WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District

Ripple Grant Program

Application Guide & Review Form

Contents

Application Guide

The Ripple Grant provides funding to community-based projects that align with the mission of West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) to inspire people to actively improve air and water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and soil health. The program prioritizes projects that address District-identified priority invasive species and/or priority habitats while advancing equitable outcomes by engaging historically underserved communities through culturally inclusive conservation approaches. This guide outlines who can apply, funding amounts, how to apply, eligible projects, timeline, process, evaluation criteria, decision-making, and tips for success.

Who Can Apply

- Eligible Organizations: Non-profit organizations, community groups (with a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor), schools and educational institutions, Tribal governments or Indigenous community groups, and local government agencies.
- *Notes:*
  - Private landowners and for-profit businesses are not eligible and should explore other District programs.
  - Past grant recipients must have completed all reporting and be in good standing to reapply.

Grant Funding

- Awards range between $10,000 and $25,000. Request only the funds needed to achieve your project goals. You may request a specific amount (e.g. $12,566). Up to 15% of your total budget may be allocated to administrative or overhead costs.
- Each organization may submit one application per fiscal year (July 1‒June 30). For multiple projects, a different partner organization must serve as lead applicant.

How to Apply

1. **Read the Application Guide:** First, please review this Ripple Grant Applicant Guide for detailed instructions, tips, and eligibility information. This will help you prepare a strong proposal.

2. **Complete the Application Form:** Download and fill out the [Ripple Grant Application Form](#). Be prepared to briefly describe your project goals, community impact, equity considerations, timeline, budget, and partners., budget, and partners.

3. **Prepare Supporting Materials:** Gather any materials needed such as, a detailed project budget, timeline of activities (including permit milestones, if applicable), letters of support or landowner permission, and an outline of how you will maintain the project's benefits long-term.

4. **Submit by the Deadline:** Submit the application form and all supporting materials by **February 27, 2026 at 5:00 PM** to the contact email below. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted. The email address you write in your application will receive a confirmation email the next business day.

Need help? We're here to assist! We are hosting a virtual informational session at noon on January 30, 2026. A link to the recording will be available on our website and YouTube afterward. Please reach out to the grant manager for additional guidance or accommodations before the deadline. WMSWCD's goal is for this process to be accessible; please fill out our post-submission survey to help us improve.

Eligible Projects:

We fund community-led conservation and education projects within WMSWCD's service area. See previous recipients of funds in our current [annual report.](#)

Priority consideration for projects that:

- Address District-identified priority invasive species (e.g., Emerald Ash Borer impacts on riparian shade)
- Enhance priority habitats (e.g., lower Columbia estuarine, wetland, Oregon white oak, and native pollinator habitats)

- Demonstrate meaningful and measurable benefits to historically underserved communities, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other environmentally impacted or low-income communities

Across all categories, WMSWCD prioritizes projects that meaningfully engage historically underserved communities. Eligible project categories include, but are not limited to:

1. Community Engagement & Equity

- Access to Land & Nature: Projects that engage communities by providing access to land and nature.

- Culturally Specific Approaches: Initiatives that incorporate inclusive practices, provide culturally specific environmental education, or educate with non-dominant ways of thinking regarding the conservation of land, water, or agriculture.

- Youth & Community Involvement: Programs that actively involve schools, youth groups, or seniors in hands-on conservation or agricultural activities.

2. Habitat Restoration & Water Quality

- Restoration & Planting: Planting trees and/or native plants along streams, restoring wetlands, or enhancing forest habitats.
  - Priority habitat types include lower Columbia estuarine, wetland, Oregon white oak and native pollinator habitats (meadows, riparian buffers, etc).
- Priority Invasive Species Management: Controlling invasive species, with specific priority given to projects addressing Emerald Ash Borer impacts on riparian shade management.
- Conservation Landscaping: Installing green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bioswales, to manage stormwater and improve water quality.

3. Sustainable Agriculture & Soil Health

- Community Food Systems: Establishing or improving community gardens, school gardens, or food forests that enhance local food security.

- Soil Conservation: Projects that improve soil health, such as erosion control on farms or cover-cropping initiatives.

4. Education & Workforce Development

- Education & Outreach: Workshops, outdoor classroom programs, or community events focused on gardening, nature, water or soil quality, or climate resilience.

- Workforce Training: environmental jobs training, youth stewardship projects, or programs that build practical knowledge and skills in the conservation sector.

