

# Locally Sponsored Open Project Selection Process



## Montana Land & Water Conservation Fund

In order to allocate Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) dollars equitably, a project rating system has been developed to consider a variety of pertinent factors. The Open Project Selection Process uses the application as a means of selecting LWCF projects. Applications will be rated and ranked by an LWCF Selection Committee using the criteria listed within. This Open Project Selection Process is part of the 2014-2018 Montana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

To remain current with changes in outdoor recreation, the Open Project Selection Process may be modified slightly from time to time. Each such change must be reviewed and approved by the National Park Service, which provides federal oversight to the stateside of the LWCF Program.

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## Preliminary Requirements

All six factors in this category must be addressed affirmatively by the sponsor for further consideration to be given to the grant application.

1. Only an eligible sponsor may submit a project application. The sponsor must have effective land control in the form of title, or in the form of a long-term lease (minimum 25 years) from the federal government.
2. An eligible sponsor is defined as any political subdivision of the State of Montana or sovereign Indian Nation, which includes incorporated cities or towns, counties, school districts, conservation districts (as co-sponsors), state agencies, and tribal governments.
3. The site owner (project sponsor) must be willing and capable to operate and maintain the site for outdoor recreation in perpetuity.
4. A sponsor must be prepared to make full payment on all project expenses before being reimbursed for up to 50 percent of allowable costs.
5. The sponsor must agree to post LWCF credit signs at all project sites. These signs will be provided by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and may be incorporated into the sponsor's sign.
6. The sponsor must affirm that all applicable federal non-discriminatory laws, regulations, and disabled-access requirements will be met.

## Scoring Criteria

### I. Project Type and Use

Maximum Potential Score For This Section Is 32 Points. For this selection process, it is assumed that the greater number of hours per day and months per year a facility is in operation, the greater the potential for recreational use. Therefore, the proposal must provide full details regarding the projected hours of operation and monthly use.

A. Use Season (12 points). The value of a facility to its surrounding community is most often directly proportional to the amount of use it receives. Points are awarded as follows.

Rating--1 point per usable month

Standards

Outdoor Pools--3 months

Tennis courts and other playing fields--6 months

Park areas--8 months to 12 months

- B. Active/Passive Recreation (12 points). Projects providing facilities or areas for both active and passive recreation will be given preference.

Active examples include: courts, playing fields, trails, skating rinks, etc.

Passive examples include: benches, picnic and camping facilities.

Initial landscaping, to make a previously unusable parcel of land usable as parkland, is considered to provide both passive and active opportunities.

Rating

For new projects and modifications and/or upgrade of existing projects:

4 points--Spectator facilities, support facilities, i.e. toilets, parking

8 points--Projects providing active or passive recreation

12 points--Projects providing active and passive recreation

- C. Project Design for Multiple Use (5 points). Projects that provide for a variety of uses will receive priority. Applicants must clearly show how each individual activity will be supported by the project.

Rating

point per activity, up to 5 points

- D. Land Acquisition/Development (3 points). Acquisition of new recreational land is given priority over development because it makes available for use public recreation land that is presently unavailable.

Rating

1 point--No acquisition

2 points--No acquisition, but development is proposed to accommodate outdoor recreation on land previously unsuitable for outdoor recreation activities

3 points--Acquisition of recreational land

## II. Need For Project

Maximum Potential Score For This Section Is 48 Points. This criterion refers to public survey information from the project service area. The sponsor of an LWCF project grant must conduct a public opinion survey of local residents prior to the application deadline. Any reasonable

survey information gathered by the sponsor will be accepted to fulfill this criterion. Information found within the 2008 – 2012 Montana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan may be used, but only as a supplement to other sponsor-gathered survey information. The LWCF Selection Committee will judge the credibility of submitted statistical data and will rank and score applications based on that judgment. Therefore, FWP encourages applicants to use the Local Recreation Survey provided by Montana State Parks (this survey is conducted by telephone). To qualify for submission, survey data must have been gathered within the preceding four years.

A. Activity (12 points). Survey information must show the public’s propensity to engage in the proposed primary activity for which the project will provide. Information on the frequency of responses must be shown.

