



Local Recreation Improvement Grant Guidelines

Fiscal Year 2024

**State of New Jersey
Philip D. Murphy, Governor**

**Department of Community Affairs
Jacquelyn A. Suárez, Acting Commissioner**

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Local Recreation Improvement Grant is a competitive grant that supports improvement and repair of public recreation facilities including local parks, municipal recreation centers, and local stadiums. Ensuring public access to community facilities is imperative since access to outdoor recreation and community resources is critical for mental and physical health, particularly for those residents with limited or no access to quality outdoor space or private recreational opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this need, and the Local Recreation Improvement Grant aims to address equity considerations by meeting the needs of communities that have been placed under substantial stress due to the lack of quality recreational facilities and spaces. The Local Recreation Improvement Grant will allocate funds to update facilities and recreational spaces to meet this statewide need.

Local Recreation Improvement Grant funds will be allocated to each grant recipient to help cover costs associated with updating community centers, playgrounds, pools, fields, walking or bicycle trails, rail trails, multi-sport courts, and recreational facilities; project development professional services costs; equipment costs including playground and recreation facilities equipment; and environmental remediation costs required to prepare recreation sites for use.

The Local Recreation Improvement Grant (LRIG) exists to:

- Fund improvements to recreational facilities
- Provide quality outdoor recreational space to underserved communities, particularly in this time of heightened need
- Assist local units in achieving unmet recreational obligations

The grant review process will prioritize communities with a demonstrated need and commitment to enhancing recreational services. Communities that rank highest as mostly distressed within their respective county and/or have underserved populations and/or unmet recreational improvement needs will be prioritized.

Funds can support a variety of local government recreational improvement activities including, but not limited to:

- Updating community centers, playgrounds, pools, fields, walking or bicycle trails, rail trails, multi-sport courts, and recreational facilities.
- Professional services costs (example: engineering and architectural costs).
- Equipment (example: cost of playgrounds or bleachers for stadiums or community theatres).
- Remediation costs associated with preparing recreation sites for use.
- Other directly related costs.

All costs must be articulated in the grant budget proposal and approved by DLGS.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

New Jersey counties, municipalities, and school districts are eligible to apply.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To qualify for Local Recreation Improvement Grant funding, each eligible applicant must:

- Describe the intended use of grant funding for improvement or repair of a specific local recreation site and identify any previously encountered obstacles to repair or improve.
- Demonstrate the applicant's capacity to complete the proposed project and provide project management and oversight for all activities and fiscal operations.
- List key personnel and/or the outside consultant that will be managing the grant funds and proposed project.
- Provide a cost breakdown to allow DLGS to prioritize the costs and consider partial funding.
- Submit a governing body resolution acknowledging and approving any grant application and the proposed plan or design for the recreation space or community facility for which funding is sought. A sample resolution can be found on the DLGS website at: <https://www.nj.gov/dca/dlgs/programs/lriggrants.shtml>.
- Certify that the property where improvements will be made is owned by the county, municipality, or school district.

FUNDING AVAILABLE

The State's FY2024 budget appropriated \$25 million for the Local Recreation Improvement Grant to support improvements and repairs to public recreation facilities. The Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) within the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will administer the Local Recreation Improvement Grant awards, which may be adjusted or capped based upon the number of viable applications submitted. A recommended maximum award of \$100,000 shall govern; however, awards in excess of the cap may be authorized, if warranted, and depending upon program demand. A LRIG may supplement new and existing projects, but funding duplication is not permitted and cannot supplant allocated grant funding from other sources. Priority will be given to unfunded projects and those that include a local match component.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must submit applications utilizing the NJDCA SAGE Portal. Each application submitted to DLGS shall include a description of the intended use of grant funding for the approved local recreation improvement project; demonstrate the applicant's capacity to complete the proposed project and provide project management and oversight for all activities and fiscal operations; and list key personnel that will be managing the grant funds and/or proposed project, including a grant coordinator, administrator, or other primary contact.

The following forms must be submitted with the Local Recreation Improvement Grant:

- a. Grant application
- b. Governing body resolution
- c. Project narrative
- d. Detailed proposed project budget
- e. Letter certifying that the applicant maintains ownership of property where improvements are being made.

Further information, including any required documents, will be posted at:

<https://www.nj.gov/dca/dlgs/programs/lriggrants.shtml>

NJDCA SAGE PORTAL

All applications must be submitted through the NJDCA SAGE Portal located at:
<https://dcasage.intelligrants.com/portal.asp>.

