



RENEWABLE
RESOURCE
GRANT
PROGRAM

Planning Grant Program Guidance

2025 Biennium



The Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation

PURPOSE

The purpose of the RRGL Planning Grant Program is to provide funding to governmental entities for professional and technical services necessary to produce a high quality RRGL grant application which leads to a project that conserves, manages, develops, or protects Montana's renewable resources.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include any division of state government, tribal government, or other county, city, or local political subdivision [MCA 85-1-605](#). These governmental entities have included:

- cities,
- towns,
- counties,
- water and/or sewer districts,
- conservation districts,
- irrigation districts,
- school districts and universities,
- regional water authority,
- state agencies, and
- tribal governments

Private or non-profit entities are NOT ELIGIBLE for funding but may partner with a local government to submit an application if the project aligns with the sponsor's organization.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Eligible funding types are specified in [MCA 85-1-602](#).

"Either grants or loans may be provided to fund the following types of projects:

- (a) feasibility, design, research, and resource assessment studies; and
- (b) preparation of construction, rehabilitation, or production plans.

Example Projects:

- Water, Wastewater or Stormwater Infrastructure Preliminary Engineering Reports (PER)*
- Irrigation Infrastructure PER*
- PER* Updates
- Resource Services (Plans or Studies)
 - Capital Improvement Plans (CIP)**
 - Growth Plans**
 - Sample Collections
 - Surveys

Current Grant Cycle and deadline information is available at www.dnrc.mt.gov

Apply online: www.grants.dnrc.mt.gov

- Studies
- Technical Assessments
- Watershed Restoration Plans***
- Watershed Restoration Project Plans***

*Preliminary Engineering Reports must meet the standard as described in the most current Uniform Application for Montana Public Facility Projects or meet the requirements of the RRGL Project Grant Application – Technical Narrative.

<https://comdev.mt.gov/shared/CTAP/docs/Presentations-Publications-Models/Tech-Doc-Guides/PER-Outline.pdf>

**Capital Improvement Plans and Growth Plans must follow the manuals provided by the Department of Commerce. <https://comdev.mt.gov/Programs-and-Boards/Community-Technical-Assistance-Program/Presentations,-Publications-and-Model-Documents>

***Watershed Restoration Plans and Project Plans must meet standard as described by DEQ's Nonpoint Source Management Program. <https://www.epa.gov/nps/handbook-developing-watershed-plans-restore-and-protect-our-waters>

Ineligible Projects

RRGL Planning Grants will not be awarded to applications that are eligible for grant funds within another grant program in DNRC, such as Reclamation Development Grants, Aquatic Invasive Species Grants, etc.

If a project is determined to have adverse environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated and do not preserve the state's renewable resources per 85-1-601, MCA, it is ineligible for a grant.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

DNRC grants reimburse eligible project costs:

- Contracted technical or engineering services.

Ineligible Expenses

RRG Planning Grants will not reimburse:

- Grant administration costs.
- Program Costs, aka indirect costs:
 - "Program costs" means non-reimbursable costs not directly related to the project. Program costs include but are not limited to: office rent that will be incurred whether or not the project is implemented; salaries of existing fully funded staff positions unless the work- hours associated with the project are accounted for; or any other costs that pay for ongoing or general services of the applicant. For example: rent, utilities, licenses, reoccurring/regular meetings/newsletters (unrelated to planning or specific capacity development), staff time (unrelated to planning or specific capacity development), ongoing cost deemed necessary to continue business (operations).
- Political lobbying or litigation
- Land or property acquisition
- Food or beverages
- Activities that limit lawful access to property (see [MCA 85-1-602 \(4\)](#))

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GRANT LIMITS

Infrastructure PER	Irrigation PER/ Technical Narrative	PER or Technical Narrative Update	Resource Services (Plans or Studies)	Watershed Restoration Plan	Watershed Restoration Project Plan
\$40,000	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$15,000	\$40,000	\$30,000

Applicants may submit multiple applications for distinct phases of a project or for multiple projects.