Rating

- 0 points--Activity most commonly associated with the project is not mentioned
- 6 points--Frequency of the activity most commonly associated with the project is greater than zero, but falls below the mean
- 12 points--Frequency of the activity most commonly associated with the project is at or above the median, OR the activity is among the top five represented

B. Facility (12 Points). Survey information must show the public’s desire for additional or new facilities for the outdoor recreation activity proposed.

Rating

- 0 points--Activity most commonly associated with the project is not mentioned
- 6 points--Frequency of the activity most commonly associated with the project is greater than zero, but falls below the median
- 12 points--Frequency of the activity most commonly associated with the project is at or above the median, OR the activity is among the top five represented

C. Special Needs (12 Points). If a special-needs project is proposed, the survey must show a favorable public response to this kind of outdoor recreation facility. Special needs may be targeted for children, the elderly, or persons with disabilities. Do not confuse this with the need to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act on all LWCF projects.

Rating

- 0 points--No facilities related to the project are mentioned
- 6 points--One facility included in the project is mentioned as being in need
- 12 points--More than one facility included in the project are listed as being in need

E. Addressing Concerns (12 points). The survey must show that what the public feels is the most important outdoor recreation problem or concern is being addressed in the project scope.

Rating

- 0 points--No aspect of the project is indicated as in need
- 6 points--One documented concern is addressed by the project
- 12 points--More than one documented concern is addressed by the project

### **III. Project Application & Administration**

Maximum Potential Score For This Section Is 8 Points. It is important that project applications are well planned, well written, complete, and punctual.

#### Rating

- 2 points--Application not submitted according to specifications and required contact with sponsor to clarify the application
- 4 points--Application received in fairly good order requiring no contact with the sponsor after submission
- 8 points--Application is a model of excellence

### **IV. Park-Related, Picnicking and Camping**

Maximum Potential Score For This Section Is 12 Points. This criterion will primarily apply to proposals involving the development of city, town, or county parks, recreation areas, nature preserves, and historic resources.

Projects do not have to entail glamorous, high-priced facilities to score well in this criterion. Essential support facilities such as irrigation systems, restrooms, walkways, landscaping, picnic benches, and drinking fountains are important infrastructure. Because unstructured play is important to a child's development, the acquisition and development of open spaces and grassy play fields should be considered a high priority and scored accordingly. Proposals addressing these park-related recreational opportunities will receive additional points as follows.

#### Rating

- 6 points--Provides for upgrade or enhancement of existing facilities
- 8 points--Access, new facilities, or acquisitions in an area with fair resource potential or good demand
- 12 points--Access, new facilities, or acquisitions in an area with good resource potential or high demand

### **V. Outdoor Sports, Games and Related**

Maximum Potential Score For This Section Is 8 Points. Proposals addressing the enhancement or development of outdoor sports and games facilities, including ball fields, tennis courts, and skate parks, may receive additional points as follows.

Rating

4 points--Provides for renovation or enhancement of existing facilities

8 points--Access, new facilities, or acquisitions in an area with good resource potential or high demand

**VI. Urban Trails**

Maximum Potential Score For This Section Is 3 Points. This criterion will primarily apply to proposals involving the development and or enhancement of greenways, rail-trail projects, and/or trails and trail-related projects in urban areas. Proposals addressing urban trail-related recreational opportunities will receive additional points as follows.

Rating

1 point--Provides for trail head facilities that support and encourage trail use

2 points-- Renovation or improvement of an existing trail

3 points--Provides for a new trail in an area with outstanding or high demand for trail oriented activities

**VII. Outdoor Swimming Pools**

Maximum Potential Score For This Section Is 8 Points. Proposals addressing outdoor swimming pools will receive additional points as follows.

Rating

3 points--Provides for a new outdoor swimming pool in an area with moderate demand for swimming activities

3 points—Renovation or improvement of an existing outdoor pool or related facilities

4 points—Establishes additional facilities at an existing outdoor pool, such as a water park, fountain, or wading pool, in an area with high demand for swimming activities

5 points--Provides for a new outdoor swimming pool in an area with outstanding or high demand for swimming activities

Supplementary Rating. This criterion will apply to proposals involving the renovation or development of an outdoor swimming pool to increase its usefulness, including heating devices such as electric, gas, or solar water heaters. This may also include partially enclosing the pool to protect it against cold weather conditions.