5. Stewardship & Maintenance

- Planning & Design: Developing technical plans or engineering designs for future conservation efforts (e.g., stream restoration designs, site plans for a community farm).

- Maintenance & Monitoring: Sustaining existing projects through necessary maintenance (e.g., watering trees, invasive plant removal) or outcome monitoring (e.g., water testing, wildlife or habitat surveys).

Timeline

Dates	Process Step
January 15	Applications open; Virtual Informational session January 30, 12pm
February 27	Applications due by 5pm
March/April	Grant applications reviewed by committee
End of April	All applicants will be notified of committee recommendations
End of June	MOUs signed with awardees following Board vote on committee recommendations
July 15	50% of award to be disbursed
January 15	Mid Year report due. Required before receiving final 50% of award funds
June 30	Project completion and Final Report due (submission is a condition for future grant eligibility)

Note: Dates are subject to change; applicants will be notified of any updates. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the project is compliant with all local, state, and federal permitting requirements.

Process:

- **Staff Review:** After the application due date, applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness. Applicants may be contacted to clarify missing or unclear information.
- **Scoring:** A volunteer Review Committee, including board members and community representatives, will evaluate each application using the review form below (beginning page 9).
- **Final Decision:** The committee's funding recommendations are forwarded to the WMSWCD Board of Directors for approval at the June board meeting.
- **Notification and Agreements:** Award decisions are announced by email. Grant awardees must sign an agreement (Memorandum of Understanding, MOU) outlining reporting and payment procedures. Projects may begin on or after July 1, 2026, once the agreement is fully signed.

Application Evaluation and Criteria

Applications are scored on a 0–2 point scale for each of the five key criteria below. The highest possible score is 10 points. Please find the review form below.

- 0 = Does Not Meet the criterion
- 1 = Partially Meets
- 2 = Fully Meets or Exceeds

Criteria

1. **Alignment with District Goals:**
   Projects should align with WMSWCD's mission to steward land and water. A strong application clearly addresses one or more of our strategic priorities.
2. **Clarity, Feasibility, and Organizational Capacity:**

Projects should aim for a well-structured plan with clearly defined goals, methods, and a realistic timeline. The proposal should demonstrate that the organization has the necessary skills, capacity, and partnerships to carry out the work successfully within the grant period. Including measurable outcomes, such as goals for the number of people served or square feet of habitat restored, may increase your score.

3. **Community Need and Benefit**:
    Projects that actively engage the community (e.g., volunteers, students, or partners) and benefit those who have been historically excluded from conservation efforts will be rated highly. Consider how volunteers will benefit from their participation, not just contribute labor.

4. **Budget and Resources**:
    The budget should be reasonable, detailed, and clearly aligned with the project's tasks and outcomes. While matching funds or in-kind support are not required, identifying them can strengthen an application by demonstrating community buy-in and resourcefulness.

5. **Project Sustainability and Impact**:
    Proposals must show a clear plan to maintain the project's benefits over the long-term.
    - On-the-ground work: Describe plans for long-term maintenance (e.g., watering, weeding) and/or monitoring (e.g., survival rates, water testing).
    - Education/outreach: Explain how effectiveness will be measured (e.g., surveys) and how the knowledge or skills will be sustained beyond the grant period.

Tips for a Strong Application
- **Be clear and concise:**
    - Avoid jargon. Use plain language so reviewers easily understand your project.
- **Show impact:**
    - Clearly state the conservation or community benefits of the project.

For example, estimate how many acres of soil will be improved, how many people will be served, or what priority habitat or species will benefit.

- **Provide details:**
    - Give a realistic timeline and explain major tasks (who will do what, and when). If you have partners or volunteers, mention their roles.
- **Budget wisely:**
    - Include a detailed budget. Justify major expenses and obtain actual quotes rather than estimates, if possible (e.g., plants, materials, labor). Use the brief budget table in the application or our Budget template. Link to both are provided here.
    - Include matching funds or in-kind donations if available.
- **Highlight experience and ability:**
    - Briefly describe your organization's relevant experience or past projects.
    - Note who will manage the project (your staff, your volunteers, or your partner in the project).
- **Letters of support:**
    - Include letters of support from partners or community groups, especially your target audience, to show "buy-in".
- **Proofread:**
    - Have a colleague review your application for clarity and errors before submission.

By following these tips and guidelines, applications can be complete, clear, and competitive. We look forward to reviewing project ideas and supporting your efforts to care for the land and water. Best of luck with the application!