MATCH

No match is required for planning grant applications. Please provide all in-kind or matching funds for the planning to demonstrate financial feasibility to complete the project. Ranking will consider committed cash match.

FUNDING CYCLES

House Bill 6 includes \$3,500,000 for Planning Grants. Application funding is available as revenue is received.

- MCEP/CDBG Planning Grant Match Cycle – October 2023
- Planning Grant Cycle #1 – December 2023 – April 2024
 - Review and award – January 2024
 - Review and award – April 2024
- Planning Grant Cycle #2 September 2024 – December 2024
 - Review and award – October 2024
 - Review and award – January 2025

Future cycles will be announced at the DNRC's discretion.

HOW TO APPLY

Application materials are available through the DNRC website <https://dnrc.mt.gov/Conservation/Grant-and-Loan-Programs/Renewable-Resource-Grants-and-Loans/>.

RANKING

See Appendix B - Eligibility and Ranking for more information. Infrastructure and irrigation/watershed projects will be ranked separately.

Applications will be reviewed and competitively ranked based on the renewable resource benefits of the proposed project. The proposed project must measurably conserve, manage, develop or preserve/protect Montana's renewable resources. Points will be awarded for public benefits, implementation of the state water plan priorities, and/or mitigates human health or safety problems.

DNRC must consider technical and financial feasibility as well as the applicant's ability to manage a project. Projects that are not technically or financially feasible are not eligible. Financial feasibility considers the committed match in relation to total project cost.

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GRANT MANAGEMENT

Awards

DNRC will provide an award letter to successful applicants. The applicant will be responsible for providing the necessary startup conditions within the timeframe identified in the award letter. Failure to meet startup conditions within a 24-month timeframe will result in a rescinded award.

PROJECT EXPENSES INCURRED PRIOR TO THE GRANT AWARD LETTER ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT.

Contracting

DNRC grant recipients are required to enter into an agreement with the DNRC prior to requesting reimbursement for eligible project costs. All local procurement and state laws are required to be followed under this agreement.

Reimbursement & Reporting

DNRC does not require quarterly or more frequent progress reports for Planning Grants. DNRC will reimburse the Planning Grant recipient a maximum of 50% of the total grant amount for incurred expenses once the grant recipient submits a draft planning document. DNRC will reimburse the balance of the grant funds upon receipt of an approved final planning document.

DNRC requires that grant recipients submit requests for reimbursement using the state vendor invoice. In addition to the DNRC vendor invoice, the grant recipient will submit copies of all applicable invoices and/or receipts eligible for reimbursement. All reimbursement and reporting are submitted through the online grant management system www.grants.dnrc.mt.gov.

Reporting and reimbursement information is provided on DNRC [Resources and Training](#) webpage.

Grant Closeout

DNRC grants require deliverables and invoices in compliance with the agreement to process final reimbursement.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

DNRC will be offering local governments assistance to apply for planning grants. These funds are designed to assist local governments that:

1. Do not have an established relationship with a professional engineering firm. OR
2. Have not been successful in applying for DNRC planning grants in the prior biennium.

DNRC will evaluate requests from local governments for technical assistance based on demonstrated need. If approved, DNRC will assign a contracted technical service provider to assist the local government with a planning grant application. Technical assistance is limited to \$3,000 or 20 hours. Technical service providers will be contracted directly with DNRC and assigned at random as local government requests are approved.

- Technical Assistance – January 2023

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Outreach

DNRC provides outreach to local governments planning renewable resource projects which will lead to RRG project grant applications.

- DNRC advertises RRG Planning Grant Opportunities primarily using electronic messages (Gov Delivery) and <https://dnrc.mt.gov/Conservation/Grant-and-Loan-Programs/Renewable-Resource-Grants-and-Loans/>.
- DNRC updates WASACT as well as other stakeholder groups such as Montana Rural Water, Montana Association of Conservation Districts, partner agencies, and other stakeholder groups of grant opportunities.
- DNRC provides online application and grant management training, FAQ documents and scheduled office hours, as needed, to applicants.