

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is seeking public input on our proposal to revise the Program Guidance, Application form, and Scoring Criteria form for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Grants for State Property Development, also known as the Friends Grants. The DNR is being proactive in notifying potential 2017 applicants about this anticipated change clarify to the grant program for our sponsors.

A. Why Are We Making This Change?

The proposed revisions were necessary to align the Friends Grant program with applicable statute, code, and Department policy and facilitate project selection.

B. Background. Friends Grants program guidance and application forms were last updated in 2011 and were in need of updating. The Department expects to use the updated Program Guidance for future grant cycles, starting November 15, 2017.

C. Summary of Proposed Changes. The new program guidance and application form were updated to clarify the goals of the grant program for the sponsors. The application form was updated to more closely match the information required by the Development Project System (DPS). The project scoring criteria were created to evaluate, rank, and select projects to receive grant awards through the Friends Grants. The revised criteria implement provisions of ch. 23, Wis. Stats., Subchapter IX of ch. NR 51, Wis. Adm. Code, and Department policy.

D. Remaining Steps. Once the 21-day comment period is complete, all comments will be considered, revisions will be made to these draft documents as warranted, a *Response Summary* will be prepared, then both the *Response Summary* and *Final Program Guidance, Final Friends Application form, and Final Scoring Criteria form* will be made available using the existing DNR Program Guidance web page (<http://dnr.wi.gov/news/input/guidance.html>) and will be posted on the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grants web page.

Please forward your comments about this proposed policy no later than June 22, 2017, to:	Name:	Phone:
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Program Guidance: Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Grants for State Property Development

Introduction

Through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the Wisconsin Legislature has allocated \$46 million annually through 2020 to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, protect sensitive lands, and conserve and restore wildlife habitat. Each year, \$250,000 of the total is set aside in the State Property Development ("Friends") grant program for Friends of State Parks groups and nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs) to develop facilities and restore habitat on state properties. This program recognizes the important role these groups play in meeting the development and habitat restoration needs of the state properties. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers this program.

Friends Grants provide opportunities for nature-based outdoor recreation activities where the primary focus or purpose is the appreciation or enjoyment of nature. Such activities include, but are not limited to: hiking, bicycling, wildlife or nature observation, camping, nature study, fishing, hunting, picnicking, cross-country skiing, canoeing and multi-use trail activities. Nature-based outdoor recreation is defined in s. NR 51.002(19), Wis. Admin. Code.

Because overall grant funding is limited, this can be a very competitive grant program. Applications are scored relative to program criteria and funded in rank order until all available funds are awarded.

Funding for this grant program originates from bond revenue. Therefore, a development project must be a permanent improvement, having a life expectancy of 20 years or more.

Who to Call

All Friends Grants support development and habitat restoration on state properties, typically State Parks. ***Applicants must contact the DNR Property Manager as early as possible in the planning stages of a project.*** The Property Manager can explain property development needs, determine eligibility, and provide assistance to make a grant application as competitive as possible. In addition, the DNR Property Manager's approval and signature is required as part of a completed application.

For general information about the program or answers to questions about the grant application, grant advances, reimbursement requests, or Final Inspection Report, please contact the Friends Grant Program Manager (contact information posted online: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/Contacts.html>).

Application Deadline & Grant Award Timeframe

Complete applications must be submitted via email or postmarked no later than November 15.

Applicants should not begin their project until a signed grant agreement has been received from the DNR. Construction costs incurred prior to the date of a signed grant agreement are not eligible for reimbursement. Applicants who are interested in seeking reimbursement for preliminary engineering and similar pre-construction costs should contact the Grant Manager to determine eligibility prior to incurring such costs.

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Eligible Applicants

Friends Groups are defined as nonstock, nonprofit corporations organized to raise funds for a DNR property as described under section 501(c)(3) or (4) of the Internal Revenue Code and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Nonprofit Conservation Organizations (NCOs) are defined as a nonprofit corporation, a charitable trust or other nonprofit association whose purposes includes the acquisition of property for conservation purposes and that is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Eligible applicants must be in good standing with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions.

Under s. NR 51.84(1), Wis. Adm. Code, Friends Groups are given priority consideration in project selection over project submitted by nonprofit conservation organizations.

