

Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund Grant Program
Year 2024 Application Materials



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Introduction

In November of 2000, approximately 70% of voters in Sheboygan County voted in favor of establishing a County-wide Stewardship Fund to create and enhance recreational opportunities, and also to conserve valuable natural resources.

Funding was allocated for the first round of projects in 2002, with monies received in part from a fee charged to developers of subdivisions in Sheboygan County's towns. In order to achieve public involvement in the process of grant distribution, an ad-hoc committee was formed that was tasked with deciding to whom grants would be awarded. Although most of the early funding was provided to communities to assist with creation of Smart Growth Plans, which became a requirement after State legislation, it has now also spread to other well-deserving applications.

Since 2007, the Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund has received its funding through the County's portion of its tax levy. Funding has fluctuated over the years depending on the availability of revenue, although the Stewardship Fund has always remained a high priority program for the Planning & Conservation Department. Since land conservation and recreational opportunities have always been cornerstones of the Department, it has maintained a sincere effort to distribute Stewardship Funds equitably.

Projects are meant to align with the goals established in the Sheboygan County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation & Open Space Plan, which is updated at approximately five year intervals, and other relevant plans. The Plan can be found online at sheboygancounty.com or made available upon request.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact the Planning & Conservation Department before beginning the process. Staff can be reached at 920-459-3060 or tyler.betry@sheboygancounty.com.

Goals of the Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund

- Ensure citizen involvement in the County's Stewardship process
- Cultivate environmental stewardship within individuals, organizations, and government entities
- Help implement projects identified in the Sheboygan County Outdoor Recreation & Open Space Plan, and other relevant plans
- Provide matching funds by the County for leveraging dollars from federal, state, local, and private entities for conservation activities
- Coordinate County stewardship activities to be in harmony with other conservation and recreational activities already occurring in or planned for the County
- Initiate only those stewardship activities that cannot be accomplished by current or upcoming regulatory tools, such as land use planning, zoning, land division ordinances, and shoreland-wetland-floodplain regulations
- Preserve the County's natural resources while minimizing the loss of property tax revenues
- Form green space and wildlife habitat corridors by linking existing natural areas together
- Acquire, protect, and restore only those resources that can adequately be maintained by specific public or private custodians in the future
- Preserve the natural resources of the County while continuing to promote wise growth and economic development
- Promote beautiful, healthy, and thriving cities, villages, and towns so that new and existing County residents will always have attractive and useful quality of life amenities
- Provide higher priority for Stewardship funding to those municipalities that have adopted Smart Growth-compliant comprehensive plans

Eligible Applicants

- Towns, villages, or cities in Sheboygan County
- Non-profit organizations as reported in federal form 501(c)(3)
- Other government units (such as school districts)

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Planning & Conservation Department before beginning the application process.

Eligible Projects (*must be located in Sheboygan County*)

- Land acquisition – examples include the following (this list is not all-inclusive):
 - Easement acquisition (such as conservation easements)
 - Property acquisition of sensitive or significant lands
 - Fee title acquisition of lands for future recreational purposes or to restrict development
 - Purchase of development rights (PDR) (before beginning Narrative (Attachment D) for a PDR project, please remember to *always* contact the Planning & Conservation Department first)
- Project development – examples include the following (this list is not all-inclusive):
 - Park or trail development or restoration
 - Creation or restoration of public access to significant water resources
 - Vegetative buffers along surface water resources
 - Fish and wildlife habitat restoration
 - Forest, prairie, and flora restoration
 - Wetland restoration
 - Lake Michigan bluff protection
- Discretionary/Planning – these projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis where the project has significant merit to promote the goals of the Stewardship program

Non-Eligible Projects

- Funding for projects that were already completed prior to submitting the application. The only exceptions to this are for real estate expenditures needed for acquisition (typically an appraisal, survey, title insurance, historical or cultural assessments, or environmental inspections).
- Playground equipment.
- Funding will not be provided to cover wage reimbursements.
- Invasive species removal must be part of a larger restoration effort. Funding for invasive species removal alone will not be considered.
- Routine property maintenance (tree clearing, stump grinding, brush cutting, etc.). Funding for this type of maintenance must be part of a larger restoration effort as well.
- Projects that do not allow the general public to access the site and/or enjoy the project.

Match Requirements

Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund grant award amounts are not to exceed 50% of the total acquisition or project development costs (or both). The applicant is responsible for obtaining funding matches, sources of which might include state or federal grants, contributions from the municipality in which the project lays, or private donations (wages cannot be used to cover matched funds or for part of the total project cost). For eligible County Stewardship reimbursable costs, see the proper Budget Worksheet (Attachments B & C).

Application, Evaluation, and Selection Process

Formal applications are due **May 3, 2024 by 4:30 pm**. Planning & Conservation Department staff will then review applications and prioritize projects based on the Rating and Ranking Form. Projects that align with the goals established in the Sheboygan County Outdoor Recreation & Open Space Plan generally receive higher placement. Points are awarded for meeting criteria provided in the Rating and Ranking Form.

