

Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Application



Instructions

After completing the form, applications and supporting documentation may be submitted by e-mail to ndicgrants@nd.gov. It is preferred that only electronic copies are submitted.

You are not limited to the spacing provided, except in those instances where there is a limit on the number of words. If you need additional space, please indicate that on the application form, answer the question on a separate page, and include with your submission.

The application and all attachments must be received by the application deadline. You may submit your application at any time prior to the application deadline. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit applications prior to the deadline for staff review in order ensure that proposals will be complete when submitted on deadline date.** Incomplete applications may not be considered for funding.

Please review the back of this form to determine project eligibility, definitions, budget criteria, and statutory requirements.

Project Name: Badlands Restoration Project

Name of Organization: North Dakota Natural Resources Trust

Federal Tax ID# :36-3512179

Contact Person/Title : Eric Rosenquist, Conservation Coordinator

Address : 1605 E. Capitol Ave. Suite 101

City : Bismarck

State : North Dakota

Zip Code : 58501

E-mail Address: eric@naturalresourcestrust.com

Web Site Address (If applicable)

Phone 701-223-8501

List names of co-applicants if this is a joint proposal

MAJOR Directive:

Choose only one response

Directive A. Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

Directive B. Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Directive C. Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

Directive D. Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

Additional Directive:

Choose all that apply

Directive A.

Directive B.

Directive C.

Directive D.

Type of organization:

State Agency

Political Subdivision

Tribal Entity

Tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation.

Abstract/Executive Summary.

Summarize the project, including its objectives, expected results, duration, total project costs and participants. (no more than 500 words)

The encroachment of woody vegetation on the landscape is a slow process that is often not identified as a problem until it is too late, resulting in expensive and time-consuming management options. The consequence of inaction is particularly evident in many of our neighboring states to the south. Identified as a top threat to native grasslands by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), encroachment of woody species like Rocky Mountain juniper reduces available forage for livestock, increases the impact of wildfires, negatively affects hydrology, and alters wildlife populations.

The Badlands Restoration Project will aim to proactively address this issue by building on the success of previous projects originating from the USDA Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Project (JCLRP), The JCLRP is a cooperative project between the US Forest Service, ND Forest Service, NRCS, NGO's and private partners focused on treating the expansion of

Rocky Mountain juniper throughout grazing lands in the North Dakota badlands. Since its start in 2020, well over 6,000 acres of public and private lands have been treated. Using the same model proposed here, 500 acres of private lands were treated in 2023.

The Badlands Restoration Project seeks assistance from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund to treat 1000 acres of rangeland infested with Rocky Mountain Juniper over a period of three years. OHF and partner funding will be used to incentivize and reduce the high cost incurred by landowners wishing to treat their grazing lands by the removal of encroaching woody species, specifically Rocky Mountain juniper. Proposed project areas will be evaluated based on NRCS Ecological Site Descriptions and require the landowner enter an NRCS cost-share agreement to receive the incentive payment.

In 2022, the Trust and our partners joined together to test the concept of incentivizing private landowners to perform this hard work. Over the past 1 ½ years, we have worked with landowners to complete management on 500 acres, with another 128 acres under contract waiting to be completed. From this work, we are aware of at least another 600 acres of opportunity should we be able to secure funding.

The OHF request for this work is \$77,000. Another \$40,000 in private match funding has been secured and \$474,860 in other project sponsor funding will be made available from NRCS cost-share and private contributions. OHF commitment to this project is 13% of the total project cost.

Project Duration: 3 years, CY 2024-2027

Indicate the intended schedule for drawing down OHF funds.

2024- Engagement with landowners, project planning, applications to NRCS. Estimate about 50% of funding to be used. Public tour to highlight past projects scheduled for June 25.

2025- Continued engagement with landowners, project planning and applications to NRCS. Estimate 80% cumulative use of funding

2026- Enrollment of final projects to fit funding availability.

2027- Wrap up of final projects. Estimate 100% of funding utilized.

Amount of Grant request: \$77,000

Total Project Costs: \$615,470

Note: in-kind and indirect costs can be used for matching funds.

Amount of Matching Funds: \$40,000 (52%)

A minimum of 25% Match Funding is required. Indicate if the matching funds will be in-kind, indirect or cash. Please provide verification that these matching funds are available for your project. Note that effective as of July 1, 2015 no State General Fund dollars can be used for a match unless funding was legislatively appropriated for that purpose.