Up to 3 points--Provides for various approaches to heating the water in an outdoor swimming pool to lengthen season of use

Note: According to LWCF Grant Manual guidelines (Chapter 640.3.9), an eligible sponsor may partially enclose an outdoor swimming pool to protect it against cold weather conditions, thereby extending the season of use. States may use up to 10 percent of their annual LWCF apportionment as grants to eligible sheltered facilities. The grant amount of the entire project (regardless of the portion of the grant used for the shelter) is charged against this allowance. Therefore, the number of such sheltered swimming pool grants will likely be limited in any given grant round.

### **VIII. LWCF Final Scoring Criteria**

After the LWCF Selection Committee has finished scoring and ranking each individual application, there will be several additional scores allotted to eligible applicants. Scores will come from the following categories and will be awarded internally by the LWCF Program.

### **IX. Financial Profile.**

A. Past LWCF Investment (12 points). This is a measure of the per capita LWCF dollars received to date by the project sponsor. The intent is to distribute funding to as many eligible sponsors as possible, therefore sponsors from areas of low LWCF per capita expenditures will receive higher priority. Sponsors with less than \$20,000 in past LWCF investments may receive the full 12 points.

B. Matching Funds (12 points). Project sponsors not using other state or eligible federal funds, but relying entirely on local agency funds or cash donations for their share of project costs, may be awarded additional points. No points need be awarded if all sponsors use the same general category of matching funds.

Rating

4 points--matching funds totally from federal sources

8 points--matching funds partially from federal and/or state sources

12 points--matching funds totally from local or private sources

Note: Revenue sharing funds are considered local agency funds.

### **X. Project Application And Administration.**

A. Administration Of Previous Projects (-20 Points). A bad record on previous LWCF projects is considered a negative factor and may result in a negative score. Factors considered include maintenance of current project sites, problems in grant administration, accounting procedures on previous grants, adherence to LWCF rules and regulations, and timely utilization of previous grant awards. A maximum of 20 points may be deducted from an applicant's score.

B. Resubmission of a project from the last grant cycle (4 points). If during the last grant cycle an eligible project was submitted but not funded, it will be given a maximum of 4 points.

#### **XI. Discretionary.**

Subjective Appraisal Of The Project (12 Points). This allows the LWCF Program to award points to a meritorious proposal that does not rank well under the conventional scoring process. Points should be awarded to projects that will provide long-lasting outdoor recreational benefits to community residents and to the LWCF Program. No points need be awarded if there are no appropriate candidates.

#### **XII. Grant Categories**

A. There are two separate grant categories so that small communities with fewer grant-writing resources do not have to compete directly with the larger metropolitan areas. The Small Grant category comprises sponsors requesting \$24,999 or less per grant application. The Large Grant category includes sponsors requesting \$25,000 or more per grant application.

B. After the LWCF Selection Committee has finished scoring and ranking each application and after the LWCF Program has allotted final additional points to eligible applicants, the applications will be divided into two grant categories based on funding requests (Small Grant category and Large Grant category). The top scoring applications from each category will be transmitted to the National Park Service for their review and approval.

C. The amount of funds in the Small Grant category and the Large Grant category will be determined annually and is dependent upon the State's LWCF apportionment.

#### **XIII. Project Cost Overruns**

Project cost overruns meeting the following criteria are exempt from the Open Project Selection Process. Cost overrun exemptions are determined on a case-by-case basis and *may* be permitted if:

the intent of the original project's scope remains unaltered; and  
the sponsor supplies documented and reasonable evidence as to why the overrun occurred.

## **Additional Information**

### **Outdoor Swimming Pools**

According to the 2008 LWCF State Assistance Program Manual, the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) should place emphasis on “project selection criteria that conforms directly to priority needs identified by the SCORP process.” One of the main issues identified in the latest editions of the SCORP is the lack of local swimming opportunities. Therefore, this OPSP includes a criterion for Outdoor Swimming Pools (Section VII).

Swimming Pools are expensive to build. In addition, they have a very short season of use (usually three months). One of FWP’s main goals is to assure that there is equal opportunity for all eligible projects sponsors and that all sectors of public are able to participate in the benefits of Montana’s LWCF program. Expensive projects increase the tendency to request the maximum allowable grant amount. Therefore, a supplementary rating has been established to award up to 3 points for those projects providing innovative solutions to lengthen the period of pool use. This should encourage pool designs that provide the public with longer swimming seasons, thereby increasing the usefulness of these facilities.