

Frequently Asked Questions

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage (EPF)

WHO MAY APPLY?

Municipalities, State agencies, public benefit corporations, public authorities and not-for-profit (NFP) corporations with an ownership interest in the property may apply. Such an interest may be outright ownership (fee simple) or a lesser interest, such as development rights, an easement, or a long-term lease of duration equal to the period of New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's (OPRHP) oversight of the project. All parties with an ownership interest in the property will be required to sign the project agreement. All lien holders must subordinate their interests to those of the State and may be required to sign the project agreement. NFP corporations are subject to New York State's Not-For-Profit Corporation Law. In order to apply under this program, a NFP corporation must have tax-exempt status under the IRS code, be current with pertinent federal and state filings, and be pre-qualified in the New York Statewide Financial System (SFS). Information on SFS is available at <https://Grantsmanagement.ny.gov>.

HOW ARE GRANTS SELECTED FOR AWARD?

Each application will be reviewed for eligibility and, if determined eligible, will be rated according to the Grant Selection Criteria. Within each region, applications are ranked according to project category, competing only against others in their region and category.

WHAT ARE THIS YEAR'S FUNDING PRIORITIES?

OPRHP Commissioner Priorities identified for 2025 are:

- A.** Projects that enhance and/or create opportunities for walkable public spaces for recreation, fitness, mental health and well-being, particularly in underserved neighborhoods (i.e., build green space, revitalize existing athletic and recreational facilities, create and enhance amenities at pocket parks, historic properties and community gardens).
- B.** Projects that advance and/or complement transformational projects across the State to enhance sustainability and resilience, especially in underserved communities, to address and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Priority projects would enhance recreation while: fostering stewardship, preserving open space, restoring natural communities, implementing climate resilient infrastructure, and reducing flood risk.
- C.** Projects designed to enhance inclusion by removing barriers, providing accommodation, and expanding visitor access and amenities to welcome new visitors, including those previously marginalized. Examples include: enhanced gateways to parks, trails, and historic sites; signage to improve programming and interpretation with an emphasis on marginalized/underserved populations (i.e., multi-lingual and/or pictorial signage); recreational and interpretive facilities serving people of diverse abilities; accessibility compliance; unisex public restroom facilities; reopening (i.e., modernize, rehabilitate, restore) shuttered recreational or historic facilities in distressed neighborhoods, etc.
- D.** Projects that are undertaken by OPRHP Friends organizations or other partner groups that occur in State Parks or State Historic Sites.

WHAT IS MY FIRST STEP?

All Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) applicants must use the Regional Economic Development Councils online application process, the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA). The CFA is available through our website <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/environmental-protection-fund.aspx> and the Regional Economic Development Councils website <https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/>. All documentation must be submitted via the CFA. Supporting documents sent by other means, such as email or regular mail to OPRHP will not be considered eligible for rating points.

The deadline for applications is **4:00 PM**, July 31, 2025.

IS THERE A MAXIMUM GRANT OR A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF GRANTS?

There is no statutory limit on the number of grants one property, or one applicant may receive, but in the interest of equity and fairness and in consideration of applicant capacity, applicants that have three or more open grants with OPRHP should not receive additional awards. **Grant awards are capped at \$675,000.**

ARE THESE MATCHING GRANTS?

Yes. Assistance toward the cost of projects shall not exceed 50% of the approved project cost. Applicants whose projects are located in impoverished areas (as defined by 10 percent or more of the population below the poverty level according to the most recent census data as provided on our website), can apply for up to 75% of the cost of the project. To view state poverty data, go to <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/environmental-protection-fund.aspx> for the Percent Below Poverty Level Table by Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA). After the grant award is made, the funding amount will not be adjusted upward.

WHAT TYPES OF APPLICANT SHARE ARE ELIGIBLE?

The applicant's share (also referred to as *matching share* or, simply, *match*) includes all funds (including State and Federal funds), other than the grant amount, related to the project and fully documented. The applicant's share may include cash and/or the value of force account labor, real property, professional services, volunteer labor, equipment, supplies and materials. Other Environmental Protection Fund grants (i.e., Climate Smart Communities, Water Quality Improvement Project, Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, etc.) cannot be used as match. Also, pursuant to Chapter Law 54 of 2014, State and Municipal Facilities Program (SAM) funds cannot be used as a required match or be considered local share to other state programs or to leverage state aid or grants including but not limited to the apportionment of aid under the education law. Additional project costs that are not paid for by the award or required local match funds can be paid for by SAM funds.

WHEN MUST MY SHARE BE AVAILABLE?

Successful applicants are expected to raise their full share within one year of the grant award. Professional services and materials purchased or donated (and warehoused, not installed) up to three years prior to the application deadline may be applied toward the matching share, as may acquisition costs retroactive up to one year prior to the application deadline.

ARE THERE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW REQUIREMENTS?