Staff provides the full applications, with a narrative for each and a recommendation to approve or deny funding—and the specific amount of funding if the recommendation is for approval—to the Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Management Advisory Committee (SCRFMAC). During its meeting, the SCRFMAC votes on its funding recommendations; this is then passed along to the Planning, Resources, Agriculture, and Extension Committee (PRAECOM) of the Sheboygan County Board. This committee, which oversees the Planning & Conservation Department, ultimately votes on the final funding allocation at one of its regular meetings.

If a project is awarded funding, the awardee will receive a formal award letter from the Department. An agreement will be included with the letter, which also explains the exact dollar amount of funding to be awarded. Prior to the project's commencement, the applicant shall coordinate a site visit with the Department. The applicant will also be notified via a formal letter if funding has not been awarded. Awardees are encouraged to work with Department staff throughout the grant process; those that were denied funding are also encouraged to discuss ways in which the application can be improved for a better possibility of funding in the next cycle. Those awarded funding shall notify the Department when the project commences and when it is completed.

Important Dates to Remember

- May 3, 2024: Deadline to submit final application materials to the Planning & Conservation Department by 4:30 pm
- May 8, 2024: Sheboygan County Planning & Conservation staff begins technical review and scoring
- Late May/Early June 2024: Sheboygan County Recreational Facilities Management Advisory Committee reviews applications and recommends projects for funding to the PRAECOM (applicants will be notified of meeting dates so they may attend if they wish)
- June-July 2024: The PRAECOM makes its decision regarding project funding at its regular meeting

- July-August 2024: Applicants are notified whether or not their project was chosen for funding and contracts signed.

Signage

Awardees are required to post a Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund Grant sign, provided by the County, during the project development process or after the land acquisition has been completed. Grant recipients should contact the Planning & Conservation Department for up to two signs, which are provided free of charge. The signage is to be posted at the site.

Project Tracking

The Planning & Conservation Department may request annual progress reports from awardees. At the conclusion of the acquisition or project development, the awardee will be required to provide a brief report. In it, the organization's representative is to provide a short narrative describing for what the funding was used (this should be general and not item-specific), lessons learned from the project, and what benefits the Stewardship allocation provided the organization or community. The report is due 60 days after the final reimbursement to the awardee. At least two pictures taken before the project has begun and after it has been completed are also due with the report; for acquisition projects, pictures of the acquisition site are required. Staff also reserves the right to visit the site with the purpose of evaluating the project or acquisition on-site and take pictures; this information is to be used for Department reporting purposes and can be shared with the awardee upon request. Also, invoices and/or receipts for specific items or services purchased must be submitted to the Department for reimbursement. For acquisition projects, a copy of the deed and any other associated documents for which the applicant is seeking reimbursement (such as recording fees) must be submitted.

Application Checklist

The following is a list of required documents to be submitted to the Department for the completed application. **One hardcopy and a digital copy** of the entire application packet **must be delivered** to the Department by 4:30 pm on or before the due date:

Sheboygan County Planning & Conservation Department
508 New York Avenue
Sheboygan, WI 53081

For questions, contact 920-459-3062 or tyler.betry@sheboygancounty.com

- Qualifying Questions (from page 9)
- Applicant and Project Information (Attachment A)
- Budget Worksheet
 - For land acquisition projects, use Attachment B
 - For discretionary or project development proposals, use Attachment C
- Narrative Outline (Attachment D)
- Resolution (Attachment E)
 - This exact form is not required, but the form or a version of it is strongly encouraged

- 501(c)(3) letter of determination from the IRS (if the applicant is a non-profit organization)
- Letters of support
 - These are not required, but will strengthen an application
- Property information
 - Include details such as ownership, known encumbrances (i.e. deed restrictions, etc.), legal description if available, property characteristics, etc.
- Map(s)
 - Must show proposed location and boundary of project with the property highlighted
 - Additional maps will strengthen the application (orthographic, topographic, etc.)
- Copies of at least two pictures taken at the project site

Checklist for Grantees of Real Estate

This checklist includes information required if the applicant is intending to acquire real estate (whether via fee title, easement, or another form of ownership).

- Property data
 - Name of current property owner
 - Location (including legal description, if possible)
 - Description of current conditions of the property
 - Encumbrances (to the best knowledge of the applicant, and can include deed restrictions, easements, etc.)
 - Existing improvements (such as buildings or trails)
- Management plan
 - If the project applicant will retain title or hold an easement to the property, a plan should be prepared for the long-term management and oversight of that property. This plan should include an indication of the ability of the applicant to oversee management and oversight responsibilities, its experience with management and enforcement, and should specify any endowment that has been established for the long-term management of the property or easement enforcement.
- DNR Environmental Hazards Assessment Form (Form #1800-001) or Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
- Letter of interest OR option to purchase OR offer to purchase from landowner
- Real estate appraisal
 - Appraisals for approved projects must be submitted prior to the final distribution of Stewardship Grant funds. Appraisals should comply with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice, the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition, and the statutory rules governing the determination of just compensation (Chapter 32 Wis. Stats.). A copy of the technical bulletin Real Estate Appraisal Guidelines, prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, is available from the Planning & Conservation Department upon request. In addition, the Department can provide applicants with a listing of appraisers with experience in appraising conservation lands. Please contact the Department if there are extenuating circumstances in receiving the appraisal by the deadline for submittal of the application.
- Title insurance policy
- Deed or easement documentation

To view the Sheboygan County Outdoor Recreation & Open Space Plan, visit sheboygancounty.com and navigate to the Planning & Conservation Department's page.