Amount of Match	Funding Source	Type of Match (Cash, In-kind or Indirect)
\$20,000	ND Natural Resources Trust	Cash
\$10,000	Northern Great Plains Joint Venture	Cash
\$10,000	The Mule Deer Federation	Cash

Certifications

X I certify that this application has been made with the support of the governing body and chief executive of my organization.

X I certify that if awarded grant funding none of the funding will be used for any of the exemptions noted in the back of this application.

Narrative

Organization Information – Briefly summarize your organization’s history, mission, current programs and activities.

Include an overview of your organizational structure, including board, staff and volunteer involvement. (no more than 300 words)

The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust was created in 1986 and was originally called the North Dakota Wetlands Trust until 2000. The Trust’s mission is to promote the retention, restoration, creation and wildlife-friendly management of wetlands, grasslands and riparian areas by presenting practical conservation opportunities throughout North Dakota.

The Trust achieves this mission by partnering with agricultural and conservation organizations to promote productive use of private agricultural lands that result in enhancement and protection of private lands, to effectively use North Dakota's public lands both for agriculture and recreation, to promote good land use along urban river corridors, and to enhance the state's significant water resources.

The Trust is managed by a six-member board of directors. Three of the directors are appointed by the governor of North Dakota, one by the National Audubon Society, one by the National Wildlife Federation, and one by the North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department Director is an ex-officio member. The Trust has an Executive Director and six staff members.

From its inception, the Trust has played a role as facilitator between agricultural and conservation interests. In addition to facilitating and funding sound, on-the-ground conservation of natural resources, its goal is to identify common issues, create dialogue, and resolve conflicts.

Purpose of Grant – Describe the proposed project identifying how the project will meet the specific directive(s) of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Program

Identify project goals, strategies and benefits and your timetable for implementation. Include information about the need for the project and whether there is urgency for funding. Indicate if this is a new project or if it is replacing funding that is no longer available to your organization. Identify any innovative features or processes of your project. Note: if your proposal provides funding to an individual, the names of the recipients must be reported to the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund. These names will be disclosed upon request.

For tree/shrub/grass plantings: provide a planting plan describing the site design, planting methods, number of trees/shrubs by species and stock size, grass species and future maintenance. A statement certifying that the applicant will adhere to USDA-NRCS tree/shrub/grass planting specifications along with the name of the governmental entity designing the planting may be substituted for a planting plan.

For projects including Section 319 funding: provide in detail the specific best management practices that will be implemented and the specific projects for which you are seeking funding.

For projects including fencing: A minimum cost share of 40% by the recipient is preferred. Include detailed information on the type of fencing to be installed, whether funding is requested for boundary fencing, new or replacement of existing fencing, and/or cross fencing.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative has identified the encroachment of woody vegetation as a top threat leading to the loss of productive grasslands.¹ This is particularly evident in the southern states and research shows the problem slowly moving north, suggesting the need for a proactive management approach.²

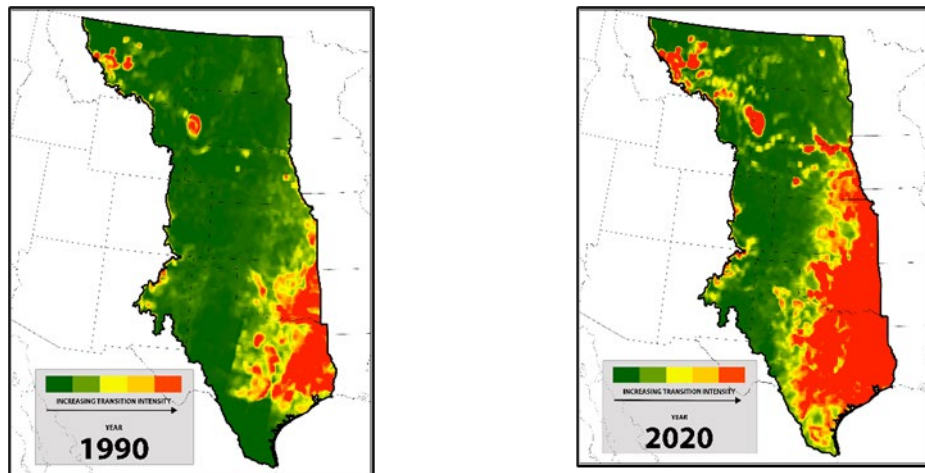


Figure 1. Expansion of woody species in the Great Plains, 1990-2020.

