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STEWARDSHIP FUND PROGRAM

Action Grant Guide

Stewardship Fund Grants assist public efforts to protect and improve shared water resources so everyone can have clean water.

The quality of water is affected by our everyday decisions. How we care for ourselves, our yards, our cars, and even our pets, can pollute water in the Mississippi River and other water bodies. Hard surfaces like our roofs, driveways, sidewalks, and pathways make it much easier for stormwater to enter storm drains if not managed properly. We can join others in taking action to reduce these harmful impacts on water quality.

Summary

Action Grants are available to complete a stewardship project, significant in scope and cost. The grant amount may not exceed \$50,000. Some matching funds required.

An application for an Action Grant should demonstrate that thorough planning for the proposed project has already taken place. It must include a realistic budget (including sources and amounts of required in-kind or cash match), secured permissions from landowners for project implementation, construction drawings, and plant lists (if applicable). If these steps are not already complete, consider applying for a [Planning Grant](#).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the MWMO to discuss ideas and ask questions in advance of submitting an application.

For questions or more information, please contact:

Marcy Bean
Capital Projects & Stewardship Specialist
612-746-4979 or mbean@mwmo.org

Grant Purposes: What types of projects are funded by this grant?

Projects funded through the Stewardship Fund Grants should be aligned with the following purposes:

- 1. Develop partnerships with community organizations.**

Projects create partnerships and build community understanding with organizations and people wanting to proactively engage in clean water issues, demonstrate new methods, and extend the MWMO's ability to protect clean water and improve water quality, and protect and restore habitat and natural resources through building community knowledge and stewardship.

- 2. Protect or improve the quality of water, habitat, and natural resources.**

Projects reduce pollution entering our streams, wetlands, lakes, river and groundwater, and projects that prevent flooding, lessen the effects of drought, retain water on site and/or restore and maintain habitat.

- 3. Build community understanding, knowledge, and initiative related to water, habitat, and natural resource issues and solutions.**

Projects engage and educate people in the community about water quality issues. These projects will result in awareness of water issues and changed behaviors that protect water. Organizations receiving grants will increase their ability to lead and promote clean water efforts.

Eligible Applicants

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

* Minnesota nonprofit organizations are governed by the Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act, Minn. Stat. ch. 317A. A nonprofit corporation's purpose and activities must serve the organization's mission to benefit the public, and may not be operated to profit other persons or entities.

Most nonprofits are exempt from taxation. There are more than two dozen different types of tax exemptions under the Internal Revenue Code, with exemption under section 501(c)(3) being the most well-known.

You can determine if your organization is registered as a non-profit with the State of Minnesota by visiting this link: <https://mblsportals.sos.state.mn.us/Business/Search>

Eligible applicants may not serve a dual role as project manager and project consultant.

Individuals or private businesses are not eligible applicants. However, individuals, homeowner and condominium associations, and private businesses may partner with eligible applicants to apply.

An eligible organization may apply for multiple Stewardship Fund grants over time as long as their requests a). Don't exceed a total of \$63,000 in Stewardship Fund grants for the same project location or b). Are not for funds to support the same project as in a past grant.

Eligible Location

All project types should benefit people who live, learn, and/or work in or near the MWMO watershed. Any physical projects must be located within [MWMO boundaries](#).

Applications that include improvements on private lands will be considered. These projects will be more competitive during review if they show ongoing benefits such as public access, public education and environmental improvement or protection.

A single property may be awarded the maximum amount of \$63,000.00 (the equivalent of one Mini, one Planning, and one Action Grant, but does not necessarily have to be that combination of grants and may be awarded in any order).

Eligible Expenses

All MWMO Grant funding must be used toward components directly related to the three grant purposes listed above. For Action Grants, this often means funding the construction of the best management practices necessary to manage stormwater, and those outreach activities required to support or facilitate that process.

The MWMO Stewardship Fund Grants may not be used to fund projects installed only to meet regulatory requirements. Projects may be initiated due to a regulatory requirement; however, stewardship funds may only be used to fund portions of the project that implement water quality innovations above and beyond the regulatory requirements.

Project expenses will be discussed in detail at the orientation meeting and during contracting. The following project expenses may be eligible for reimbursement:

- Staff time
- Consultant costs (e.g., engineering, training) *Note: design work cannot be funded under the Action Grant*
- Contractor costs
- Materials and supplies
- Postage
- Printing
- Travel
- Facility rental
- Others as proposed and accepted

Expenses that are *not* eligible:

- Costs incurred **before** a funding Agreement is signed
- Any costs not directly related to the funded project
- Costs associated with activities that are a normal part of the organization's activities (for example, production of an organization's regular newsletter)
- General "overhead" or "administrative fees" that are not specific to this project
- Features that are deemed aesthetic only
- Regulatory requirements, such as sanitary sewer line disconnects (*only stormwater best management practices that exceed regulatory requirements are eligible for funding*)

Funding

Eligible organizations are required to provide a 25% match to the grant received. The match may be cash or in-kind support (e.g., volunteer time, donated materials or services, etc.).

