

IDNR Coastal Management Program Grants

Frequently Asked Questions

General

1) We'd like to apply for more than one grant. Is that allowed?

Yes. A single organization can apply for and receive multiple grants in a funding cycle. Please note that your applications will be competing against each other.

2) Will the funding be available upfront or is this a reimbursement grant?

This is a reimbursement grant program. The grantee must spend its money first and then CMP will reimburse the grantee for eligible costs.

3) How are full applications evaluated and selected for funding?

Full applications will be scored by an internal team of IDNR staff. Projects with the highest point totals will be recommended to the Coastal Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for funding. This committee is made up of state employees from IDNR and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency as well as University of Illinois staff. The TAC will complete a technical review and will recommend re-scoring of applications with technical issues by the IDNR internal team. IDNR will complete re-scoring and will submit funding recommendations to the IDNR Director for sign-off.

The review criteria are included in the Funding Guidelines document. Here are supplementary definitions of the criteria used to score full applications:

- Need (14 points)
- Anticipated Impact (14 points)
- Feasibility and Timeline (10 points)
- Under-Served Communities and Populations (8 points)
- Partnerships and Local Support (6 points)
- Capacity and Qualifications (4 points)
- Cost Effectiveness (4 points)
- Past Performance (3 Points)

Total : 63 points

- **Need (14 points)**
How well the project ties to a clearly articulated un-met need.
- **Anticipated Impact (14 points)**
There is anticipated positive impact on coastal resources and communities. This may include the scale of impact and the quality of the plan to achieve this impact.
- **Feasibility and Timeline (10 points)**

The proposal clearly articulates the feasibility of achieving objectives and completing the project on time and on budget.

- **Under-Served Communities and Populations (8 points)**

Projects that benefit under-served communities or populations or that address the concerns and needs of segments of the population that have been disproportionately affected by adverse environmental impacts will receive extra consideration. This includes projects that address geographic areas with highly concentrated environment hazards and/or projects that extend work into historically underserved communities.

- **Partnerships and Local Support (6 points)**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the level of local support for the project, which is demonstrated through substantive partnerships and/or letters of support. Partnerships where each party is bringing unique value or expertise to the project will receive more weight than letters of support.

- **Capacity and Qualifications (4 points)**

The applicant demonstrates ability to complete a reimbursement grant-funded project, provide required match, complete a project on this scale, and successfully meet federal grant compliance requirements. Personnel qualifications will also be considered.

- **Cost Effectiveness (4 points)**

The cost of the project is reasonable within the context of anticipated outcomes. Providing a greater than 1:1 match to grant ratio will increase point total.

- **Performance (0 to 3 points)**

Past problematic performance on the Coastal Grants, including multiple late or incomplete performance, fiscal, or final reports, will result in low score.

4) When will we hear whether we have been selected to receive a grant?

We expect to be able to notify applicants of our preliminary decision in April 2024. This date is not the start of the grant – just notification of plans to award funds. After preliminary decision, applicants will have to enter into a grant agreement with IDNR. There may also be additional NOAA and IDNR requirements that have to be completed.

5) We're having trouble with a portion of the application. Can you help?

Yes, please contact Ania Bayers for technical assistance. Depending upon the volume of inquiries, she may ask you to schedule a time to talk. Please email: ania.bayers@illinois.gov

6) Can we request reimbursement for expenses incurred before the grant started? Can we use work completed before the grant started as match?

No. To be eligible for reimbursement or as match, costs must be in your budget and must be incurred after grant agreement between IDNR and your organization has been signed.

7) How often are reimbursements issued? What type of documentation is required? What is the processing time for reimbursements?

Successful grant applicants may request reimbursement quarterly. Grantees are required to submit a reimbursement request form and provide supporting documentation for all grant and match expenses. Examples of documentation include receipts, timesheets, accounting system records, etc.

Reimbursement processing is generally 6 to 8 weeks. Grantees can help decrease processing time by ensuring that all documentation is included in submission and is organized by budget category (i.e., Personnel, Fringe, Supplies, etc.).

8) We're a new non-profit with no federal grant management experience. Can we use a fiscal agent? How does that work?

The State of Illinois strongly encourages grantees that lack financial or administrative capacity to use a fiscal agent. A fiscal agent is an entity contracted to perform fiscal responsibilities such as preparation of reimbursement requests or indirect cost rate proposals. Your organization would be the grantee and the fiscal agent would be listed in your budget as a contractor. This is different than a fiscal sponsor, which is an organization that would receive the grant on your behalf and would be ultimately be responsible for program compliance.