¹ NRCS, 2021. A Framework for Conservation Action in the Great Plains Grassland Biome. Working Lands for Wildlife, USDA-NRCS. Washington, D.C. Available at <https://wlfw.rangelands.app>

² <https://centerforresilience.unl.edu/Woody-Plant-Encroachment>

In the Framework for Conservation Action, NRCS identifies the consequences of woody invasion as well as management strategies. The expansion of woody vegetation, in this case Rocky Mountain junipers, out of natural ecological sites and onto rangeland negatively alters hydrology, contributes to soil erosion, loss of range productivity, increased wildfire severity and altered wildlife composition.

With increasing interest in programs to offset the high cost of woody shrub removal needed to keep working grasslands healthy and livestock operations economically viable, the Badlands Restoration Project was developed to further enhance efforts made during the collaborative USDA Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Project in western North Dakota. Since its start in 2020 well over 6000 acres of public and private lands have been treated. Using the same model proposed here, 500 acres of private lands were treated in 2023. In cooperation with the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund, we seek to facilitate and incentivize the treatment of an additional 1,000 acres of private lands (Directive B). The need for this work is supported in both the ND Forest Service Forest Action Plan³ and the ND Game and Fish State Wildlife Action Plan⁴.

We propose the targeted removal of encroaching Rocky Mountain juniper in areas of Slope, Billings, McKenzie, Golden Valley, Bowman, and Dunn counties within the Badlands Major Land Use Area (MLRA) of western North Dakota. Rocky Mountain juniper is native to certain ecological sites in western ND. However, over time the exclusion of fire has led to the colonization of rangeland by juniper and stand densities which are practically unusable to both wildlife and livestock.

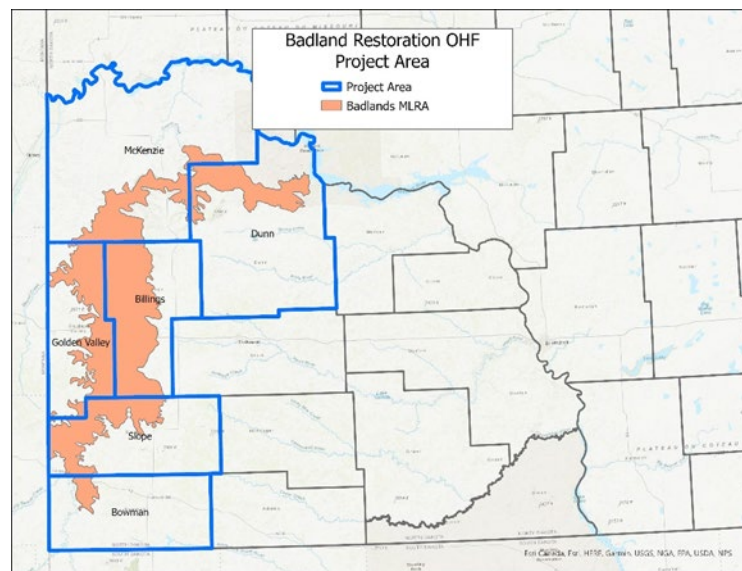


Figure 2. Proposed Project Area.

³ [2020-north-dakota-forest-action-plan-final.pdf \(ndsu.edu\)](https://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/~ndfs/2020-north-dakota-forest-action-plan-final.pdf)

⁴ [swap-2015_0.pdf \(nd.gov\)](https://www.nd.gov/swap-2015-0.pdf)

This funding proposal is focused on private landowners' grazing areas and select, privately managed USFS allotments. It is important to recognize that similar treatments conducted by the U.S. Forest Service in nearby locations are adding to the private land treatments, showing the value of a coordinated approach, and enhancing the habitat at a landscape scale.

We anticipate the restoration of these areas to a more natural ecological state will support a variety of species including wild turkeys, mule deer, grouse, big horn sheep and many other native flora and fauna. Additionally, this will benefit local ranchers and other user groups by improving rangeland resiliency by increasing forage and water availability and reducing wildfire severity (Directive B and C).

Treatments of infested areas can be particularly challenging for private landowners to take on. The labor and mechanization costs, as well as the technical expertise required, are all limiting factors. NRCS estimates treatments to cost \$498/acre. This is often far beyond what most private landowners are willing or able to spend.

