submitted to Montana State Parks according to the instructions and deadlines below.

### **Application Packages Submitted by Online File Transfer Service (Preferred)**

Compile all the required Sections into one PDF document. Then, either include the required Appendices in the main PDF document or compile them into an additional PDF document, depending on the file size. Send the completed 2021 LWCF application package to the LWCF Program Manager via the State of Montana's File Transfer Service. Application packages will NOT be accepted by email.

To use the File Transfer Service:

1. Go to <https://transfer.mt.gov/>.
2. Create an ePass account and/or login with an existing ePass account.
3. Click "Send a New File" towards the top of the page.
4. Upload the application package document(s) and click "Continue".
5. On the "Recipient Options" page, click "State Employee or ePass Montana Customer" near the top, right of the page.
6. On the "Recipients" page:
  - a. Enter the Program Manager's email address ([michelle.mcnamee@mt.gov](mailto:michelle.mcnamee@mt.gov)) or search for and add the email address using the name "Michelle McNamee".
  - b. Ensure the correct file name(s) appears under "File(s)" on the right side of the page.
  - c. Enter a message for the Program Manager on the right side of the page under "Message". Keep the message short; include the Applicant Organization Name and reference "2021 LWCF Application Submission".
7. Click "Send" to submit the application package.

8. Email the LWCF Program Manager to confirm receipt of the LWCF application package. If you submitted multiple files, provide a list of the files that should have been included with the application package.

### **Application Packages Submitted by Mail**

Compile all the required Sections and Appendices into one document and send the completed 2021 LWCF application package to the address below. The applicant should retain a full copy of the application package for its records.

Michelle McNamee  
Montana State Parks  
PO Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701

### 2021 Application Deadlines

**LWCF Program application packages will be accepted throughout 2021 on a rolling basis based on available funding.** Applications received or postmarked by the application deadlines listed in the chart will be reviewed as stated. The applicant organization will receive a Notice of Funding Letter by Funding Recommendation Announcement Date A, B, or C (depending on when the application was submitted).

<b>Application Deadline A</b>	<b>March 1, 2021</b>
Application Review Period A	March 1 to April 15, 2021
Funding Recommendation Announced	April 15, 2021
<b>Application Deadline B</b>	<b>July 1, 2021</b>
Application Review Period B	July 1 to August 15, 2021
Funding Recommendation Announced	August 15, 2021
<b>Application Deadline C</b>	<b>November 1, 2021</b>
Application Review Period C	November 1 to December 15, 2021
Funding Recommendation Announced	December 15, 2021

### Additional Contact Information

Montana State Parks staff is available to provide technical assistance to any applicant throughout the grant application process. If you have questions or need further information, please contact the LWCF Program Manager or other Montana State Parks Staff.

## **Land & Water Conservation Fund Program Manager**

Michelle McNamee  
Outdoor Recreation Program Manager  
(406) 444-7642\*  
[michelle.mcnamee@mt.gov](mailto:michelle.mcnamee@mt.gov)

*\*The Program Manager is working remotely until further notice. Reach out by email to set up a phone meeting.*

## **Montana State Parks Administration**

Administrative Assistant  
Colleen Furthmyre  
(406) 444-3750  
[cfurthmyre@mt.gov](mailto:cfurthmyre@mt.gov)

Assistant Parks Administrator  
Tom Reilly  
(406) 444-3752  
[treilly@mt.gov](mailto:treilly@mt.gov)

Parks Administrator  
Beth Shumate  
(406) 444-3750  
[bshumate@mt.gov](mailto:bshumate@mt.gov)

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

### System for Award Management (SAM) Registration

All LWCF award recipients must obtain a Dun and Bradstreet (DUNS) number and register in the System for Award Management (SAM) by the time of award. Grantees must renew their SAM registration annually to continue to receive reimbursement from LWCF Program.

Entities already registered in the SAM:

- ▶ **On the LWCF Application, you must include your organization's SAM registration information.**

Entities not yet registered in the SAM:

- ▶ **On the LWCF application, you may leave blank the fields requesting SAM registration information. However, note your organization must complete its SAM registration by the time of award. The process may take several months to complete.**

The details and processes for registration are available at [www.dnb.com/duns-number](http://www.dnb.com/duns-number) and [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov).