Individuals, homeowner and condominium associations, private businesses or any other organization that must partner with an eligible organization to apply for an Action Grant are required to provide a 25% cash match.

Funding can only be used for activities that occur after the agreement has been signed.

Grant recipients will receive 25% at the beginning of the agreement, most of the remainder based on completion of activities or deliverables, and the remaining 10% upon submission and MWMO approval of completion. Reimbursements will be contingent upon documentation of the expenditure of matching funds.

Eligible Projects

The MWMO focuses its grant funds in areas related to the Stewardship Fund grant purposes listed above. This means we cannot support worthy projects outside our program interests. For example, we do not generally fund grants (or project costs) like decorative-only items, projects being completed to satisfy regulatory rules, lobbying or advocacy work, roofing materials, building plumbing, traditional pavement, or environmental projects that don't prevent stormwater pollution or protect water bodies' quality, habitat and natural resources.

Action Grant Project Examples

The following are examples of projects that have received an Action Grant. These examples are provided simply as general ideas and are not meant to limit the possibilities or creativity of applicants. Also see our [webpage](#).

- Installation of erosion control practices, planting native plant buffers around water bodies, and ecological restoration (e.g., removal of invasive species and establishment of native species)
- Implementation of program designs that could result in positive, long-term changes in community behaviors, such as improved water conservation practices, reduction in use of polluting agents (e.g., road salt and lawn chemicals) and use of stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP's)
- Construction of stormwater BMP's to reduce pollution, combined with reporting on the effectiveness of new technologies and approaches
- Construction of impervious surfaces with high-capacity pervious materials, and documents created for site tours to demonstrate the BMP
- Implementation of an educational curriculum, creation of a communication or behavior change campaign, or other outreach/engagement projects.

- Implementation of water quality themed educational activities and workshops for an area.

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.

How to Apply for an Action Grant

Submit an [Application](#) to the MWMO. This Application should show the MWMO how a project meets our grant goals and can be realistically accomplished.

Action Grant initial Applications will be reviewed by MWMO staff. The MWMO will invite selected applicants to meet to discuss their proposal in more detail and give the opportunity for revision. Final applications will be reviewed by MWMO staff and the MWMO Citizen Advisory Committee. These recommendations for grant award are reviewed and must be approved by the MWMO Board of Commissioners, after which applicants will be notified about their grant status.

See also [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Grant Award

Once a project is selected for funding, an Agreement will be prepared for signature by the MWMO and the grantee. Grantees must attend an Orientation Session to review and clarify the grant process, administrative procedures, technical assistance, and discuss other resources. MWMO staff will work with each grantee to finalize the Agreement. The Agreement will outline the obligations of the grant recipient and the MWMO. It will include project-specific details and requirements, including a timeline, budget, work tasks, deliverables, evaluation, and reporting procedures. *Note: MWMO retains ownership of all deliverables.*

Once the agreement is signed, the grantee will have one (1) calendar year to complete the requirements of the grant.

Typical MWMO Grant Application + Award Process

To obtain a Stewardship Fund grant from MWMO, applicants generally follow this process:

1. Contact the MWMO to discuss your project idea that meets one or more of the grant purposes listed above and/or attend an information session.

2. Coordinate with MWMO staff to decide if a meeting and/or a visit to your project site would help the application process.
3. Submit a completed application form that matches the grant type you wish to apply for (Mini, Planning, or Action) by the application deadline. The application helps the MWMO decide if a project meets our program purposes and can realistically be accomplished with our partnership.
4. If your project is selected to move ahead by the MWMO, meet with our staff for feedback on your application. Use the information provided to update the application and submit it by the application deadline.
5. All grant applications go through a competitive review process, and are subject to approval. Action Grant applications are reviewed by MWMO staff and the MWMO Citizen Advisory Committee, and are then approved by the MWMO Board of Commissioners.
6. Wait for the MWMO to tell you if your project was selected for a grant before you spend any expected funding from the MWMO.
7. Attend an orientation session to learn how you can to use your grant funds, how to track project expenses, and what other resources are available to help grant recipients.
8. Plan your project with the MWMO's participation. Agree on "deliverables" that must be provided to the MWMO at the end of the grant.
9. Review and sign an agreement with the MWMO. Receive initial funding.
10. Begin your project activities. Grantees have 12 months to complete their project and submit deliverables to the MWMO.
11. Provide project deliverables and participate in a close-out interview with MWMO staff at the end of the project to receive the final reimbursement.