Eligible Projects

The first 5 eligibility requirements below existed before this program guidance document. Eligibility requirement # 6 is new and helps clarify the Department's expectation for projects that take more than one year to complete (also called "multi-phased projects"). This clarification is included based on comments the Department received from sponsors about their multi-phased projects. Projects must meet all of the following requirements as per s. NR 51.83, Wis. Admin. Code:

1. The project is for nature-based outdoor recreation as defined in s. NR 51.002(19) any activity where the primary focus or purpose is the appreciation or enjoyment of nature. These activities may include but are not limited to: hiking, bicycling, wildlife or nature observation, camping, nature study, fishing, hunting, trapping, public shooting range, boating, picnicking, cross-country skiing, canoeing, and multi-use trail activities. Eligible support facilities for these activities may include but are not limited to: access roads, parking areas, utility, and sanitation systems, sanitary and shelter building, signs, interpretive item, and other features that enhance nature-based outdoor recreation or improved disabled accessibility. Playgrounds and playground facilities that supplement the appreciation of nature and occupy a minor portion of the property are also eligible. Ineligible activities include but are not limited to: extensively developed open space such as for dedicated sports fields, swimming pools, and tennis courts.
2. The project addresses unmet needs consistent with DNR approved plans for the property, unless the project is for a state trail managed and maintained by a governmental unit or other cooperator with a memorandum of agreement with the DNR.
3. The project is identified in a property's plan, unless the project is habitat restoration project described in s. NR 51.84(2)(e) or the project is for a state trail managed and maintained by a governmental unit or other cooperator with a memorandum of agreement with the DNR.
4. The project makes long-term capital improvements or installs durable equipment with an expected useful life of 20 years or more, unless it is a habitat restoration project [as described in s. NR 51.84(2)(e)] that is consistent with approved plans governing the management of the property.
5. The application has submitted required reports and returned any unused funds for all prior projects within the required timeframe.
6. The project is a stand-alone project, the first phase of a multi-phased project, or a multi-phased project for which the DNR will have awarded \$60,000 or less in Friends grants for all phases.

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Eligible Project Expenses

Grant funds may reimburse any of the following costs:

1. Materials, supplies, contractual services, labor
2. Salaries, fringe benefits, if directly related to the project
3. Rental or lease of equipment related to the project
4. Building and land restoration, if project adds to the permanent inventory or resources of the property.
5. Furnishings such as picnic tables, grills, garbage receptacles, but only if put permanently in the ground with a 20-year life.

Grant funds may not reimburse any of the following costs:

1. Administrative overhead
2. Purchases of computers, monitors, printers, peripheral devices, tools, and shop equipment
3. Educational materials such as brochures, videos, and books.

Calculating Applicants Share (also called “Sponsor Match”)

This program is administered as a cost-sharing program. This means the grant only covers a portion of project costs. For this grant program, the state share cannot exceed 50% of total project costs. The remaining portion of project costs must be provided by the project applicant. Eligible sources of sponsor match include cash and non-cash donations.

All sources of sponsor match must be identified in the grant application.

Non-cash donations cannot exceed 50% of the sponsor match. There are three categories of non-cash donations:

1. Donated general volunteer labor – The maximum value of donated, non-professional labor shall be equal to the prevailing Wisconsin minimum wage per s. NR 51.09(1)(c)2. Currently, the Wisconsin minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. All donated hours must be documented, showing name of donor, hours worked, and date of donation.
2. Donated materials, supplies, and professional labor – Value established by market rates and must be established by an invoice provided by the donor.
3. Donated equipment use – Must conform to rates shown in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) highway rates for equipment as per s. NR 51.09(1)(c)4 Wis. Admin. Code. You can find the rates on the Wisconsin DOT Equipment Rates web site.

All donations must be directly related to the project and be essential to the completion of the project.

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DNR Development Projects System (DPS) Database

Your project must be entered into the DNR DPS database in order to be eligible for funding. It is the DNR Property Manager's responsibility to enter your project into the DPS database and communicate to you the DPS number issued to your project; you will need to include this number on your grant application.

How to Apply for a State Property Development Grant

STEP 1: Start planning your project early and contact your DNR Property Manager about your project goals.

STEP 2: To apply for a State Property grant, complete the following:

- Stewardship Application for State Property Development Projects application
- Application Form 2500-112
<http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/2500/2500-112.pdf>
- Cost Estimate Worksheet Form 8700-114
<http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/8700/8700-014.pdf?o=n>
- Authorizing Resolution
[Sample Resolution for Friends Grant](#)
- Location Map
- Detailed Site Plan

STEP 3: Submit the application form with project description and justification criteria, cost estimate worksheet, Resolution, Location Map, and Detailed Site Plan to the Property Manager for approval and required signatures.