### Continuous Protection of Outdoor Recreation at LWCF Site

If funded, it will be the applicant organization's (subrecipient's) responsibility to ensure the following LWCF requirements are met in perpetuity:

1. The area depicted in the Boundary Map (submitted with your LWCF application) is adequately operated and maintained for outdoor recreation.
2. The area depicted in the Boundary Map (submitted with your LWCF application) is not/will not be encroached upon by any use not compatible with outdoor recreation. Such incompatible uses may include a public road/road Right-of-Way or any enclosed structure within the project site aside from a structure serving outdoor recreators (e.g. a restroom facility or park maintenance building).

**The applicant will prepare and submit a Boundary Map depicting the boundary of the property on which the LWCF project will take place. The project's Boundary Map, when approved by FWP and the NPS, will define the area to be subject to these requirements.** LWCF Program staff or their designees will perform site visits on a five-year basis to confirm these LWCF requirements are being met.

### Posting of LWCF Credit Sign(s)

If awarded LWCF funds, the applicant (subrecipient) must agree to post LWCF credit signs at all LWCF project sites. These signs will be provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and/or, with approval from the LWCF Program Manager, may be incorporated into a sign designed by the subrecipient organization. The applicant organization (subrecipient) should verify the signs' presence on an annual basis. LWCF Program staff or their designees will perform site visits on a five-year basis to confirm this



LWCF requirement is being met.

### Proof of Funding, Resource, or Maintenance Commitments

A complete application must include proof of any financial or resource commitments identified in Section III, Question 4 (Committed Funding Sources). Proof of commitment should also be provided for any entities identified as responsible for future project maintenance in Section II, Question 6 (Project and Site Maintenance). The proof of commitment should be from the organization committing funds, resources, or maintenance.

The proof of commitment should include:

- a. The name of organization/individual providing project funding, resources, or maintenance.
- b. The amount of funds or type of resource/maintenance being committed.
- c. Any restrictions on the funds/resources being committed (e.g. a deadline or timeframe for when funds/resources will be available).

If the subrecipient organization is committing itself to providing project funding, resources, or maintenance, the organization's leadership (e.g., the mayor, the county, city, or town commission) should provide a statement acknowledging its specific commitment.

### Letters of Support

The LWCF application should include Letters of Support further justifying the project need and/or demonstrating user benefits. Applicants should include only a limited number of Letters of Support, focusing on quality over quantity. There is no minimum requirement regarding the number of Letters of Support; however, the applicant should try to include no more than ten.

Requirements for Letters of Support:

- Letters are typed.
- Letters are from an organization, not an individual (unless an individual is an adjacent landowner and/or expressing a commitment of some kind).
- Letters signed and dated.
- Letters are current and reference the specific project for which you are applying.
- Letters are unique. Form letters are not acceptable.

### Resolution Authorizing Application

Each application must include a signed Resolution Authorization Application form. The form is available on the [LWCF Program website](#). It must be signed by individuals with the authority to commit funds and attached to the LWCF application as a supplemental documentation.

## Interlocal Agreement (School Districts Only)

This document must be submitted with the application only when the subrecipient organization is a school district. The form is available on the [LWCF Program website](#).

## Landowner Permissions, Easements, and Public Access

The public must be assured legal access to trails and trail-related facilities developed or maintained with LWCF Program funds. Applications without adequate landowner permissions will be considered incomplete and will not be considered for funding. The program places a higher value on longer-term agreements that have the potential of allowing for public access in perpetuity.

## Right-of-Way, Railroad Certifications, and Public Utility Certifications

Each LWCF Program application must include all necessary public right-of-way, railroad, and/or public utility certifications or confirm that no such certifications are required for the LWCF project. All certifications must be guaranteed at the time of application for your project to be considered for funding.

If your project includes construction or improvements in any other entity's right-of-way, you must demonstrate you have received adequate permissions from that entity for the proposed work.