Contact

Urban Conservationist and Ripple grant manager: Ariana Scipioni

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Phone: 971-265-9872

See next page for Review Form

West Multnomah SWCD Ripple Grant Review Form

Instructions for reviewers:

Thank you for dedicating your time, effort, and expertise to review the Ripple Grant applications and for being an important part of advancing conservation work in the District. Please complete your review by selecting a ***whole*** number rating for each criterion question below (only scores of 0,1, or 2; 0.5 points may not be awarded). Your ranking will result in a numerical score that will be used to guide discussion when the full grant review committee convenes in March/April (dates to be determined).

Total Score: Ten total points are possible per form; the 6th and 7th questions are not scored. The numerical score is not itself a determination of whether the proposal will be funded, but rather a prompt for discussion and prioritization.

Conflict of Interest: To maintain a fully impartial process**,** anyone affiliated with an organization that is applying for a Ripple Grant (staff, board, contractor, or immediate family) may not serve on the Review Committee in that grant cycle.

Non-Discrimination: Reviewers must score solely on project merits- not on any protected characteristics of applicants or participants. Intentional efforts to reach underserved or historically marginalized groups are evaluated on demonstrated **outcomes and processes**- not on applicant demographics.

Resources:

WMSWCD's mission is to provide resources, information, and expertise to inspire people to actively improve air and water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and soil health.

WMSWCD Long Range Business Plan

Summary of WMSWCD's Priorities

Reviewer: _____   Date:_____

Applicant: _____   Project title:_____

Criteria Question	Guiding Prompts for Reviewers	Score (0-2)
1. Alignment with District Goals *(Matches Guide Criterion #1)*	Does the project align with WMSWCD's mission to steward land and water? Does it address strategic priority areas such as water quality, soil health, habitat, climate resilience, or equity? Priority consideration is given to projects that: • Address District-identified priority invasive species (e.g., Emerald Ash Borer impacts on riparian shade) • Enhance priority habitats (e.g., lower Columbia estuarine, wetland, Oregon white oak, and native pollinator habitats) • Demonstrate measurable benefits to historically underserved communities, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other environmentally impacted or low-income communities	Strong (2) Fair (1) Insufficient (0)
2. Clarity and Feasibility of Plan & Capacity *(Matches Guide Criterion #2)*	**Clarity and Feasibility:** Is the plan, timeline, and method clearly explained? Are the goals well defined? **Capacity:** Does the organization demonstrate the skills, experience, and partners necessary to carry out the work? If it is a new organization, does the application show a clear management plan involving staff or volunteers?	Strong (2) Fair (1) Insufficient (0)
3. Community Need and Benefit *(Matches Guide Criterion #3)*	To what extent does the project serve the community, especially historically underserved populations? How and by whom is the need for this project being identified? Look for: • Culturally specific/inclusive approaches. • Meaningful engagement of impacted community members, volunteers or youth. • Evidence of reciprocity (mutual benefit) if volunteers are engaged.	Strong (2) Fair (1) Insufficient (0)

Criteria Question	Guiding Prompts for Reviewers	Score (0-2)
4. Budget and Resources *(Matches Guide Criterion #4)*	Is the budget reasonable and justified for the proposed activities? • Are costs aligned with tasks? • Are major expenses (e.g., plants, labor) explained? • While not required, are matching funds or in-kind support identified?	Strong (2) Fair (1) Insufficient (0)
5. Project Sustainability and Impact *(Matches Guide Criterion #5)*	How well does the project plan for lasting benefits to air, soil, water, habitat, climate resilience, and/or community members? • On-the-ground: Is there a long-term maintenance or monitoring plan (e.g., watering trees, weeding)? • Education projects: How will effectiveness be measured? How will knowledge persist beyond the grant?	Strong (2) Fair (1) Insufficient (0)
6. Reflection	**If funding allowed, would you support awarding this project?** This question provides an opportunity to gut-check your ranking of this project. Is this project a good use of public funding? There may be cases in which a project ranks highly, but you have reasons for not wanting to recommend funding, or cases in which a project received a low ranking, but you have compelling reasons to advocate for funding it.	**No Points**
7. Reflection	**Please provide any additional notes on the application's merits. If you did not recommend funding this application, please describe why.** These notes may be used when providing feedback to the applicant. If you are	**No Points**

Criteria Question	Guiding Prompts for Reviewers	Score (0-2)
	recommending that the funding be declined, please provide: (1) detailed reasoning for declining the grant proposal; and (2) recommendations for how the proposal can be improved to be more competitive for grant funding in the future.	
Total Score		/ 10