This project will provide a \$100/acre incentive for landowners who enroll in NRCS cost-share practice #314. While current NRCS cost-share allows for \$373.86/acre to support private landowners, the actual cost of this type of treatment is often near \$500/acre.⁵ This still leaves a significant financial burden for the landowner. Funds received from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, coupled with private sources, will be used to offset the cost to the landowner. We seek to assemble \$77,000 in OHF funding in addition to private funds to offset the cost of mechanical treatments by \$100/acre on 1,000 acres, as well as provide project coordination.

There are currently landowners with projects totaling about 600 acres waiting to apply. However, the full extent of exact project locations is not known at this time and will be determined by landowner interest and NRCS contract acceptance. Project review and sign-off by NRCS will be required for landowners to receive incentive payments.

The Trust has developed a network of individuals and agencies to promote the program to landowners. The program would be marketed to landowners through the Trust's contractors, the North Dakota Conservation District Employee Association's Dakota Prairie Legacy Initiative (DPLI), local NRCS offices and the Meadowlark Initiative (MI).

Is this project part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan? Yes No

If yes, provide a copy with the application.

Note: Projects involving buildings and infrastructure will only be considered if part of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Please refer to the "Definitions" section at the back of the form for more details.

Management of Project – Provide a description of how you will manage and oversee the project to ensure it is carried out on schedule and in a manner that best ensures its objectives will be met.

⁵ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules>

Include a brief background and work experience for those managing the project.

The Trust will complete all program coordination from our office located in Bismarck, ND. Staff members include Brenda Newton, Administrative Assistant/Conservation Specialist, Terry Allbee, Biologist/Business Manager, Eric Rosenquist, Conservation Program Coordinator, and Jesse Beckers, Energy Program Manager, and Heather Husband, Meadowlark Initiative Coordinator. Eric Rosenquist will serve as the program coordinator. Trust staff have decades of experience and a strong track record in delivering similar conservation projects. The Trust will provide tracking and reporting for all project agreements following grant guidelines.

Evaluation – Describe your plan to document progress and results.

Please be specific on the methods you will utilize to measure success. Note that regular reporting, final evaluation and expenditure reports will be required for every grant awarded.

Projects will be evaluated based on NRCS standards and must meet NRCS completion standards to receive payment. All projects will be photo documented with before/after treatment photos.

Financial Information

Project Budget – Use the table below to provide an itemized list of project expenses and describe the matching funds being utilized for this project.

Indicate if the matching funds are in the form of cash, indirect costs or in-kind services. The budget should identify all other committed funding sources and the amount of funding from each source. **A minimum of 25% match funding is required.** An application will be scored higher the greater the amount of match funding provided. (See Scoring Form.)

Certain values have been identified for in-kind services as detailed under “Budget Information” at the back of this form. Refer to that section and utilize these values in identifying your matching funds. **NOTE: No indirect costs will be funded. Supporting documentation for project expenses, including bids, must be included or application will be considered incomplete.**

Project Expense	OHF Request	Applicant's Match Share (Cash)	Other Project Sponsor's Share (non-match)	Total Each Project Expense
Project cost	\$70,000	\$30,000	\$473,860	\$573,860
Contractual	\$7,000	\$10,000	\$0	\$17,000
Landowner	\$0	\$0	\$24,610	\$24,610
Total Costs	\$77,000	\$40,000	\$498,470	\$615,470

Note: Costs for seeding, fencing, pipelines, wells, and cover crops cannot exceed NRCS Field Office Tech Guide without justification. Projects involving perimeter fencing must follow NRCS eligibility standards.

Budget Narrative – Use the space below to provide additional detail regarding project expenses.

We are requesting \$77,000 from the OHF and have identified \$498,470 in other contributions, making the OHF contribution 13% of the total project cost. \$373,860 of the other contributions will come from NRCS cost-share provided directly to the private landowners upon completion of their contracts. Total landowner share would be 25% of project cost before incentive payments from OHF and private sources are applied. Due to NRCS confidentiality rules we may not be able to provide detailed information on NRCS

expenditures but will be able to reliably report that all projects with valid NRCS contracts and completed to NRCS specifications will receive the scheduled payments from NRCS. In cases where the landowner performs the work themselves the incentive will be provided using NRCS cost estimates to determine project cost. In no situation will the total of NRCS cost share and incentive payment exceed the total cost of the project.