Qualifying Questions

Proposals not qualifying in this section will not move forward in the grant selection process.

Applicant:

Municipality/organization: _____

- 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
- Town, Village, or City in Sheboygan County
- Other governmental agency

In what manner is this project consistent with the Sheboygan County Outdoor Recreation & Open Space Plan?

- Project has been identified in the Plan and its boundaries are entirely within the Plan
- Project has partially been identified and/or buffers a project identified in the Plan
- Project fits the intent of one or more of the goals of the Plan
- This project is not identified in the Plan, but is identified in the following local, state, or federal plan: _____

Project applies to which of the following categories:

- Project development
- Real estate acquisition
- Discretionary/Planning

(explain): _____

Please complete this form and attach to the front of the application packet.

Attachment A - Applicant and Project Information

Applicant Information

Municipality / organization _____

Contact person / title _____

Address _____

City, state, zip code _____

Phone number _____

Fax number _____

Email _____

Organization website _____

Project Information

Project location:	Township	Range	1/4 1/4	Section
Project type:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Project development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Property acquisition (fee title)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Property acquisition (easement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discretionary
Total project cost (if project development or discretionary):	\$ <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>			
Total purchase price (if land acquisition):	\$ <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>			
Total grant request (up to 50% of total project cost):	\$ <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>			
Ultimate title or easement holder (if land acquisition): _____				
Brief project description: _____ _____ _____				

I certify that the information in this application and its supporting materials are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Name / Title

Signature

Date

Attachment B – Budget Worksheet for Land Acquisition Projects

1. Purchase price \$ _____

2. Associated transaction costs

 Appraisal(s) \$ _____

 Survey \$ _____

 Title insurance \$ _____

 Recording fees \$ _____

 Relocation payments \$ _____

 Historical or cultural assessments \$ _____

 Environmental inspection \$ _____

3. Estimated total acquisition costs (line 1 + line 2) \$ _____

4. Matching grant fund(s)

 Pending \$ _____

 Committed \$ _____

 Applied for \$ _____

Total of matching fund(s) \$ _____

5. Appraised value of land to be acquired \$ _____

6. Stewardship Grant funding request (50% of line 3) \$ _____

List sources and associated values of any matching grant funds (from Line 5):

Source:	Amount:
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____

Note: Stewardship Grant funds granted for acquisition are based on the appraised value of the property unless the purchase price is lower. If the purchase price is higher than the appraised value, a 2/3 vote of the present Committee members will be required to approve funding.

Attachment D – Narrative Outline

All Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund Grant proposals **must include** a stand-alone narrative that includes a summary describing how the proposal is consistent with the Sheboygan County Outdoor Recreation & Open Space Plan and other relevant plans. Applicants can refer to the Rating & Ranking Guidelines and Forms, beginning on page 15, for guidance. The form of the narrative can follow the factors as they are outlined in the Rating and Ranking Forms specifically (see below for guidance); the applicant is welcome to write independently and without the guidance of the Forms, although the narrative must be presented in a complete, structured format.

The narrative should not exceed 5 pages.

A clear, concise narrative will improve the applicant’s probability of being awarded a Stewardship Fund grant. Proposals can also include additional documentation that supports and enhances the narrative.

Form A (all project types)

Introduction
 Natural resources: water
 Natural resources: land
 Community cooperation
 Density standards

Form B (project development)

Introduction
 Planning factors
 Recreation
 Management factors
 Economic factors
 Cooperative factors

Form C (land acquisition)

Introduction
 Project availability
 Economic factors
 Management factors
 Planning factors
 Natural resources factors
 Cooperative factors
 Recreation

Sheboygan County Planning & Conservation Department staff is not responsible for researching various local, State, and/or Federal plans in which the project may be identified. It is the responsibility of the applicant to include this information in the proposal in order to receive points for those items.

If you would like a copy of a past successful Stewardship Fund Grant application, please contact 920-459-3062 or tyler.betry@sheboygancounty.com.

Attachment E – Sample Resolution

Requesting a Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund Grant

BE IT RESOLVED, that the _____
(Board of Directors or other authorized governing unit)

of the _____
(name of municipality / organization)

headquartered at _____

HEREBY AUTHORIZES _____
(name and title)

to act on its behalf to submit an application for financial assistance to the County of Sheboygan under the Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund Grant Program for the acquisition of property or for other qualified conservation and recreation project purposes described below; to sign documents; and to take action necessary to undertake, direct, and complete an approved Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund Grant project:

(description of grant proposal project)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE _____
(name of municipality / organization)

recognizes and acknowledges the long-term ownership and management responsibilities (when applicable) associated with this Sheboygan County Stewardship Fund Grant Program, and will meet its obligations under the Stewardship Grant Agreement for the project.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

Authorized signature _____

Printed or typed name _____

Title _____

Date _____