## APPLICATION REVIEW AND SCORING

To allocate Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funds equitably, Montana State Parks has developed the following funding selection process. Applications will be scored by Montana State Parks staff using the criteria below. The funding selection process will also consider how each application meets the goals of the [2020-2024 Montana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#).

### Preliminary Requirements

The applicant must thoroughly address the following criteria in their LWCF application and supporting materials. If the criteria are not met, the application will not be considered for funding.

- 1. Applicant Eligibility.** The applicant is eligible for LWCF funding.
  - Only an eligible applicant may submit a project application. The applicant must have effective land control of the property on which the LWCF project will take place in the form of title, or in the form of a long-term lease (minimum 25 years) from the federal government.
  - An eligible applicant is defined as any political subdivision of the State of Montana or sovereign Indian Nation, which includes incorporated cities or towns, counties, school districts, state agencies, and tribal governments.
  - Successful applicant organizations (subrecipients) may hold only two active LWCF awards at one time. Any applicant organization with multiple active LWCF awards must demonstrate at least one will be closed by the time of award.
- 2. Site Operation and Maintenance.** The site owner (applicant organization) has demonstrated it is willing to and capable of operating and maintaining the site for outdoor recreation in perpetuity.
- 3. Federal Requirements.** The applicant has demonstrated that the project will meet all applicable federal non-discriminatory laws, regulations, and disabled-access requirements will be met.

### Primary Review Criteria

#### **1. Project Type and Expanded Recreational Opportunity (10 points)**

The LWCF project type is appropriate given the characteristics of the property and surrounding area. The project creates a new public recreational area or facility (pool, ball fields, etc.) where one is currently unavailable. Additional consideration will be given to applications from communities/areas where developed outdoor recreation opportunities are limited.

## 2. Expected Project Use (10 points)

The applicant must provide full details regarding the type of project and expected hours of operation and monthly use. The following will be considered:

- a. **Hours/Months of Use.** The project is appropriately open to the public. The value of a facility to its surrounding community is most often directly proportional to the amount of use it receives.
- b. **Opportunity for Active and Passive Recreation.** The project incorporates both active and passive recreation. Projects providing facilities or areas for both active and passive recreation will be given preference.
- c. **Opportunity for Multiple Recreational Uses.** The project is designed for multiple recreational uses. Projects that provide for a variety of uses will be given preference. Applicants must clearly show how each individual activity will be supported by the project.

## 3. Need for Project (10 points)

The application shows a clear need/demand for each aspect of the proposed LWCF project and addresses goals of the 2020-2024 Montana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Need/demand may be demonstrated with planning documents, formal agreements, survey research/data, photos, letters of support, etc.

Additional consideration will be given if the applicant demonstrates the project will serve a unique need in the community (e.g., providing safe recreational access to persons with disabilities, senior citizens, etc.).

## 4. Application Quality and Completeness (10 points)

The application provides a clear and complete overview of the LWCF project, budget, and timeline. The applicant has met all application requirements and provided necessary supplemental documentation (including maps). Responses are complete and specific to the LWCF project. Grammar/spelling errors are minimal. The project budget, including both LWCF expenses and match, is detailed and justified.

### Additional Considerations

Other considerations that may affect Montana State Parks' final funding decision:

- The amount of LWCF funding available.
- The applicant's recent performance as an FWP grantee (if applicable).
- The amount of LWCF funding the applicant organization has received in previous grant years and any LWCF funds it has left to expend (if applicable).
- Applications for projects that were not selected for LWCF funding in a previous cycle that have adequately addressed the unsuccessful project's and/or application's deficiencies.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The LWCF Program is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) at the federal level and by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) at the state level. LWCF Program projects must therefore satisfy both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requirements to be eligible for funding. Since all LWCF projects include new construction, development, or acquisition, all must undergo the MEPA/NEPA Environmental Analysis (EA) process and include a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Letter of No Adverse Effect.

Each applicant must provide the following as supplemental documentation with the LWCF application.

### SHPO Letter of No Adverse Effect

Each application must include a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Letter of No Adverse Effect to demonstrate the project will have no adverse effect on any historical or cultural resources. Contact the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (406-444-7715) and request a cultural resource file search to determine whether your project has a previously recorded historic site within its boundaries.