Funding from matching partners will be used for incentive payments and contractual costs. Partner funds may also be used to support qualifying projects in which NRCS funding is not available. The North Dakota Wildlife Federation has committed \$100,000 (other project sponsor column) to the project. However, this funding must be spent in only Dunn or McKenzie counties.

Table illustrating how project cost totals were developed using 2023 NRCS rates.

	NRCS Estimated Total Cost	NRCS Cost Share to Landowner	Gross Landowner obligation	Incentive Payment	Net Landowner obligation after Incentive (estimated)
Per acre	\$498.47	\$373.86	\$124.61	\$100.00	\$24.61
Project (x1000)	\$498,470	\$373,860	\$124,610	\$100,000	\$24,610

Funding for contractual work is needed to provide local technical support for services provided to landowners related to project management and other technical assistance, as well as some promotion and outreach services. If contracting services are not needed or under-utilized, this funding will be moved to the Project Cost category to support additional project work.

Sustainability – Indicate how the project will be funded or sustained in future years.

Include information on the sustainability of this project after OHF funds have been expended and whether the sustainability will be in the form of ongoing management or additional funding from a different source.

This project will have a noticeable impact on the landscape but will, over time, require active management to maintain the state of the grassland. We are currently working with our partners to develop future projects which will expand on this work. For treated acres periodic treatments by hand lopping new seedlings or control using prescribed fire will be needed to prevent additional encroachment.

Partial Funding – Indicate how the project will be affected if less funding is available than that requested.

Depending on how much less funding was available, we would assess whether the project is viable as planned. If still considered viable it would mean either fewer acres impacted or a reduced incentive resulting in increased cost to landowners.

Partnership Recognition - If you are a successful recipient of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars, how would you recognize the Outdoor Heritage Fund partnership? * There must be signage at the location of the project acknowledging OHF funding when appropriate.

The Badlands Restoration Project will recognize the OHF partnership in as many opportunities as possible. Those will include, but not be limited to, all interactions with landowners and coordination meetings. The OHF funding will also be recognized in any outreach material including the Dakota Legacy and Meadowlark Initiatives. We will use social media to both advertise the program's availability and tout its successes, noting the key role played by OHF funding. The OHF logo will also be included on all agreement materials. If the grant is awarded, the OHF will be recognized at a free public tour planned for June 25th, 2024 in Medora ND.

Awarding of Grants - Review the appropriate sample contract for your organization on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm>.

Can you meet all the provisions of the sample contract? Yes No

If there are provisions in that contract that your organization is unable to meet, please indicate below what those provisions would be:

ABOUT OHF:

The purpose of the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund is to provide funding to state agencies, tribal governments, political subdivisions, and nonprofit organizations, with higher priority given to projects that enhance **conservation** practices in this state by:

Directive A. Providing access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat and provide access for sportsmen;

Directive B. Improving, maintaining and restoring water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems and by supporting other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching;

Directive C. Developing, enhancing, conserving and restoring wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands; and

Directive D. Conserving natural areas and creating other areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

EXEMPTIONS

Outdoor Heritage Fund grants may not be used to finance the following:

- Litigation;
- Lobbying activities;
- Any activity that would interfere, disrupt, or prevent activities associated with surface coal mining operations; sand, gravel, or scoria extraction activities; oil and gas operations; or other energy facility or infrastructure development;
- The acquisition of land or to encumber any land for a term longer than twenty years; or
- Projects outside this state or projects that are beyond the scope of defined activities that fulfill the purposes of Chapter 54-17.8 of the North Dakota Century Code.

OHF funds may not be used, except after a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission, to finance:

- A completed project or project commenced before the grant application is submitted;
- A feasibility or research study;
- Maintenance costs;
- A paving project for a road or parking lot;
- A swimming pool or aquatic park;
- Personal property that is not affixed to the land;
- Playground equipment, except that grant funds may be provided for up to 25% of the cost of the equipment not exceeding \$10,000 per project and all playground equipment grants may not exceed 5% of the total grants per year (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);
- Staffing or outside consultants except for costs for staffing or an outside consultant to design and implement an approved project based on the documented need of the applicant and the expenditures may not exceed 5% of the grant to a grantee if the grant exceeds \$250,000 and expenditures may not exceed 10% of the grant to a grantee if the grant is \$250,000 or less (see Definitions/Clarifications for how this will be calculated);

- A building except for a building that is included as part of a comprehensive conservation plan for a new or expanded recreational project (see Definitions/Clarifications for definition of comprehensive conservation plan and new or expanded recreational project); or
- A project in which the applicant is not directly involved in the execution and completion of the project.