Here is some guidance on using a fiscal agent:

- Reasonable fees to a fiscal agent may be included in the budget as direct costs.
- Fiscal agents should be Certified Public Accountants with experience in federal grant accounting. Non-profit partners with greater than 3 years of federal grant accounting experience may also be eligible to act as fiscal agents.
- Fiscal Agents should meet the minimum qualifications, available here: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Documents/Resource%20Library/Webinar%20Fall%202018/Fiscal%20Agent%20Framework.pdf>

Budget

9) What is excluded from funding?

The following expenses are not allowable, either as a grant expense or as match:

- Food or beverages
- Academic research
- On-the-ground or site-scale planning projects outside of the Coastal Area
- Land acquisition
- Improvements that result in private or commercial gain
- On-the-ground improvements to properties or facilities that charge admission
- Large-scale construction
- General recreational and athletic facilities such as playground equipment, ball fields, and courts
- Roadway, parking lots or other transportation related projects. Please note that green infrastructure components of larger transportation projects may be eligible for funding

- Gray infrastructure such as storm sewers
- Shoreline hardened erosion control structures (e.g. groins, seawalls, etc.)
- Beach re-nourishment projects
- Dredging projects including removal of contaminated sediments

This list is not comprehensive.

10) Is [name of expense] allowable under this grant?

Maybe. Here's how you can figure it out:

- Is the cost necessary for project completion?
- Is it reasonable?
- Can it be allocated to the grant?
- Is it allowed under section 306A of the Coastal Zone Management Act?
<https://coast.noaa.gov/czm/media/guide306a.pdf>
- Is it allowable under the Federal Grant Cost principles? The cost principles can be found in 2 CFR 200, Subpart E: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/xml/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-part200.xml>
- Cost Principles training is available on the Grants.Illinois.gov website at:
<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Documents/Resource%20Library/GATA%20Spring%202018%20Training%20for%20FY19/Basic%20Considerations.pdf>

If you are still stumped, please contact us. We will help determine allowability.

11) Can we include participant support costs (e.g. a stipend for students who participate in the program) in our budget?

Stipends for participants or other participant support costs require approval from our federal funding agency. If funded, we will request approval on your behalf. Participant support costs should be included in the budget under Other/Miscellaneous (which is a budget category that is excluded from calculations of indirect) because indirect cannot be charged on them (see 2 CFR 200.68).

12) How do we categorize [name of expense]?

It's important to correctly classify costs by budget category because it impacts the amount of indirect that your organization can charge to the grant or use as match. It also makes financial reporting easier.

Here are some rules of thumb:

- Staff time of partner organizations that will be paid for by the grant: Contractual
- Volunteer time: Other/Miscellaneous under Match
- Participant Stipends: Other/Miscellaneous
- Conference registration, transportation costs, or per diem for employees on travel

status: Travel

- Conference registration, transportation costs, or per diem for program participants: Other (This is a type of participant stipend.)
- Buses for participants: Contractual
- Donated supplies: Other
- Small equipment that costs less than \$5000: Supplies (Equipment is only items greater than \$5000.)

Feel free to contact us with any questions.

13) Why are citizen science grants limited to \$10,000? Can citizen science be incorporated into a larger project?

CMP is not providing grants for academic research through this funding opportunity. By limiting the size of citizen-science grants to \$10,000 maximum, we are keeping the emphasis on citizen participation and learning.

Citizen-science may be incorporated into a larger project; however, applicants must specify citizen-science expenses in the budget, and the total of these expenses cannot exceed \$10,000.

Match

14) What can count as match?

Match expenditures must be integral to the accomplishment of project or program objectives. For example, a grantee may use the salary and fringe expenses of a staff member who is being paid by a non-federal source as match. However, they can only count the hours that staff member spends on activities related to the project as match. Counting time spent on other activities outside of the project scope is not allowed. This rule applies for both cash match and in-kind match

Here are some additional guidelines:

- Match may be cash or in-kind.
- Federal funds cannot be used as match.
- The source of match must be identified in your budget narrative. If the match is coming from a partner, include a letter of commitment in your application packet.
- Secured match is strongly preferred over match that has been applied for but not secured.
- Match expenditures cannot pre-date the grant start date and must be spent before the end date of the grant.
- Match cannot be included as contributions for any other federally-assisted project or program. That is double counting.
- Match must conform to all applicable federal, state, and local regulations. For further details on federal grant requirements for match, please consult the Uniform

Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards:

http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl

15) How do we document match?

