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MISSISSIPPI  
WATERSHED  
MANAGEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

## STEWARDSHIP FUND PROGRAM

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### Mini Grant Guide

The MWMO Stewardship Fund grant program offers financial, educational, and technical assistance to protect and improve water resources within our watershed.

#### Summary

Mini Grants are available for short-term or small-scale projects. The grant amount may not exceed \$3,000. No matching funds are required.

An application for a Mini Grant should describe a project and explain how the applicant and their partners will educate others in learning how they can take actions to protect lakes, rivers, streams, or wetlands. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the MWMO to discuss ideas and ask questions in advance of submitting an application. The application is available on the website.

*If you have any questions, please reach out to the [contact listed on our website](#).*

## **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 the [state registry website](#).

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

Individuals or private business are not eligible applicants. However, individuals, homeowner and condominium associations, and private businesses may be included as a partner in an application submitted by an eligible entity.

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.

## **Eligible Expenses**

All MWMO Grant funding must be used toward components directly related to the three grant purposes listed above.

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*)

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, or environmental projects that don’t prevent stormwater pollution or protect water bodies’ quality, habitat and natural resources.

## Funding

No matching funds are required for Mini-Grants. Grant recipients will receive their payment in two installments. For projects up to \$500, this will be 75% at the beginning of the Agreement and the remaining 25% upon submission and MWMO approval of completion. For projects \$500 and over, this will be 50% at the beginning of the Agreement and the remaining 50% upon submission and MWMO approval of completion.

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).

## Mini Grant Project Examples

The following are examples of projects that have received a Mini Grant. Please also see our [website](#) for past project examples. These examples are provided simply as general ideas and are not meant to limit the possibilities or creativity of applicants.

- Community events, such as clean-ups, festivals, and invasive plant removal/restoration
- Leadership programs for young people or underserved communities
- Educational and technical training (including workshops) for all ages
- Art or media projects depicting water and natural resource issues
- Installation of small Best Management Practices (BMP's) demonstrations (e.g., rainbarrels, raingardens, pervious pavers)
- Engagement processes that help identify water and natural resource issues of concern to a community
- Educational signs or brochures to explain water quality improvement projects

## How to Apply for a Mini Grant

All interested applicants are urged to contact MWMO staff with any questions or ideas. MWMO staff can help determine if the project will fit the goals and requirements of the program. Once interested applicants are sure they are eligible and want to apply, the application should be downloaded and filled in with information as best as possible.

Once completed, please submit the application to the MWMO. The application will explain the basic ideas behind your project, how much you think it will cost, and when you think the project will end. The application should show the MWMO how a project meets our grant goals and could be completed.

Mini Grant applications will be reviewed by MWMO staff. Selected applicants will be invited to discuss their project ideas with MWMO staff. Feedback from the meeting should be used to develop the final application. The final application will be due on **Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 by 4:30 pm**. MWMO staff will choose which of the final applications to fund. The MWMO will begin notifying applicants whether they will be given funding in mid- late February or shortly afterwards. Actual funding will be provided after a grant Agreement is complete and signed by both the grantee organization and the MWMO (roughly March through May).

## **Grant Award**

MWMO staff will review and select final applications for funding. The MWMO will begin notifying applicants whether they will be awarded funding in mid-late February or shortly afterwards. Funding will be provided to the applicant after a grant Agreement is finalized and signed by both the grantee organization and the MWMO (typically completed between late February and March).

Grantees must attend an Orientation Session to review and clarify the grant process, to learn how to manage grant funding and related paperwork, to find out about technical assistance, and to discuss other resources.

MWMO staff will work with each grantee to finalize the Agreement. The Agreement will outline what is expected of the grant recipient and of the MWMO. It will include project-specific details and requirements, including a timeline, budget, work tasks, end-products of the project called deliverables, methods for assessing the project, and information on how to share the project's outcomes with the MWMO.

Once the Agreement is signed, the grantee will have one (1) calendar year to complete the requirements of the grant. During this time frame, the grantee will need to provide its project deliverables to the MWMO and the MWMO will review the deliverables to ensure the grant project has been completed as indicated in the signed Agreement. Applicants will need to provide project deliverables and participate in a close-out interview with MWMO staff at the end of the project to receive the final reimbursement.

## **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 that grant's application deadline. This initial 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 revise the application and submit it by the application deadline.
5. All grant applications go through a competitive review process, so not all applications will be funded. Final Mini Grant applications are reviewed by MWMO staff and some are selected for funding.
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 grant project products (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.

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