STEP 4: Submit the completed application and attachments to the Friends Grant Program Manager either via email or postmarked by the application due date (contact information posted online: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/Contacts.html>).

Scoring Criteria

DNR staff will review each application for eligibility consistent with required criteria described in the 'Eligible Project' section of this guidance. Eligible projects will then be scored on questions A1-A4 below. Questions T1-T5 will be used to rank projects that score equally on questions A1-A4. When all projects have been scored, grants will be awarded to projects received from Friends Groups in rank order. If funds remain, grants will be awarded to NCOs in rank order. Applicant prioritization is per provisions of s. NR 51.84(1) Wis. Adm. Code.

Application scoring is new to this grant program. Now that the Department is receiving more applications than available funding, the Department must identify a way to prioritize projects for grant funding. Assigning a score for each application component is a commonly used method. Projects that meet the goal of the Friends Grant Program score highest; projects are ranked based on score. Funds are awarded beginning with the highest scored project ... until all funds are allocated.

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Project Rating & Ranking Questions – Based on s. NR 51.83 Eligibility and s. NR 51.84 Priorities

	Question	Max Points	Earned Points	Comments
A1.1	Project provides capital improvements and or habitat work that directly provides nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities	2	2	If direct, then 2 points, if indirect, then only 1 point. For example, kitchen, restrooms, etc., would be direct. Indirect items would be playground equipment, kiosk, trail signs.
A1.2	Project provides capital improvements and or habitat work that indirectly provides nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities		1	
A1.3	Applicant has requested funding for 25% or less of the total project cost	2	2	"Other funding" defined as sources other than Friends cash or force account (i.e. in-kind) services. If applicant is meeting their match with Friends cash or donated labor from Friends, then zero points.
A1.4	Applicant has requested funds for 25-45% or less of the total project cost		1	
A2.1	Project provides a new type of, or access to, a nature-based outdoor recreation that is not currently available at the property.	3	3	Projects that expand or modify existing infrastructure to provide new recreation opportunities that meet or exceed applicable accessibility standards qualifies for full points (3).
A2.2	Project expands availability and/or access to nature-based outdoor recreation activities that currently exist at the property.		2	
A3.1	Project addresses completely an identified public health, safety, or security concern at the property.	3	3	Environmental concerns often include invasive species and energy efficiency.
A3.2	Project contributes to an identified public health, safety, or security concern at the property.		1	
A3.3	Project fully addresses or contributes to addressing a priority environmental concern at the property.		1	
A4.1	Capital improvement or habitat projects that directly expand environmental education, interpretation programs, or outdoor skills development opportunities or facilities.	2	2	
A4.2	Capital improvement or habitat projects that enhance or expand existing environmental education, interpretation programs, or outdoor skills development opportunities or facilities.		1	
TOTAL MAXIMUM SCORE =		12		
Tie-breaker Questions				
T1	The project directly supports volunteer-based services provided at the property by the Friends Group	1	1	
T2	Project reduces property maintenance & operation needs.	1	1	
T3	The applicant is a first time applicant for a grant.	1	1	
T4	The project supports a DNR program priority.	1	1	
T5	The project is a multiple phased project that has already received funds for the 1 st or 2 nd phases.	1	1	This supports completion of a started project.

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Grant Advance

Successful applicants may request a 50% advance payment on their grant award.

Reimbursement

The DNR administers this program on a reimbursement basis. Accurate and comprehensive documentation of project costs is critical. To request reimbursement, grantees are required to submit completed DNR grant payment request (Forms 8700-001 and 8700-002) and detailed documentation (e.g., proof of purchase, proof of payment, force account details if local government staff are involved, volunteer labor worksheets showing hours worked, dates worked, and volunteer signatures, etc.) prior to final reimbursement.

You can find reimbursement Forms 8700-001 and 8700-002 on the Friends Grant program webpage:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/applyFriends.html>.

Final Inspection Report

A Final On-Site Project Inspection Report must be completed by the DNR Property Manager and submitted with the reimbursement request before the DNR will process final project reimbursement. The DNR Property Manager should include pictures of the completed project.

You can find the final inspection report Form 8700-335 on the Friends Grant program webpage:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/applyFriends.html>.

Help

Contact the Friends Grant Program Manager either via email online at:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/Contacts.html>).