The goal of the Industrial Commission is that at a minimum 15% of the funding received for a biennium will be given priority for recreation projects that meet Directive D.

The following projects are not eligible for funding, unless there is a finding of exceptional circumstances by the Industrial Commission include:

- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor ice rinks,
- Construction or refurbishment of indoor/outdoor athletic courts and sports fields,
- Other substantially similar facilities.
- Infrastructure that is not part of a comprehensive conservation plan.
- Projects not meeting a minimum funding request of \$2,500.

Budget Information

In-kind services used to match the request for Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars shall be valued as follows:

- Labor costs \$15.00 an hour
- Land costs Average rent costs for the county as shown in the most recent publication of the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Services, North Dakota Field Office
- Permanent Equipment Any equipment purchased must be listed separately with documentation showing actual cost. (For example: playground equipment)
- Equipment usage Actual documentation
- Seed & Seedlings Actual documentation
- Transportation Mileage at federal rate
- Supplies & materials Actual documentation

More categories will be added as we better understand the types of applications that will be submitted. We will use as our basis for these standards other State and Federal programs that have established rates. For example, the North Dakota Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program has established rates. If your project includes work that has an established rate under another State Program, please use those rates and note your source.

Definitions/Clarifications:

Building - Defined as "A structure with a roof either with walls or without walls and is attached to the ground in a permanent nature."

Comprehensive Conservation Plan - Defined as "A detailed plan that has been formally adopted by the governing board which includes goals and objectives--both short and long term, must show how this building will enhance the overall conservation goals of the project and the protection or preservation of wildlife and fish habitat or natural areas." This does not need to be a complex multi-page document. It could be included as a part of the application or be an attachment.

New and Expanded Recreational Project means that the proposed building cannot be a replacement of a current building. The proposed building must also be related to either a new or expanded

recreational project--either an expansion in land or an expansion of an existing building or in the opportunities for recreation at the project site.

Playground equipment calculation - Only the actual costs of the playground equipment (a bid or invoice showing the amount of the equipment costs must be provided) - cannot include freight or installation or surface materials or removal of old equipment, etc.

Staffing/Outside Consultants Costs - If you are requesting OHF funding for staffing or for an outside consultant, you must provide information in your application on the need for OHF funding to cover these costs. For example, if you are an entity that has engineering staff you must explain why you don't have sufficient staff to do the work or if specific expertise is needed or whatever the reason is for your entity to retain an outside consultant. If it is a request for reimbursement for staff time then a written explanation is required in the application of why OHF funding is needed to pay for the costs of that staff member(s)' time. **The budget form must reflect on a separate line item the specific amount that is being requested for staffing and/or the hiring of an outside consultant.** This separate line item will then be used to make the calculation of 5% or 10% as outlined in the law. Note that the calculation will be made on the grant less the costs for the consultant or staff.

Maintenance – Activities that preserve or keep infrastructure in a given existing condition, including repairs. Repair means to restore to sound condition after damage, to renew or refresh; except repairs due to damage caused by Acts of God.

Scoring of Grants

Oral Presentation. Please note that you will be given an opportunity to make a ten-minute Oral Presentation at a meeting of the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board. These presentations are strongly encouraged.

Open Record. Please note that your application and any attachments will be open records as defined by law and will be posted on the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund website.

All applications will be scored by the Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board after your ten-minute oral presentation. The ranking form that will be used by the Board is available on the website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm> .

Awarding of Grants

All decisions on requests will be reported to applicants no later than 30 days after Industrial Commission consideration. The Commission can set a limit on duration of an offer on each application or if there isn't a specific date indicated in the application for implementation of the project, then the applicant has until the next Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board regular meeting to sign the contract and get the project underway or the commitment for funding will be terminated and the applicant may resubmit for funding. Applicants whose proposals have been approved will receive a contract outlining the terms and conditions of the grant.

Responsibility of Recipient

The recipient of any grant from the Industrial Commission must use the funds awarded for the specific purpose described in the grant application and in accordance with the contract. The

recipient cannot use any of the funds for the purposes stated under Exemptions on the first page of this application.

If you have any questions about the application, the Commission can be reached at 701-328-3722 or outdoorheritage@nd.gov.

Revised: November 4, 2019, April 12, 2023