
2026 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 Water Quality Mini-Grant Program supports education and outreach projects that engage Montanans in addressing nonpoint source pollution through enhancing awareness, improving knowledge, and developing skills that lead to improved land and water management. Program funds may be used for new education and outreach projects or to assist with maintenance needs for existing education and outreach tools. Projects implementing a DEQ-accepted Watershed Restoration Plan and benefitting underserved communities will be prioritized.

Funding Available, Individual Awards, and Cost Match

\$48,000 is available for this call for applications. Individual mini-grants will be awarded **up to \$8,000** in §319 funds. **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. Additional information on calculating the required match is included on page 3.

Applicant Eligibility

Mini-grants may be awarded to eligible governmental entities or nonprofit organizations with a tax-exempt declaration under §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and registration with the Montana Secretary of State to do business in Montana. Applicants must have proof of liability insurance to receive funding.

Example Projects

Visit the [MACD Mini-Grants Library](#) to view examples of past education and outreach projects funded through the Mini-Grant program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review our [Educational Resources Guide](#) for existing lesson plans and resources that can be adapted, rather than using program funds to create duplicative materials.

More Project Examples:

- Youth Outdoor Education
- Bioengineering Workshops
- Grazing and Ranch Management Workshops
- Virtual Watershed Tour
- Watershed Story Map
- Rain Garden Demonstrations
- Educational video series
- Stormwater Awareness
- 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 clearly helps address that issue

Priority will be given to projects that:

- **Implement a DEQ-accepted Watershed Restoration Plan (WRP).** For more information about WRPs and areas with accepted WRPs, visit: [Nonpoint Source Program | Montana DEQ \(mt.gov\)](#)
- Benefit underserved communities
- Are new or pilot education and outreach efforts focused on nonpoint source pollution
- Are sponsored and led by organizations that have not previously received funding through this program
- Are submitted to MACD ahead of the application deadline for review

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

- Baseline data collection or monitoring **without** an education and outreach component
- Normal website maintenance
- Administrative costs in excess of 10% of the requested funding (may be included as match)
- Food and beverage costs in excess of 10% of the requested funding
- Creation of new educational lesson plans or materials, unless they are meaningfully different from existing resources and designed to address an unmet need.

To Apply

1. Thoroughly read this Call for Water Quality Mini-Grant Applications
2. Visit the [MACD Mini-Grants Library](#) to see examples of previous projects funded
3. Download the application form on the [MACD Mini-Grants](#) webpage
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 Madi Larson at madi@macdnet.org.**

Schedule

Applicants 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 issues(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: [Match Funding Information from DNRC](#).
- 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.

- **Match Funding:** Applicants **must** meet a 40% cost share of the total project cost, provided in the form of non-federal in-kind or cash. 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 on the [MACD Mini-Grants](#) webpage. Please consider final report requirements when planning project proposals to ensure projects cover all necessary reporting requirements. In addition, recipients are asked to respond to a voluntary survey regarding the long-term benefits of their project, which will be sent following project completion.

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 or any questions on how to incorporate acknowledgement into your specific project)).

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

Madi Larson, MACD Associate Director, (602) 295-3913, madi@macdnet.org

or

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