### Environmental Analysis

**Applicants must conduct the EA process before submitting their LWCF application and, as documentation of this effort, include an EA form with their application.** Applicants can use either the EA form located on the [Montana LWCF website](#) or another version of the EA form (if it includes an analysis equal to or greater than what is found in FWP's EA form). With the EA form, the applicant should also include any additional analysis conducted (e.g., agency consultations, details about the public process, etc.).

### Evidence of Title

Each application must provide a legal document demonstrating who owns the property on which the LWCF project is located. LWCF funds cannot be awarded unless the subrecipient organization can prove it has control and tenure over the property in perpetuity.

### Compliance with Existing Laws, Regulations, Policies, and Ordinances

All projects seeking funding from the LWCF Program must comply with existing federal, state and jurisdictional laws, regulations, and ordinances. If applicable, such compliance should be discussed and demonstrated on the project's environmental review documentation.

FWP encourages public involvement in all LWCF projects. Since LWCF projects are community-focused, the LWCF applicant should involve the public as much as possible (e.g., by posting a legal notice for a 30-

day public comment period, conducting public meetings during project planning, etc.). The organization should have involved the public, adjacent landowners, and other interested parties in the LWCF project from its inception. Public participation may be promoted through newspaper articles and any other means available (e.g. public meetings, federal quarterly newsletters, TV programs, radio announcements, etc.).

## PROJECT SITE PLAN AND MAPS

A complete application must include adequate information about the LWCF project site itself. At a minimum, the application must include the following regarding site plans and maps:

### Boundary Map

Applicants must provide a detailed Boundary Map clearly depicting the boundaries of the parcel/property on which this LWCF project will take place. The project Boundary Map must establish the boundary that defines the project area being developed or acquired with LWCF grant funds. With rare exception, this boundary will be drawn around the entire park or the area of the unit that receives LWCF assistance. **Boundary Maps must provide metes and bounds and the total acreage within each boundary.**

**The project's Boundary Map, when approved by FWP and the NPS, will define the area to be protected for outdoor recreation in perpetuity.** It will be the applicant organization's (subrecipient's) responsibility to ensure the area is adequately operated and maintained for outdoor recreation in perpetuity. The applicant organization (subrecipient) must also ensure the area's boundary (as shown on the Boundary Map) is not/will not be encroached upon by any use not compatible with outdoor recreation. Such incompatible uses may include a public road/road Right-of-Way or any enclosed structure within the project site aside from a structure serving outdoor recreators (e.g. a restroom facility or park maintenance building).

### Site Plan

Applicants must provide a site plan of the proposed project area, depicting the elements listed below. The site plan document(s) must be detailed enough to see each element. If submitting a physical site plan, it must be at least 8½" x 11". Applicants should make every attempt to make the site plan to scale.

- a. Existing facilities.
- b. Proposed facilities.
- c. Streets, roads, and avenues.
- d. Overhead utility lines.
- e. Basic map elements (legend, compass orientation, etc.).
- f. If a building is part of the project, include its floorplan in an additional document.

### Locator Map

Applicants must provide a Locator Map showing the general location of the LWCF project. This map should show the location of the LWCF project property relative to known landmarks such as cities, towns, etc. A person unfamiliar with the project area should be able to use this map to understand the project location.

### Site Photos (Optional)

You may provide photos depicting the project site's current state to orient the reviewer to site attributes and demonstrate the need for development/improvement.



## BUDGET AND MATCHING FUNDS

### Eligible LWCF Program Activities (Costs)

Expenses and match shown on the LWCF Program application must be direct costs necessary for conducting a project directly benefiting outdoor recreation (e.g., purchasing play equipment/materials, hiring a contractor to haul and deliver materials, paying for construction labor, etc.). Overhead or administrative costs are ineligible.

Projects that have been approved and funded in the past include such facilities/amenities as ball fields, open space acquisitions, golf courses, public parks, swimming pools, skating rinks, picnic facilities, playground equipment, snowmobile facilities, and walking trails. Facilities directly supporting outdoor recreation areas, such as restrooms and maintenance sheds, also are eligible.

