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MISSISSIPPI
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATION

STEWARDSHIP FUND PROGRAM

PLANNING GRANTS

Please see www.mwmo.org/stewardshipfund.html for more information.

Water pollution comes from many different sources, including our everyday activities. How we care for our yards and grounds, wash and maintain our cars, and even dispose of pet waste can contribute to water pollution in the Mississippi River. The hard surfaces of our driveways, sidewalks, and roofs increase the amount of stormwater entering the stormdrains. There are many choices we can make to reduce these harmful impacts on water quality. Become a partner organization with the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) by applying for a Stewardship Fund grant to work together to improve water quality in the MWMO.

Overview

- Grants of up to \$10,000 are available to complete planning in order to develop a full application for a Stewardship Fund Action Grant or a significant project with another funder
- Applications are reviewed once per year
- Planning Grants are due annually on February 1st by 3 PM (see **Timeline** section below for details)

Planning Grants are intended to assist organizations to prepare for implementation of a more complex project. The outcome of the Planning Grant is to be “project ready” when applying for an Action Grant or other source of funding for implementation.

A completed Planning Grant will result in the following (may vary based on project specifics):

- Detailed technical designs
- Lists of materials
- Site information, such as soil type, infiltration rates, and identification of any soil contamination
- A clearly defined plan for educational and outreach activities
- A maintenance plan
- A detailed project implementation budget
- Secured permission from landowners (if applicable)
- Identification of any needed permits and plan review from the city
- Strategies for funding project implementation (including sources other than an Action Grant).

The planning process should include the development of accurate cost estimates, so that budgeting for project implementation will be realistic. The Planning Grant also allows an applicant to grow the organizational capacity needed to successfully implement a complex project and to become familiar with MWMO requirements and procedures.

Participation in a Planning Grant *is not a required step* prior to application for an Action Grant. However, applicants are encouraged to plan large and complex projects in partnership with the MWMO with the assistance of a Planning Grant or close communication with MWMO staff. Completing a Planning Grant will not automatically result in receipt of an Action Grant; a highly competitive application process must be completed to receive an Action Grant.

Program Goals

Planning grants of up to \$10,000 are available for planning significant watershed stewardship projects completed by community groups.

Resulting projects of a Planning Grant should achieve *both* of the following:

1) Improve water quality or improve water and natural resource management

Projects may reduce pollution (both point and non-point source) entering surface and groundwater, prevent flooding, lessen the effects of drought, increase the capacity of the watershed to store water, and/or restore or maintain habitat and native plant communities.

2) Build community understanding, knowledge, and initiative related to water and natural resource issues and solutions

Projects should educate and engage people in the watershed regarding watershed issues, resulting in awareness and changed behaviors. Organizations receiving grants will increase their capacity to lead and promote water quality efforts.

Geographic Location of Projects

Projects should educate and engage people who live, learn, and/or work in or near the MWMO watershed. Any physical improvements that are planned as part of the project *and* that will seek funding from an Action Grant must take place within the boundaries of the MWMO watershed (see **MWMO Watershed Map** on our website). Planning Grants may be used to plan projects outside of the MWMO watershed only when physical projects are funded by other sources *and* there is demonstrated benefit to water quality in the MWMO.

Eligible Applicants

The following groups are eligible to receive a grant:

- Non-profit organizations
- Officially recognized neighborhood groups
- Schools
- Local units of government
- Business associations and professional associations

Individuals, homeowners and condominium associations, and private businesses may partner with eligible applicants in order to apply.

Applications that include improvements on private lands will be considered, but issues such as public access and the environmental benefits of the project will influence decisions.

The MWMO is particularly interested in supporting projects that will reach underserved populations (neighborhoods or residents not previously involved in MWMO projects) and projects located in environmentally sensitive areas as defined by the MWMO Watershed Management Plan (see **MWMO Watershed Management Plan** on our website) or the MWMO Board.

Project Examples

The following are examples of projects that could be planned with a Planning Grant. These examples are provided simply as general ideas and are not meant to limit the possibilities or creativity of applicants.

- Erosion control practices, planting native plant buffers around water bodies, and ecological restoration (e.g., removal of invasive species and establishment of native species), combined with public education
- Programs designed to change community attitudes and behavior over the long-term, such as programs that discourage wasting water and using polluting agents such as road salt and lawn chemicals, and encourage use of rainbarrels, rainwater cisterns, and raingardens
- Installation of grit chambers, filtration areas, and other practices to reduce pollution, combined with reporting on the effectiveness of new technologies and approaches
- Replacement of impervious surfaces with high-capacity pervious materials, combined with publicly-accessible demonstrations and high-quality community outreach efforts

It should be noted that soil contamination in urban areas is common and implementation of projects that infiltrate water will be contingent upon successful demonstration that there is no contamination of concern, remediation has occurred, or there is no potential for negative impact on surface or ground water resources.

