

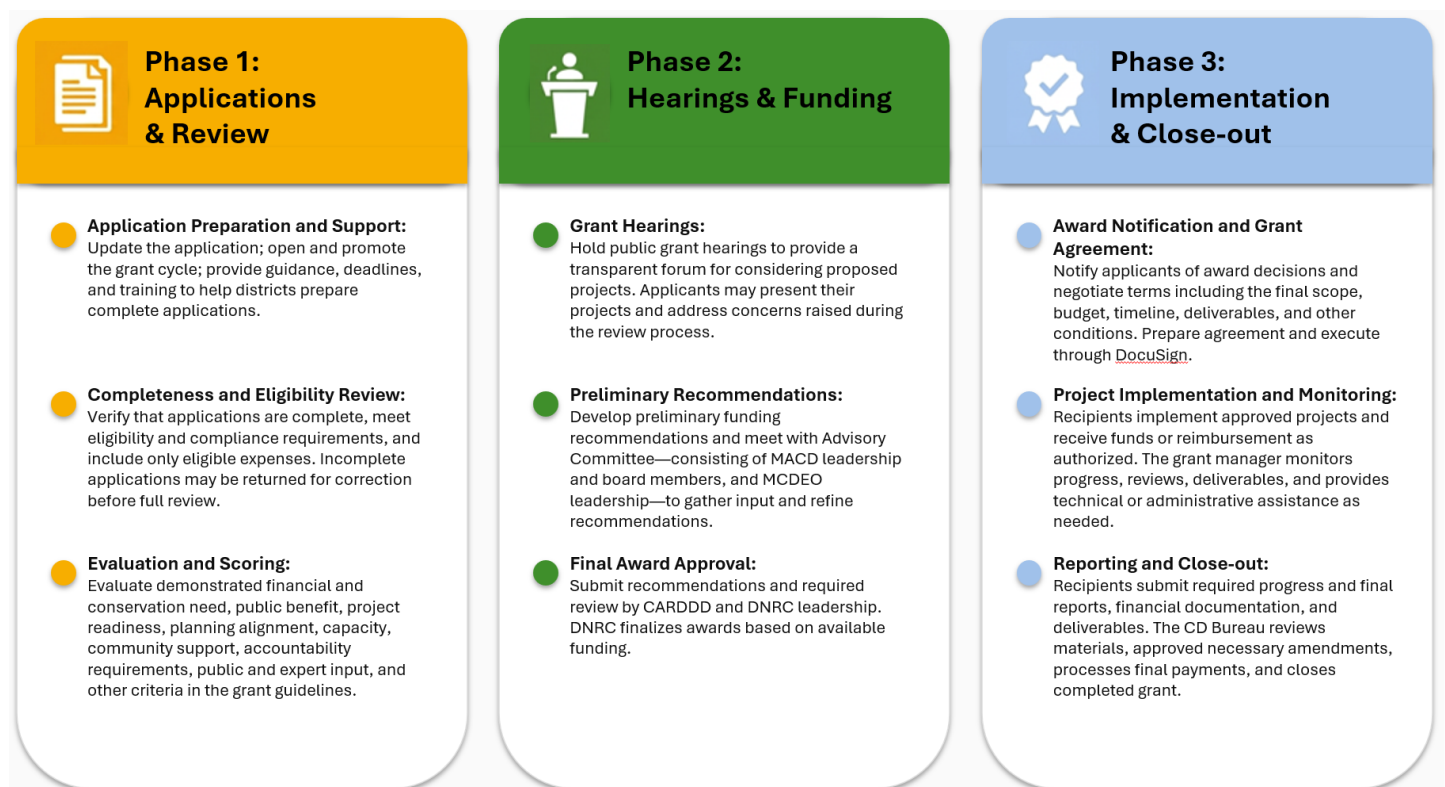


Conservation District Grant Application Review & Award Process

Purpose

This process provides a clear and consistent method for reviewing and awarding conservation district grants. It helps the CD Bureau evaluate applications fairly, verify eligibility and compliance, and make funding recommendations based on documented need, available funding, and program priorities.

The CD Grant Program employs a multi-stage, collaborative review and approval process—integrating public feedback, expert analysis, and committee deliberation—culminating in project funding, agreement execution, and ongoing support through project close.





