

2025 Call for Applications: Water Quality Education and Outreach Mini-Grants

The Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) is seeking to fund local education and outreach efforts in Montana to address water quality issues resulting from nonpoint source pollution. Funding for this mini-grant program is provided by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality via a grant with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act.

Purpose

The goal of the mini-grant program is to provide support for locally led education and outreach activities that address nonpoint sources of pollution to Montana's surface waters. A priority of this program is to promote new educational activities and development or improvement of partnerships. The mini-grant program is not intended to sustain ongoing activities.

Funding Available, Individual Awards, and Cost Match

\$24,000 is available for this call for applications. Individual mini-grants will be awarded ***up to \$4,000.***

A 40% cost share (match) is required for each mini-grant. Match must be from non-federal sources and may be in the form of in-kind donations, or state, local, or private cash match. Information on calculating the required match is on page 3 of this Call.

Sponsor Eligibility

The project sponsor (applicant) may be a local governmental entity or nonprofit organization such as a conservation district, local watershed or volunteer group (if a legal entity), county extension service, county, school, etc., and must have the ability to manage grant funding. Project applicants must also be able to show proof of liability insurance to receive federal funding.

Example Projects

Visit <https://macdnet.org/programs/mini-grants/> to view examples of past education and outreach projects funded through the Mini-Grant program.

More Project Examples:

- Youth Outdoor Education
- Virtual Watershed Tour
- Educational video series
- Bioengineering Workshops
- Watershed Story Map
- Stormwater Awareness
- Grazing and Ranch Management Workshops
- Rain Garden Demonstrations
- Drought Management Engagement



Project Requirements

Projects must:

- Clearly define a nonpoint source pollution issue in the local watershed
- Have an education and outreach activity that effectively addresses the nonpoint source pollution issues

Priority will be given to:

- New or pilot education and outreach projects about nonpoint source pollution
- Entities that are new to the mini-grant program
- Projects implementing a DEQ-accepted Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP). For more information about WRPs and areas with accepted WRPs, visit: [Nonpoint Source Program | Montana DEQ \(mt.gov\)](#)
- Applicants that submit a draft application for review by MACD
- Activities that achieve one or more of the following categories:
 - Improve climate resiliency for communities or ecosystems
 - Improve or creating access to a healthy environment for underserved populations (e.g. minority, low income, rural, tribal, indigenous, and homeless populations)
 - Reduce pollutant loading above a point source discharge in a way that could increase assimilative capacity in the receiving water
 - Protect or improve a drinking water source

The following activities will NOT be considered for mini-grant funding:

- Monitoring **without** an education and outreach component
- Normal website maintenance
- Baseline data collection
- Administrative costs (although administrative costs may be counted as match)
- Food and beverage costs in excess of 10% of the requested funding
- Creation of new educational lesson plans
 - *Applicants are encouraged to review our [Educational Resources Guide](#) for existing lesson plans that can be implemented as part of proposed activities)*

To Apply

1. Thoroughly read this Call for Water Quality Mini-Grant Applications
2. Visit <https://macdnet.org/programs/mini-grants/> to see examples of previous projects funded
3. Download the application form at: <https://macdnet.org/programs/mini-grants/>
4. Consult with MACD staff to ensure the proposed project is a good fit for the mini-grant program and discuss ways to strengthen your application (optional, but encouraged)
5. Review our [Educational Resources Guide](#) for lesson plans, videos, or ideas that can be used for your educational plans.
6. Complete and sign your application (only signed applications will be considered for funding)
7. Submit your application and proof of liability insurance to MACD. **Email applications to Seth Shter at s.shter@macdnet.org.**

Schedule

Project sponsors may contact MACD to obtain input on proposed projects and draft applications until the Call closes. A review panel will review all applications within a couple weeks of the submission deadline and awards will be determined within 1-2 months from the application deadline.

Application Requirements

Successful Applications:

- Clearly define the nonpoint source water quality issue(s) to be addressed by the proposed project
- Have an education and outreach activity that directly addresses the identified nonpoint sources issue(s), with a target audience appropriate for the activity
- Clearly define project goals and objectives
- Describe expected knowledge, skills, and abilities development by project participants AND how knowledge, skills, and abilities will be evaluated and reported
- Clearly address the need for the activity, explain how it ties into larger watershed conservation efforts in the community, and include appropriate partners
- Include a clear and detailed budget and provide adequate detail for evaluation, as well as defined sources of match and any volunteer rates used. See this resource to learn more about what counts as match and how to calculate volunteer match rates:
https://dnrc.mt.gov/_docs/forestry/PP4-Match.pdf. Reach out to Seth at s.shter@macdnet.org if you have questions about Match.
- If funding is requested for a project that has received a mini-grant award in the past, explain how the current request expands upon past efforts

Budget

Using the Budget Table in the mini-grant application, applicants must provide a **detailed** budget for each proposed task, designating the amount of requested funds and match funds for each task. Applicants **must** meet a 40% cost share of the total project cost, provided in the form of non-federal in-kind or cash. Cost share is determined by adding match to the grant request and then taking 40% of that total.

To calculate a 40% match on a total project cost, simply multiply the total project cost by 0.4 (which represents 40%) to find the amount that constitutes the 40% match.

Formula: Match Amount = Total Project Cost x 0.4

Example: If your total project cost is \$6000, then your 40% match would be \$2400, and you would request \$3600 in mini-grant funds.

Using Requested Funds for Food or Beverage Expenses

No more than 10% of the total requested funds may be applied to food or beverage expenses. If any requested funds or matching funds will be used to purchase food and/or non-alcoholic beverages, please include as a budget item and specify the following in the application:

- Need for providing food/beverages
- Estimated number of attendees

- Estimated cost of food/beverages
- Proposed venue and schedule for serving refreshments

Reporting Requirements

Funds must be spent and reported on within one year of the project award date. Mini-grant recipients must submit a final report using the provided template to summarize the activities and outcomes supported by the grant. After receiving all final report materials and a final invoice, MACD will reimburse grantees for the mini-grant funds that were spent, based on the agreed upon award amount.

Final report and invoice templates are located here: <https://macdnet.org/mini-grants/> Please consider final report requirements when planning project proposals to ensure projects cover all necessary reporting requirements.

In addition, recipients may be asked to respond to a voluntary 1-year follow-up survey regarding the long-term benefits of their project. This survey will be sent out in spring 2026.

Acknowledgement Requirements

Any signage or published materials funded by a mini-grant should include an acknowledgement of funding sources. Acknowledgement can be in the form of logos (ie. EPA, DEQ and MACD logos) or text (ie. "This project has been funded in part by the US EPA, Montana DEQ and MACD" (please contact MACD for specifics on obtaining logos. Exceptions to this may be made on an individual basis with a written request.

For more information or questions about the mini-grant program, project eligibility, or to discuss potential project proposals, contact:

Seth Shteir, MACD Grant Manager, (360)-218-8801, [s.shteir @macdnet.org](mailto:s.shteir@macdnet.org)

or

Tiffany Lyden, DEQ Contract Manager, 406-444-3576, Tiffany.Lyden@mt.gov