Available Funds and Selection Process

\$50,000 is available for Planning Grants annually. Applications will be reviewed by MWMO staff and the MWMO Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), and their recommendations for funding must be approved by the MWMO Board. The following criteria will be used to select projects for funding:

- 30% Project purpose is clear and well aligned with Stewardship Fund Program goals
- 45% Planning activities are clearly stated and will produce a high-quality plan ready for implementation
- 15% Project timeline and budget are reasonable and cost effective
- 10% Overall proposal quality, including completeness, clarity, and key project personnel

Planning Grants Timeline

February 1 (by 3 pm)

Applications Due

February – March

MWMO Staff review of applications

MWMO Citizens Advisory Committee review of applications

March

MWMO Board Meeting: Board Approval of Planning Grants

Mid-March

Planning Grant Partners notified

Mid-March – April

Planning Grant Agreements prepared for signing

Partner meetings for Agreement review and signing

Planning Grant Agreements signed by MWMO Commissioner & Executive Director

Agreement signing

April 15

Partners may begin project work

Please note: work begun before the Stewardship Fund Grant Agreement is signed by a MWMO Commissioner and the Executive Director is not eligible for reimbursement.

How to Apply for a Planning Grant

Submit an application on your letterhead, if possible. Use a minimum font size of 12-point and one-inch margins. The proposal should be no more than eight pages. In addition to the application, submit a completed **Stewardship Fund Budget Form** (available on our website or contact Erica at (612) 465-8780, ext. 206, for a copy). If you have pertinent drawings, designs, or photographs of the project site, no more than two additional pages of these types of materials may be submitted. Letters of support do not count towards the page total. Any materials exceeding the page limits will be not be reviewed.

Please address the following in your application:

1. Describe the applicant organization (and any partners, if applicable).
2. List the staff responsible for the project, including a key contact person. Include phone numbers, email, and a short description of qualifications for the key staff person.
3. Describe the eventual project you would like to complete **after** your Planning Grant.
Include:
 - ✓ who (who is involved, who is affected, and who is leading it)
 - ✓ what (what activities will take place)
 - ✓ where (list the specific geographic areas involved), and
 - ✓ when (provide a brief timeline)
 - If you are considering more than one way of completing your project, include alternatives or options you are considering.
 - If the final project is located outside the MWMO, describe the direct benefits to the MWMO.
 - If the final project is located outside the MWMO, describe your plan for funding project implementation and include letters of support from project funders as an attachment to the proposal.
4. How will your project achieve the two goals of the Stewardship Fund program?

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2) Build community understanding, knowledge, and initiative related to water and natural resource issues and solutions

Projects should educate and engage people in the watershed regarding watershed issues, resulting in awareness and changed behaviors. Organizations receiving grants will increase their capacity to lead and promote water quality efforts.

5. Why is the project of interest to your organization?
6. If you have received funds from the MWMO in the past, describe how your new project will complement and extend your past projects.
7. What activities do you hope to complete **during** the Planning Grant?
Include a detailed work plan comprised of:
 - ✓ key planning activities (refer to **Overview** section for key Planning Grant results)
 - ✓ who is responsible for them
 - ✓ how you will evaluate the project
 - ✓ a timeline
8. How much funding is requested (up to \$10,000), and how will you use the funds?
9. Complete the **Stewardship Fund Budget Form** (available on our website or contact Erica at (612) 465-8780, ext. 206, for a copy). If staff or consultants' time is included, include a cost detail that lists the staff/consultant's name, a salary or hourly/daily rate, and the amount of time to be spent in the planning process. Indicate any matching cash or in-kind funds that support this project.
10. How did you learn about the Stewardship Fund Program (*e.g., email, past Stewardship Fund grant recipient*)?

Email your application to Erica at esniegowski@mwm.org by the deadline (see **Timeline** section). You will receive an email confirmation that your application was received. If you do not receive a confirmation, please call (612) 465-8780, ext. 206. If you are unable to send your application by email, you may mail or submit it in person to:

Erica Sniegowski
Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
2522 Marshall Street NE
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55418

Additional information may be requested in the review process, and final approval may be contingent upon minor changes to the scope of work.

Administrative Reference Information

Before submitting your application, review the following essential information in the **Administrative Reference Information** document on our website:

- Eligible Project Expenses
- Meetings

- Project Evaluation and Reporting
- Other Expectations
- Contracting and Disbursement of Funds
- Funding for Past Partners
- Insurance Requirements

For Help or More Information

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Erica Sniegowski, Education & Outreach Specialist, to discuss ideas and ask questions in advance of submitting an application. Erica can be reached at esniegowski@mwmo.org or (612) 465-8780, ext. 206.