



RECLAMATION AND DEVELOPMENT GRANTS PROGRAM – PLANNING GRANT

Program Overview and Application Guidance

The Montana DNRC manages the Reclamation and Development Grants Program (RDGP) to fund projects that protect Montanans from the effects of mineral development on public resources and support other crucial need projects to protect Montana's environment and public. An RDGP planning grant funds planning and preparation for these projects.

Application Forms and Guidance are on [RDG Planning Grants webpage](#).

Eligible Applicants

Reclamation and Development Grants Program planning grants are available to:

- City/town or county;
- Local political subdivisions (i.e. conservation districts, irrigation districts, school districts, water/sewer/solid waste districts, and state agencies); or
- Tribal governments within the State.

Federal agencies, private corporations, non-profits and individuals are not eligible to receive RDGP planning grant funding. Ineligible entities may not receive grant funds through eligible entities as a pass-through. Eligible entities must:

- Have a material connection to the work being performed;
- Be willing to act as the legal party for the purposes of project representation, negotiations, and communications; and
- Provide DNRC with an executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party.

Please see the [Guidance for Sponsored or Partner Grants](#) for more information about these partner relationships.

Eligible Projects and Funding Limits

Eligible planning grants must plan for projects in one of the five categories below. The term "project" means a planned and coordinated action or series of actions addressing an objective consistent with the policy and purpose of the RDG Program. An applicant may submit planning grant applications for multiple distinct projects (please see [Ineligible Projects](#) for additional considerations).

1) Reclamation Project Planning (\$75,000)

Project planning for mining, oil and gas, and hazardous waste sites. Projects must meet one or more of the following project types:

- Reclaim land, water or other resources adversely affected by mineral development;
- Mitigate damage to public resources by mineral development;
- Research, demonstrate, or assist wise use of Montana's minerals;
- Investigate and remediate sites where hazardous waste threatens public health or natural resources; or
- Assess existing or potential environmental damage resulting from mineral development.

2) Drought Mitigation (\$75,000)

Planning that will lead to the development of drought management plans in line with the State Water Plan. The primary purpose of the plan should be to address drought and benefit natural resources across a watershed or region of the state. Drought mitigation projects must fit into one of the following categories:

- Drought Management Plan - Develop a Plan for a watershed or region of the State, including identifying and prioritizing drought mitigation projects.

- **Deliverable: Drought Management Plan**

- Drought Mitigation Planning – Plan specific projects to address drought. The projects must be identified in an existing plan (e.g., Drought Management Plan or Watershed Management Plan) and tied to a watershed or region of the State.

- **Deliverable: Drought Mitigation Plan**

3) **High Hazard Dams (\$75,000)**

High Hazard Dam (Montana Dam Safety Act, MCA 85-15-106) projects mitigate damage to natural resources from dam failure. Applications must clearly demonstrate natural resource benefits.

- **Deliverables:**

- Preliminary Engineering Report (including surveys and studies)
 - Feasibility studies
 - Engineering design

4) **Channel Migration Zone Mapping (\$75,000)**

Channel migration zone (CMZ) mapping projects include large-scale flood assessment or other natural resource benefits to a watershed or region of the State. Projects must identify the natural resource needs of the area and include prioritization of projects benefiting natural resources.

- **Deliverables:**

- CMZ map(s)
 - Project Prioritization

5) **Other Crucial State Need (\$50,000)**

Crucial State Need projects prevent or eliminate severe and unacceptable damage to natural resources or capture extraordinary public benefit that would otherwise be lost. They must have a regional, watershed, or statewide importance. Public benefit from this type of project must directly relate to natural resources.

Planning grant activities may include, but are not limited to problem analysis, feasibility or design studies, environmental monitoring, remedial action plans or implementation, technology demonstration, research, site assessment, grant writing (up to \$6,000) for a RDGP Project Grant application, or other actions that clean up contamination, mitigate damage, or protect Montana's environment.

Ineligible Projects

- Projects that relieve a liable party or include work on an actively permitted site are ineligible. Applicants may be required to show liable party determination and financial statements showing the remaining bonds and/or financial viability.
- Water development and management projects where the primary purpose and benefit is irrigation are ineligible. Those projects may be eligible for funds under the Renewable Resource Grant Program.

- A project is not eligible for funding if it can reasonably be expected to receive full funding from another source.

Ineligible Costs

- State and Federal employee wages or salaries.
- Costs that cannot be documented with accounting records.
- Activities outside of the scope of work, including salaries/wages, travel, conferences, licenses and memberships, and other expenses not directly related to the project.
- Routine maintenance and operation, general advertising, office rent and utilities, salaries and benefits, tuition, routine project monitoring or maintenance, routine repair and maintenance of vehicles and equipment, and any indirect costs.
- Legal fees not associated with the project.
- Food and beverages for meetings.
- Costs incurred outside of the grant term.
- Costs that were not procured following either Montana or local procurement laws or rules.
- Prepayment of anticipated costs for future activity.
- Travel and per-diem costs that exceed Montana Travel Policy.