All expenditures, including match, must be verifiable through the applicant's records. Grantees will be required to track match and provide documentation. Depending upon the source of match, this may include signed and dated volunteer timesheets, donation forms, receipts, and other tracking consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). We require grantees to submit extensive documentation along with quarterly reimbursement requests. Further information will be available to successful applicants.

20) 16) How do we value in-kind match?

- Volunteer Labor: Rates for volunteer services shall be consistent with those paid for similar work in the applicant's organization. Estimate the number of volunteer hours required for each task and multiply by this rate per hour. Grantees must submit and retain individual time records signed by all volunteers.
- Volunteer Labor 16 and Under: Current Minimum Wage.
- Skilled Labor: Fair Market value of labor per hour with proper documentation.
- Donated Equipment: FEMA Equipment rates
- Donated Materials: Fair market value of materials with proper documentation from provider.

Indirect Costs

17) What are Indirect Costs? Can we charge indirect costs to our grant? Can we use them as match?

Indirect Costs are a proportional allocation of general operating costs (commonly referred to as "overhead"), such as rent, utilities, and other costs that can't be easily allocated to a specific project. Indirect costs may be funded by a Coastal Grant or used as match or both. See 2 CFR 200.414 for more information:

http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=2:1.1.2.2.1.5&rgn=div6#se2.1.200_1414

Grantees are generally able to charge indirect costs to their grant and/or use them as match.

18) How do we determine our indirect rate?

- If your organization has a negotiated indirect cost agreement in place with the federal government, refer to your agreement for your rate and base to correctly calculate indirect costs for your project.
- If your organization has never had a negotiated indirect cost agreement, you may elect to use the de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs. See 2 CFR 200.414 (f):

http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=2:1.1.2.2.1.5&rgn=div6#se2.1.200_1414

- If your organization has an expired federally negotiated indirect rate, please contact us for guidance.
- Successful applicants are eligible to negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois. See question 23 below.

19) Our organization is interested in negotiating an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if we receive a grant. How does that work? What should we include in our application budget?

Once you have an active grant, you will be prompted to select an option in the Illinois GATA Grantee Portal. If you chose to negotiate a rate, your organization will be asked to provide documentation to the contractor (currently Crowe LLC) who assists the State of Illinois with indirect rate negotiations.

If you intend to negotiate a rate, we recommend using the de minimis indirect rate (10%) as a placeholder in your budget. We will allow a transfer of funds between budget categories after your negotiated indirect cost agreement is finalized. Please note that budget category transfers cannot increase the total amount of your grant.

20) How do we calculate indirect?

To calculate how much indirect to charge to your grant and/or include as match, first determine which costs are in your “Base” and multiply the sum of those costs by the indirect rate.

Example:

Total Budget before indirect is calculated: \$92,200

Indirect rate: 10% de minimis rate

Base: Modified Total Direct Costs, as defined in 2 CFR 200.68:

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/xml/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-sec200-68.xml>

Included in Base Personnel: \$45,000 Fringe: \$5,000 Travel: \$800 Supplies: \$900
Contractual: \$25,000 (one contract for \$35,000 but only the first \$25,000 can be included in the base)

Total included in base: \$76,700

Not included in Base

Equipment: \$5,000

Other: \$500

Contractual: \$10,000

Total not included in base: \$15,500

To calculate indirect, multiply the total included in base (\$76,700) by the indirect rate (10%). In this case, it would be \$7,670.

$$\text{(Included in Base: \$76,700)} \times \text{(Indirect Rate: 0.10)} =$$

Indirect Costs: \$7,670

Add the totals included in base (\$76,700) + not included in base (\$15,500) + the indirect costs (\$7,670) to get your full budget, \$99,870.

$$\text{(Included in Base: \$76,700)} + \text{(Not included in Base: \$15,500)} + \text{(Indirect Costs: \$7,670)} =$$

Full Budget: \$99,870

If you have any questions on how to apply your rate, interpret the base, or complete the calculation in your specific case, please let us know. We happily provide technical assistance.

Contracting and Sub-awarding

21) A contractor is helping with our application and/or we've had a great experience with a specific contractor in the past. Can we hire them to complete work under this grant?

Subcontracting is allowed; however, applicants are warned not to make commitments to any parties prematurely. Federal regulations require an open selection process for all hiring of consultants and contractors connected with a federally funded grant.

- In compliance with federal requirements, grantees must either advertise the contract or distribute a request for proposals to a reasonable number of qualified individuals or firms and must receive back at least 3 written bids. If the item or service required is only available from a sole source, the grantee must write up a sole source justification. Project familiarity (i.e., the contractor helped write the grant application) is not an acceptable sole source justification.
- Grantees may be asked to provide evidence that the fee is appropriate considering the qualifications of the consultant/contractor and that no contractor with equal experience and qualifications is available for a lesser amount.