Yes. Before any action to award grants, the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) must be met. Specific requirements for SEQR, including the designation of lead agency and

classification of actions, can be found in the EPF Guidance Document at <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/environmental-protection-fund.aspx>.

ARE THERE HISTORIC PRESERVATION REQUIREMENTS?

For projects that involve properties listed on or eligible for the State and/or National Register, all work undertaken as part of a grant-assisted project must conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

For projects on sectarian properties, grant assistance can fund only costs necessary for historically accurate restoration to restore and preserve the historic integrity of the historic property, and only to the extent that those costs exceed the cost of basic rehabilitation. Information and instructions on how to structure/present a sectarian project can be found at <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/environmental-protection-fund.aspx>.

WHEN ARE THE GRANT MONIES AVAILABLE?

This grant program is administered on a reimbursement basis. Successful applicants will be expected to fund project expenditures upfront, and then submit for reimbursement. Once the project agreement with OPRHP is formally approved and conditions met, grant recipients must document project expenditures in order to receive reimbursement (i.e., document 100% of eligible costs to receive up to 50% reimbursement or up to 75% reimbursement for selected high-poverty grants). Grant recipients must plan their financial arrangements accordingly.

ARE THERE FISCAL REQUIREMENTS?

Project costs will be eligible for reimbursement only if the specified grant work meets State standards and the expenditures are made in compliance with State requirements. Municipalities must comply with General Municipal Law Sections 103 (competitive bidding) and 104-b (procurement policies and procedures). Not-for-profit corporations must follow procurement policies that ensure prudent and economical use of public money in the best interests of the taxpayers of the State of New York, to facilitate the acquisition of goods and services of maximum quality at the lowest possible cost under the circumstances, and to guard against nepotism, favoritism, improvidence, extravagance, fraud, and corruption. Such procedures may include, but are not limited to, competitive bidding, the solicitation of three price quotes, written requests for proposals, etc. Expenditures that do not meet these standards (including retroactive services and purchases) should not be included in the grant budget.

WHEN CAN I START WORK?

Work completed prior to award is not generally eligible for reimbursement or for match (retroactivity exceptions are noted above). Successful applicants are advised NOT to begin work until a project agreement (including a budget, scope of work and performance timeline) has been formalized between OPRHP and the grant recipient and OPRHP has issued all necessary approvals. Conditions of award will include environmental and historic preservation reviews, OPRHP acceptance/approval of plans and specifications and bidding documents, competitive bidding, etc. Proceeding without advance OPRHP approval could jeopardize grant reimbursement.

WHEN MUST WORK BE ACCOMPLISHED?

All projects must be completed within five years from date of award. OPRHP will monitor the progress of project work and will recapture awarded funds if significant progress is not made.

DO THESE GRANTS COME WITH PROVISIONS FOR LONG TERM PROTECTION?

Yes. All successful applicants will be required to enter into formal grant contract with OPRHP. To ensure the public benefits from the investment of State funds, all properties acquired or developed with grant funds will receive long-term protections. The method and term of the protection is dependent upon the type of applicant and project undertaken. Generally, the long-term protections include:

- A. Public access covenants or preservation covenants, for a specific term, conveyed to the State and recorded against a property deed, run with the land and apply to the grant recipient and all successive owners, operators and lessees.
- B. Perpetual preservation covenants or conservation easements conveyed to the State and recorded against a property deed, run with the land and apply to all successive owners, operators and lessees.
- C. Municipal parkland acquired or improved with EPF funding must remain parkland in perpetuity. Such real property shall not be sold, leased, exchanged, donated or otherwise disposed of or used for other than public park purposes without the express authority of an act of the legislature which shall provide for the substitution of other lands of equal environmental value and fair market value, reasonably equivalent usefulness and location, and such other requirements as shall be approved by the Commissioner.
- D. Sample documents are located at <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/environmental-protection-fund.aspx>, under Long Term Protections. For municipal parkland, information is available in the "Handbook on the Alienation and Conversion of Municipal Parkland," located at <https://parks.ny.gov/publications/> under Other Publications.

WHAT OTHER REQUIREMENTS MUST BE MET?

All projects will need to comply with the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the State Labor Law, Workers' Compensation Law and State Historic Preservation Law. Please contact your RGA for information on how these and other applicable statutes may impact your project.

ARE THE REQUIREMENTS THE SAME AS PRIOR YEARS'?

The Guidelines (EPF Guidance Document) and forms are updated at the beginning of each grant round. The complete text of OPRHP's EPF regulations can be found at <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/environmental-protection-fund.aspx>.

IS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE?

Yes, technical assistance is available through the Regional Economic Development Councils and through the OPRHP Regional Grant Administrators (RGA). If you have any questions about your application, please contact the RGA for your county available at <https://parks.ny.gov/grants/environmental-protection-fund.aspx>. The website has more information on the EPF, including pre-application informational webinars, and forms and resources available to help you submit a more competitive application.