



DNRC Reclamation and Development Planning Grant

Program Overview and Application Guidance



The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) manages the Reclamation and Development Grants Program (RDGP) to fund projects that indemnify the people of the state for the effects of mineral development on public resources and that meet other crucial needs to protect Montana's environment. The purpose of the RDGP planning grant program is to assist local governments with planning and preparation for these types of projects.

Applicant Eligibility

Reclamation and Development Grants Program planning grants are available to:

- city/town,
- county,
- other 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.

Project Eligibility and Funding Limits

Eligible planning grants must plan for projects in one of the categories below. 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 must meet one or more of the following project types:

- Reclaim land, water or other resources adversely affected by mineral development; or
- Mitigate damage to public resources caused by mineral development; or
- Research, demonstrate, or provide technical assistance to promote the wise use of Montana minerals; or
- Investigate and remediate sites where hazardous wastes or regulated substances threaten public health or the environment; or
- Research to assess existing or potential environmental damage resulting from mineral development.

2. Drought Mitigation (\$50,000)

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 - Development of a drought management plan for a watershed or region of the state. Drought management plans must include project prioritization and identify drought mitigation projects (see below) to implement.
 - Deliverable: Drought Management Plan

- Drought Mitigation Project Planning – Planning for specific projects that address drought as the main purpose of the project. The project must be identified in an existing plan such as a drought management plan or a watershed management plan that ties the need for the project to a watershed or region of the state.
 - Deliverable: Project design

- 3. High Hazard Dams (\$75,000)
 High hazard dam (Montana Dam Safety Act, MCA 85-15-106) projects that will mitigate damage to natural resources as a result of failure. Planning grants must clearly demonstrate natural resource benefits.
 - Deliverables:
 - Preliminary Engineering Report (including surveys and studies)
 - Feasibility studies
 - Engineering design

- 4. Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) Mapping (\$75,000)
 Channel migration zone (CMZ) mapping projects that plan for 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.
 - Deliverable: CMZ Map(s) and project prioritization

- 5. Other Crucial State Need (\$50,000)
 Projects that meet a crucial state need must 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: (1) problem analysis, (2) feasibility or design studies, (3) environmental monitoring, (4) remedial action plans or implementation, (5) technology demonstration, (6) research, (7) site assessment, (8) grant writing (up to \$5,000) for a RDGP project grant application, or (9) other related actions that lead to cleanup of contamination, mitigation of damage, or protection of 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 grants from the [Renewable Resource Grant Program](#).

Cost Considerations

DNRC will only reimburse actual direct cost associated with the project and that are included in the approved scope and budget. **Direct costs** are identified specifically as costs of implementing the RDG program objectives, such as contracted services, staff time, materials, and supplies.

Applicants may request project-specific administration funds, this can include costs for professional services, legal, 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 will be awarded points based on the amount of committed match funding for the project. Match funds may include in-kind contributions.

Direct Cost vs Indirect Cost

Direct costs (project costs) are costs that will be incurred by implementing a particular project and should be directly assigned to activities related to the tasks outlined in your scope of work within your application and, subsequently, grant agreement.

Indirect costs (program costs) cannot be reimbursed by DNRC. Indirect costs are costs of an organization that are not readily assignable to a particular project but are necessary to the operation of the organization. This may include but is not limited to, office rent, salaries of existing fully funded staff positions unless the workhours associated with the project are accounted for, operation and maintenance or any other costs that pay for ongoing or general services of the applicant. See [Ineligible Costs](#) below for additional information on non-reimbursable costs.

Ineligible Costs

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

The following items are ineligible for reimbursement:

- 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 and routine repair and maintenance of vehicles and equipment, as well as tasks that are programmatic in nature (see [Direct Cost vs. Indirect Cost](#) above).
- 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 State of Montana or local procurement laws or rules.
- Prepayment of anticipated costs for future activity.

- Grant recipient travel and per-diem costs that exceed those allowed by the [State of Montana Travel Policy](#).

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 or by contacting DNRC.

Submittal Instructions

Grant application must be completed at grants.dnrc.mt.gov. The following items must be attached to the online application:

- Completed online application.
- Project location map uploaded.
- Project budget tables 1 and 2 uploaded as PDF documents (PDF only)
- Funding commitment letters uploaded.
- Signed authorizing statement, uploaded as PDF.
- Additional project documentation may include:
 - Letters of support
 - Permits or permit applications
 - or other project documentation needed for the project

Please contact Samantha Treu or Jorri Dyer with any questions on the grant and application process or for technical support.

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Application Review

DNRC will review and rank the applications based on technical and financial feasibility. Criteria for review include:

- Degree to which the project will provide public and natural resource benefits
- Documentation of project need and benefits
- Degree of need and urgency of the project
- Technical feasibility (scope of work and schedule)
- Budget and cost effectiveness of the project
- Degree of match funding and commitment
- Degree of local support and commitment of partners

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

DNRC Requirements upon Award

Upon award of a planning grant, 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 representatives of the DNRC and the recipient.

Reporting

The recipient must submit a quarterly progress report with budget updates and a final report of planning grant activities. 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. Reported project costs must include those funded by the grant recipient and matching funds.

Payment

Expenses incurred before the grant agreement becomes effective are not eligible for 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, and a budget tracking spreadsheet that includes match expenses.

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 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.

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

Agency Coordination

For all proposed projects regulated, or likely to be regulated, in some capacity by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) or any other agency, planning grant applicants must upload a letter from an authorized agency official with their application that confirms support for the project.

Additional Resources

Resources for applicants and grant recipients, including FAQs, grant writing webinars, and report templates can be found on the DNRC website: <https://dnrc.mt.gov/Conservation/Training-and-Education/>

Helpful Tips for Preparing Applications

- ✓ Make sure you are an eligible applicant and that your project is eligible for funding.
- ✓ Start early. Give yourself plenty of time to write the application.
- ✓ Talk to staff in the Reclamation and Development Grants Program and experts in the project field.
- ✓ Develop a clear idea and approach for the project and clearly identify the final product.
- ✓ Make sure the budget is clearly tied to the activities/tasks and objectives outlined in the application.
- ✓ Show how amounts in each of the budget line items were calculated.
- ✓ Make sure the bulk of the grant addresses the ranking criteria.
- ✓ **All basic information requested in the grant application should be provided in the main application text, not in the appendices.** Appendices should provide supporting information but not serve as the primary source of that information. If critical information is buried in the appendices, it may be missed by reviewers conducting the grant evaluation.
- ✓ Make sure to include sufficient time and money for project reporting to DNRC.
- ✓ Develop and document support from agencies or groups that will benefit from your project or provide access to the project site.
- ✓ Make sure that the project is coordinated with appropriate regulatory jurisdictions before application submittal.