### Creating a Budget

When applying for LWCF Program funding, you will be instructed to detail your project budget and provide justification for the budget numbers you provide.

- ▶ **On the LWCF Program application, be sure the budget information you provide is clear, detailed, and justified. Budget line items for project expenses and match should be detailed to the extent possible. Additional information (e.g. contractor quotes) may be attached.**

Those reviewing your application should understand precisely what your organization is proposing to do with the requested LWCF Program funds and how your organization will match the requested LWCF Program funds. It should be clear how you came up with your numbers and how you calculated your request and match numbers.

All LWCF Program applicants should be aware of FWP Purchasing Guidelines if proposing to purchase any materials/services over \$5,000. For more information, see the [Purchasing Guidelines Section](#).

### Match Requirements

Entities must ensure matching funds meet LWCF Program requirements. Applications not including the minimum amount of match may not move forward for further consideration.

To meet LWCF Program requirements, matching funds must:

- Be an eligible LWCF Program activity
- Be clearly tied to the LWCF project scope
- Be incurred after the project start date
- Be guaranteed at the time of application
- Have a total value equaling at least the LWCF grant request amount plus 5% of the LWCF request amount (to match indirect costs)

- ▶ **On the LWCF Program application, you must clearly identify your match. Like LWCF Program expenses, your match should be detailed and justified.**

*Match on Direct Costs (must equal at least the LWCF grant request)*

At the time of application, the grantee must be able to commit matching funds equaling at least the LWCF grant request amount. This represents the applicant's match requirement on direct project costs.

*Match on Indirect Costs (must equal at least 5% of the LWCF grant request)*

The grantee project must also commit additional funds to match indirect costs incurred by Montana FWP, totaling 5% of the total project costs (LWCF funds plus match). Applicants may exceed the match requirement.

*Using Volunteer Hours as Match*

The LWCF Program allows volunteer hours to be used as match with proper documentation at the rate of \$20/hour. Any volunteer hours shown on your application must be guaranteed/justified based on your experience from previous years and/or with similar projects.

Also, if funded, all volunteer hours used as match must be documented using the most current FWP Volunteer Log (which requires details including volunteer and volunteer manager signatures). Volunteer hours will not be accepted as matching funds if documentation is missing from the FWP Volunteer Log.

## PURCHASING GUIDELINES

### Purchasing Services or Materials with LWCF Program Funds

Entities planning to purchase services or materials over \$5,000 in value with LWCF Program funds must follow state and federal procurement procedures before selecting a vendor. No documentation is required on the application. However, if awarded funding, the procurement process must be adequately documented on the corresponding reimbursement request(s) or the expense may not be claimed for reimbursement or match.

#### **The Limited Solicitation Process (see [ARM 2.5.603](#))**

If you are planning to use LWCF Program funds or match on the purchase of a service valued between \$5,000 and \$24,999 or a supply valued between \$5,000 and \$49,999, you must obtain a minimum of three viable quotes, if available, before selecting a vendor. The selected vendor should be the lowest acceptable quote. The process you followed, including vendors contacted and quotes obtained, must be documented when seeking reimbursement.

#### **The Competitive Bid Process (see [ARM 2.5.601](#))**

If you are planning to use LWCF Program funds or match on the purchase of a service greater than or equal to \$25,000 or a supply greater than or equal to \$50,000, you must undergo a 21-day solicitation for bids. A request for bids must be placed in a newspaper of general circulation in your area. The selected vendor should be the lowest acceptable bid. The process you followed, including vendors that supplied bids and the bids obtained, must be documented when seeking reimbursement.

### Buy America Requirement for Iron and Steel

Entities planning to purchase any item(s) containing iron/steel with LWCF Program funds must ensure the Buy America requirement is met. The Buy America requirement applies to your overall LWCF project. The foreign-made iron or steel components contained within any item(s) identified in your project budget as expenses or match cannot exceed \$2,500 in value.

If you are planning to purchase any item(s) for your LWCF project containing iron/steel components, you must ensure the total value of all iron/steel components is less than or equal to \$2,500.

Common items that may trigger the Buy America requirement include:

- Bridges or large culverts
- Storage sheds and containers