Phase 1: Application Preparation, Review, and Evaluation

- **Application Review:** Review and update previous cycle's application.
- **Open and Promote Application Period:** Open and promote application cycle to conservation districts with guidance and deadlines.
- **Training Session:** The CD Bureau hosts a training session to assist CDs with application preparation.
- **Completeness Review:** Verify eligibility and return incomplete applications to correct errors or provide missing information. Only complete applications move forward for full review.
- **Eligibility Review:** Complete applications are reviewed to confirm basic eligibility and compliance requirements. Only eligible expenses are considered.
- **Evaluation of Need:** Eligible applications are evaluated based on demonstrated financial need under 76-15-530, MCA. Applications are also evaluated based on the proposed project's demonstrated conservation need, anticipated public natural-resource benefits, and alignment with district priorities.
- **Project Readiness:** Review of the project's feasibility, including a clear scope of work, realistic timeline and budget, measurable outcomes, district and partner capacity, community support, and any matching contributions. The proposed project must be identified in the district's annual workplan, strategic plan, or watershed restoration plan.
- **Additional Review Factors:** Other qualitative and quantitative criteria listed in the grant guidelines are considered, along with external input from the application gallery and public comments. Input is collected from subject matter experts if applicable. Submission of the district's accountability assessment and corrective action plan (if applicable) is verified.
- **Comprehensive Scoring:** Criteria is applied using qualitative and quantitative factors from grant guidelines and additional review factors described above.

Phase 2: Hearings & Funding

- **Grant Hearings:** Grant hearings are held to consider proposed projects. Hearings provide an opportunity for applicants to present project merits, address questions or concerns, and consider input received during the public comment period.
- **Preliminary Recommendations:** After application review, the CD Bureau develops preliminary funding recommendations and meets with an Advisory Committee consisting of MACD leadership, conservation district board members, and MCDEO leadership. The Committee's input is considered as recommendations are refined. Requested amounts may be adjusted



based on eligibility, demonstrated need, available funding, and consistency across applications.

- **Final Award Approval:** Following grant hearings and preliminary funding recommendations, the CD Bureau submits recommendations to CARDD, DNRC leadership, and State Administration, as applicable, for review. After that review, DNRC approves, adjusts, and finalizes award amounts to promote equitable treatment across conservation districts. Final awards are based on available funding and the results of the application review process.

Phase 3: Implementation & Close-out

- **Award Notification:** Distribute award and non-award letters to all applicants. Award letters identify the approved project, funding amount, any conditions of award, and next steps.
- **Grant Agreement Development:** Negotiate final project terms, including the scope of work, budget, deliverables, timeline, match commitments, reporting schedule, and special conditions. Prepare and execute grant agreements and required legal or administrative documentation.
- **Project Implementation and Monitoring:** Following execution of the grant agreement, recipients may begin work and request reimbursement or receive funds as authorized by the agreement. The CD Bureau monitors project progress, reviews submitted deliverables and provides technical or administrative assistance as needed.
- **Progress reporting and amendments:** Recipients submit periodic progress reports and supporting documentation in accordance with the grant agreement. Any requested changes to the scope, budget, timeline, or deliverables must be reviewed and approved before implementation.
- **Final reporting and close-out:** Recipients submit final reports, financial documentation, and required deliverables to demonstrate completion of the project. The CD Bureau reviews final materials, verifies that grant requirements have been met, processes final payment as appropriate, and formally closes the grant.

Criterion	Requirement
✓ Complete application	Complete application is submitted in Submittable with all required sections and supporting documentation. Application includes a defined scope of



Criterion	Requirement
	work, schedule, budget, goals and measurable objectives, and anticipated deliverables.
✓ Financial need	Need for supplemental funding is demonstrated, as required by 76-15-530, MCA.
✓ Current compliance	District is in good standing on prior DNRC grant agreements, including required reporting and deliverables and all legal requirements in Title 76, MCA.
✓ Conservation planning alignment	Proposed activity advances a conservation priority identified in the district's annual work plan, watershed restoration plan, or strategic plan.
✓ Public benefit	Public natural resource benefits are clearly described. Applications that provide multiple natural resource benefits may receive stronger consideration.
✓ District capacity and partnerships	District's capacity to complete and manage the proposed work, including staff or supervisor involvement, partner roles, and any match or other committed resources is described.
✓ Support of project (not required)	Demonstrated support for the proposed project showing that the project addresses an identified local need and has community or partner support is recommended.



CDA Grant Review and Award Process

