

FAQs

Monmouth County Municipal Open Space Grant Program

The Municipal Open Space Grant Program is a program of the Monmouth County Commissioners. The Monmouth County Park System administers the program on behalf of the Commissioners. This Frequently Asked Questions Sheet has been prepared to answer basic questions about the program.

Who and what are eligible for program funding?

Monmouth County municipalities are the only eligible applicants. The governing body must adopt a resolution authorizing the application. Municipalities may submit only one application per funding cycle. Both acquisition and development projects for park, recreation and open space purposes are eligible.

How much money is available?

The Commissioners have allocated a total of \$2 million per year for the grant program. Monmouth County will fund up to 50% of eligible project costs. In State-designated Urban Aid Communities, the County will increase its maximum share to 75%. County funding is limited to \$250,000 per project.

What costs are eligible?

Acquisition funding will cover the purchase price of the title in fee-simple interest for land and structures, or the purchase price of public access easements for land. For development projects, the direct cost of facility construction, demolition, renovation, and/or stabilization are eligible. No indirect or soft costs are eligible including, but not limited to, professional and in-kind services. Any costs incurred prior to the filing of the application are considered ineligible; the issuance of a purchase order or the award of a contract constitutes the incurrence of costs.

What is the application and funding cycle?

The round of funding is formally announced each summer through an announcement to Municipal Mayors, Administrators and Clerks. The annual filing deadline for the round is in September. One hard copy of the application containing the required original documents as detailed in the application, along with an electronic copy should be submitted by the deadline. The hard copy must be postmarked or delivered to the Acquisition and Design Office of the Monmouth County Park System at Thompson Park in Lincroft on or before the deadline.

The deadline for 2021 is 4:00 pm on Thursday, September 16.

Applications are accepted throughout the year and are reviewed for completeness upon receipt. Formal evaluation takes place annually, after the deadline for the round. Incomplete applications and those received after the filing deadline may be considered for the next funding cycle.

How are projects selected for funding?

This is a competitive grant program. All applications are reviewed for conformance with the eligibility requirements and the project evaluation criteria (see the Program Manual for details). A complete, well-written and well-organized application that is responsive to the project evaluation criteria and application requirements will be more likely to receive funding. In accordance with established program priorities, land acquisition projects will generally be favored over development projects, applications for projects that diversify or expand recreation opportunities will be favored over applications that replace aged or substandard facilities or address issues of maintenance, and additional priority will be given to State-designated Urban Aid Communities.

What are the requirements for a public hearing?

A public hearing on the grant application must be held within a twelve (12) month period prior to filing of the application. Notice of the hearing must be published as a legal notice or display advertisement at least ten (10) days prior to the hearing in a newspaper providing local circulation in the municipality in which the project is located. The notice must state the time, place and purpose of the hearing and identify the project by name, street address, block and lot. An affidavit that the notice was published and a certified copy of the minutes from the public

hearing must be included with the application for it to be considered complete and eligible for funding in the current funding cycle.

Who should the municipality name as its municipal contact person?

All program correspondence and communication will be directed to the municipal contact person designated in the Municipal Resolution authorizing the application. For ease of communications and continuity over the life of the project, it is recommended that a responsible full-time employee of the municipality available during regular business hours in the municipal offices be named as the municipal contact person, rather than a consultant or appointed or elected official.

How soon must a town complete its project after the award of funding?

Once the project is selected for funding, the municipality has six months to execute a grant agreement with the County. The municipality must obtain the services of an environmental consultant and conduct a Preliminary Assessment and Site Inspection (PASI) of the property to identify any areas of concern before the grant agreement can be executed. The project must be completed within thirty months of the application selection.

Can the project scope change after the application is selected for funding?

It is the philosophy of the County's program that the grant is funding a portion of a total project, whose scope is described in the grant agreement based on plans, cost estimates, and other statements included in the grant application. The program procedures provide for requests for minor changes in scope (see the Program Manual for details). No major changes are permitted and all changes must be approved in advance in writing. Changes that negatively impact the fundamental merits of the project that resulted in its selection for funding will not be approved. Unauthorized changes may result in the loss of all or a portion of the County funding.

Can the project be developed in phases?

Municipalities have funded separate phases of park development projects under the grant program. Applicants should consider phasing larger projects, in order to complete an initial phase under one round of grants and seeking additional funding for subsequent phases under subsequent rounds. Project phasing must be proposed with the initial project proposal and subsequent grant applications are not guaranteed funding in subsequent rounds.

What are the most common problems with applications?

- Missing information
- Failure to follow the application checklist
- Application narrative does not follow prescribed outline
- Inclusion of ineligible costs
- Faulty public notice or hearing process
- Property not on or eligible for the State's Recreation and Open Space Inventory or ROSI
- Vague or unrealistic project timetable or budget
- Inconsistencies between the application cover page, application narrative, project budget, and the authorizing resolution
- Authorizing resolution does not follow the form provided
- Hearing not conducted prior to filing
- Less than whole park identified as project site.

How can I get more information?

Questions and correspondence regarding the Monmouth County Municipal Open Space Grant Program should be addressed to the Monmouth County Park System, Acquisition and Design Office, Attn: Municipal Open Space Program, 805 Newman Springs Road, Lincroft, NJ 07738, by telephone at 732-842-4000, Ext. 4472 or by e-mail to municipal.grants@monmouthcountyparks.com. Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the Program Administrator before beginning the application process; pre-application meetings can be scheduled.

Current information regarding the program, including a copy of the Program Policies and Procedures Manual, is posted on the Monmouth County Park System website, www.monmouthcountyparks.com, under the heading Municipal Open Space Grant Program.