IDNR retains the right to approve the subcontracts involving funds from this grant program. Further budget details for subcontracts may be required. Subcontracts must be disclosed to IDNR on the form provided to grantees.

For more information, see 2 CFR 200.317-326

22) We are partnering on this project with another eligible applicant. Can they receive grant

funding as part of our project?

Yes. Please include partner's staff time and fringe under the contractual budget category. Although partners' time is captured in the contractual category, they are subaward recipients, not contractors. They are exempt from the open competition requirement but must provide services at a reasonable or fair market rate and your organization is responsible for overseeing their subaward in the role of a pass-through entity. Do not include partners' staff time in the personnel category. The personnel and fringe budget categories are only for your organization's staff time.

Environmental Review

23) We're applying for a grant for a planning project or an on-the-ground project. If our project is selected for funding, what types of environmental review will this project go through before it is fully approved?

Planning projects and on-the-ground projects require review by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) prior to the start of work. IDNR completes a Comprehensive Environmental Review Process (CERP) and NOAA completes a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Review.

24) What is the Comprehensive Environmental Review Process (CERP)? How long does it take and what will be asked of our organization? What happens if an adverse impact is discovered during the review?

Most planning projects and on-the-ground projects are subject to CERP review. The Comprehensive Environmental Review Process (CERP) coordinates internal reviews of actions funded or performed by IDNR to ensure that they comply with relevant state and federal environmental statutes. As part of this process, applicants may be asked for more detailed information such as maps, project footprints, techniques, timelines, or photos of historic structures or other resources. In some cases, projects are approved to start with a stipulation that the grantee submit 30% designs or provide the results of an archaeological study before construction. Including more detailed information about planned mitigation activities at the time of application, especially if your project may cause adverse impacts to natural or cultural resources, can save time in the approval process.

CERP review may result in mitigation recommendations, mitigation requirements, or, in rare cases, CMP may choose to remove your project from funding consideration or cancel your grant before work has begun.

More information is available here:

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/NaturalResources/environmentreporter/Pages/default.aspx>

25) What is a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Review? Why are they needed? How will they impact the project start date? What happens if an adverse impact is discovered

during the process?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq., as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500 through 1508), requires that federal agencies appropriately and carefully consider the following in their decision-making processes to the extent practicable: all environmental effects of proposed actions; adverse effects of proposed actions; alternative actions; and restoration and enhancement of environmental quality.

IDNR Coastal Management Program grants are subject to NEPA review because they are federal pass-through grants. All on-the-ground projects that are selected for funding are reviewed by NOAA. This review may take anywhere from 2 weeks to 6 months or more depending on NOAA's backlog of projects, the project's complexity, and its potential environmental impacts. Whenever possible, NEPA review is completed concurrently with other reviews and approvals; however, NEPA review may delay the project start date.

If adverse impacts or extensive delays threaten project success, CMP may choose to remove your project from funding consideration or cancel your grant before work has begun.

More information on NOAA's NEPA review process can be found here:

<https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-NAO-216-6A-Companion-Manual-03012018.pdf>

26) Are there any special requirements for citizen science projects?

We may require additional information, such as details on data management, to be submitted at the full-application stage for citizen science projects. We are gauging interest in this type of work at the pre-application stage. If you are invited to submit a full application, CMP will flesh out guidance and provide clear instructions to any citizen science project applicants.

Performance Reporting and Performance Metrics

27) How often are performance reports required?

Performance reports are required quarterly on January 30, April 30, July 30, and October 30, for all grants.

28) What performance metrics will grantees need to track?

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requires that all Coastal Management Programs report on the following metrics. Subsequently, grantees are required to report to us on the same metrics. Grant applications are not scored on anticipated performance metrics. See question 5 for scoring criteria (pg. 1).

Category	Sub-Category	Reported Metric
Coastal Habitat	Under restoration	# of acres
Coastal Hazards	Reduce future damage	# of communities
	Increase public awareness	

Plans Developed or Updated	Sustainable Development	# of communities
	Waterfront Redevelopment	
	Runoff Management	
Implemented Activities	Sustainable Development	# of communities
	Waterfront Redevelopment	
	Runoff Management	
Public Access	Enhanced existing sites	# of sites
Training Activities	Government Coordination	# of people
	Public Access	
	Coastal Habitat	
	Coastal Hazards	
	Coastal Dependent Uses and Community Development	
Education	N/A	# of people