

About the program

Michigan Spark Grants help local communities create, renovate and redevelop public recreation opportunities for residents and visitors—especially those communities whose economies and health were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These grants support projects that provide safe, accessible, public recreation facilities and spaces to improve people's health, introduce new recreation experiences, build on existing park infrastructure and make it easier for people to enjoy both indoor and outdoor recreation. It's all made possible because of the [Building Michigan Together Plan](#), signed in March 2022, which included a historic infusion of federal funding in state and local parks.

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Program goals

- Leverage federal, state, local and private resources toward a sustainable public recreation development program.
- Provide a clear, simple and equitable grants distribution process in support of public recreation.
- Align project partners and community organizations so resources are maximized, and roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined and balanced.

Addressing community need

The Michigan Spark Grants program is aimed at helping improve and redevelop existing public recreation in communities that have historically experienced barriers to accessing these types of grants. Funding priority will be given to areas with a high proportion of households that are struggling financially, a high number of residents with physical and mental disparities, and a lack of public recreation opportunities.

Eligible applicants

- Applicants must be local units of government or public authorities legally established to provide public recreation.
- Applicants may include a regional or statewide organization or consortium of local units of government or public authorities legally established to provide public recreation. Please [refer to the questions and answers page](#) for

more information.

- An eligible financial match is encouraged but not required.
- A community planning process is encouraged but not required.

Eligible projects

- Projects must support and enhance neighborhood features that promote improved health and safety outcomes or address the increased repair or maintenance needs in response to significantly greater use of public facilities in local communities that have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Projects may include the development, renovation or redevelopment of public recreation facilities, and the provision of recreation-focused equipment and programs at public recreation spaces.
- Funds may be used for activities such as, but not limited to, project review, planning, architecture and engineering services, construction, oversight and compliance activities associated with state and federal requirements, as applicable.
- Projects must be completed by Oct. 31, 2026, on public land with the primary purpose of providing outdoor recreation.

Application scoring criteria

Applications that address existing park infrastructure will be given priority. Consideration will be given to applications that complete critical trail projects or provide access to new opportunities that currently don't exist within a local community. Scoring will be based on the following criteria, listed in order of priority:

- Public benefit and anticipated outcomes
- Financial and social considerations
- Access to project site
- Access to new opportunities for people of all abilities
- Clarity of scope and ability to execute
- Renovation and long-term maintenance

Advisory group

Several key collaborators worked with the DNR to provide input on the program's intent, scoring criteria and application requirements to ensure the stated objectives of the

grant program are met. The group also advised on a strategy for the disbursement of funds, though the DNR is ultimately responsible for how and where to leverage this funding. Members represented diverse perspectives including private philanthropy, regional planning, parks and recreation, community foundations, local governments (rural and urban), and federal and state grant programs. Advisory group members are:

- Kyle Caldwell, Council of Michigan Foundations
- John Egelhaaf, Region 4 Southwest Planning Commission, Michigan Association of Regions
- Andrea LaFontaine, Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
- John LaMacchia II, Michigan Municipal League
- Dan Lord, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Amy Matisoff, Michigan Department of Transportation
- Clay Summers, Michigan Recreation & Park Association
- J. J. Tighe, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

Available funding

A total of \$65 million of coronavirus state and local fiscal recovery funds was made available through Public Act 53 of 2022. Individual grant amounts – ranging from \$100,000 to \$1 million – will be distributed as follows:

- Round one: [\\$14.2 million was awarded in February 2023](#).
- Current round: nearly \$23 million to be awarded in September 2023.
- The remaining \$27.5 million to be awarded in "opportunity communities" by the end of 2023.

Funding authority

- [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds under the American Rescue Plan Act](#)
- [Public Act 53 of 2022, Building Michigan Together Plan, Section 452](#)

Contact

Not finding answers you need? Please [email DNR-Grants@Michigan.gov](mailto:DNR-Grants@Michigan.gov) or [contact grant staff](#) for assistance.