Cost Considerations

The RDGP only covers costs incurred that are directly associated with the project and activities and tasks outlined in your scope of work and budget. Direct costs include contracted services, staff time, materials, and supplies.

We do not reimburse indirect costs or program costs, including office rent, salaries of existing fully funded staff, operation and maintenance, or any other ongoing costs or general services of the applicant.

RDGP supports project-specific administration funds, including costs for professional and legal services, accounting, audit, and staffing to comply with grant administration and reporting. Costs must be reasonable and allocable to the project. Administrative costs must be supported with documentation of actual expenses. The total for administrative costs cannot be greater than 8% of the total project cost.

Match funds are not required, but applications with match funding will be awarded points based on the amount of committed project funds, which may include in-kind contributions. Matching funds must be secured prior to executing an agreement with DNRC and all project costs are funded.

Application Submittal

Applications must be submitted at grants.dnrc.mt.gov. Applications will not be accepted by email or mail. The complete application form and instructions are available electronically on the [RDG Planning Grants](#) webpage.

The following items must be submitted to the online application:

- Completed online application
- Project location map
- Project budget tables 1 and 2 uploaded as PDF documents (PDF only)
- Funding commitment letters
- Signed authorizing statement, as PDF.

- Additional project documentation may include:
 - Letters of support
 - Permits or permit applications
 - Other project documentation needed for the project
 - For projects regulated, or likely to be regulated, by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality or any other agency, planning grant applications must include a letter of support from the partner agency

Application Review

DNRC will review and rank the applications. Review criteria include:

- Degree to which the project provides public and natural resource benefits;
- Documentation of project need and benefits;
- Urgency of the project;
- Technical feasibility (scope of work and schedule);
- Budget and cost effectiveness of the project;
- Committed match funding; and
- Local support and commitment of partners.

DNRC will take into consideration any issues with current or past projects and availability of funding.

Requirements Upon Award

When a planning grant is awarded, the recipient must enter into a grant agreement with DNRC. The RDG grant manager may request additional information or documents necessary to begin working on the grant agreement. The grant agreement will not be effective until signed and dated by both representatives of the DNRC and the recipient.

- **Reporting**

The recipient must submit a quarterly progress report with budget updates and a final report outlining planning grant activities, along with any deliverables. Progress reports must include project activities during the reporting period, anticipated activities during the next reporting period, and expected changes in scope, schedule, or budget. The budget update must include costs incurred (including match), funds remaining, and itemized tracking.

- **Reimbursement**

Reimbursement requests may be submitted with the quarterly report or as needed. Reimbursement requests must include a progress report, vendor invoice, invoices and supporting documentation of project expenses, proof of payment for invoices, and a budget tracking spreadsheet that includes match expenses. **Expenses incurred before the grant agreement becomes effective are not eligible for reimbursement.**

DNRC will withhold 10% of grant funds until the final report and any additional requirements are approved. The recipient will receive the final payment based on the total of actual costs submitted, not to exceed the total agreement amount, and upon delivery of a final report, deliverables, and a final invoice.

- **Procurement and Permitting Requirements**

Recipients agree to comply with all relevant procurement and contracting laws and requirements related to work performed under DNRC grant agreements. In some cases, DNRC retains the right to approve subcontracts. For more information, see the [RDGP Procurement Guide](#).

Recipients are responsible for obtaining all necessary local, State, and Federal permits for the completion of projects approved for funding through the RDG Program. Landowner permission must be secured for projects on private land before contracting.

Additional Resources

Resources for applicants and grant recipients, including [FAQs, grant writing webinars, and report templates can be found on the DNRC website.](#)

Your DNRC Grant Manager

The [RDG Program has several staff members](#) managing grants. Your DNRC grant manager is identified on your award letter. Please contact your grant manager or an RDG team member today:

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RDG Planning Grant Tips

- ✓ Make sure you are an eligible applicant and that your project is eligible for funding.
- ✓ Start early; give yourself plenty of time to write your application.
- ✓ Talk to RDGP staff and experts in the project field.
- ✓ Develop a clear approach for the project and identify the final product.
- ✓ Verify the budget is clearly tied to the activities and tasks in the application; show budget calculations.
- ✓ Make sure to include sufficient time and money for project reporting and administration.
- ✓ Document support from agencies and project partners; coordinate with appropriate regulatory jurisdictions.
- ✓ Document landowner access to the project site, if on private land.
- ✓ **All basic information requested in the grant application should be provided in the main application text, not in appendices;** appendices should provide supporting information but not serve as the primary source for application information.