****All applicants are to ensure that their SAGE Agency information contains up-to-date information including all email contacts of personnel responsible for administering the grant.**

NJSTART E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

Applicants who do not have a NJ State-issued Vendor ID number are required to register in the NJSTART E-Procurement system located at: <https://www.njstart.gov/bsol/> and provide banking information for electronic receipt of grant funds. For assistance, please contact:
njstartagency.support@treas.nj.gov.

****The NJ State-issued Vendor ID number is required to be on your SAGE Agency Profile.**

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

DLGS must be in receipt of one electronic copy of the completed application in SAGE by 5:00 P.M. EST on **February 27, 2024**, for the applicant(s) to be eligible for grant funding.

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. Applications not submitted on or before 5:00 P.M. EST on **February 27, 2024**, will be rejected.

GRANT REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

DLGS will evaluate all applications. Grant applications will be ranked by distressed community ranking, financial need, feasibility, local unit match commitment, and scope of impact.

Grant application decisions are final and not subject to appeal.

APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

Applications will be scored based on the following criteria, on a scale of 100 points:

1. Scope of Community Impact (up to 30 points).

- a. Demonstrated need for project
 - b. Degree of transformation
 - c. Projected attendance/use of facility
2. Quality and Feasibility of Work Plan (up to 20 points).
 - a. Quality
 - b. Feasibility
 - c. Expense eligibility
3. Demonstration of Applicant Commitment to Recreation (up to 20 points).
 - a. Local Match
 - b. Existing and forward-looking plan for recreational opportunity creation and maintenance
4. Ranking Within County (up to 30 points)
 - a. Distressed City Ranking within County
 - Applications for LRIG funding must be consistent with the policies and priorities of any relevant State agency which has jurisdiction or supervisory responsibility over the project site or function (e.g. Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Education). Applications for grants may be reviewed in part by, and are subject to the comments of, such agencies.
 - Funds will be awarded to grantees only if they are in good standing and in compliance with all programs, statutory, and regulatory requirements.
 - Recipients must use funds awarded to support costs associated with the authorized project activities.

GRANT FUNDING PROCESS

All awards are subject to the continuing availability of appropriated funds.

Upon completion of grant review and award notification, DLGS will enter into an agreement with applicants approved for funding. Following execution of the agreement, the grantee can seek reimbursement of eligible costs, provided that all award conditions have been satisfied.

Grantees shall maintain and retain accounting and other grant-related records and information for the duration of the project funded by the grant, as required by applicable state and local laws and regulations, for no less than two (2) calendar years.

Such records shall be subject to examination, audit, and inspection by DLGS and/or any other federal, state, or local agency that has jurisdictional authority.

DLGS reserves the right to rescind or reclaim funds, withhold future grant funding and/or disqualify a grantee from participating in future grant awards if any condition of the grant program is unmet, including if grant funds received by the grantee are not properly accounted for, or if the grantee fails to meet reporting or certification requirements.

Following execution of the agreement, the grantee is permitted to move funds between authorized categories within these guidelines for eligible items without requesting prior approval from the Division.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Local Recreation Improvement Grants are reimbursement based. There will be no advance payment of grant funds. Reimbursements may be made semi-annually when semi-annually progress reports are due. Eligible costs are reimbursed to the grantee upon submission of evidence of payment by the grantee.

Requests for payment must be made through NJDCA SAGE portal by submitting a Financial Status Report (FSR), Expense Report, Payment Voucher, and Project Progress Report. The recipient must also attach copies of fully executed purchase orders and copies of cancelled checks

(both sides) documenting the expenditure of funds for which reimbursement is sought. Requests for reimbursement can be submitted at any time but cannot be more than once every six months.

Funding for reimbursement requests received more than two (2) months after the close of the fiscal year during which the costs were incurred cannot be guaranteed.

Payment will be made via electronic transfer of funds to the account and financial institution identified by the grantee. Grant applications require the applicant's state Vendor ID number.

GRANT CLOSEOUT PROCESS

At the conclusion of the approved project period, which may coincide with the date upon which the grantee requests final payment but shall not be before the completion of the recreation improvement project for which funding was provided, except as otherwise provided in writing by DLGS, the recipients must submit a final report documenting that all administrative responsibilities and required activities under the grant agreement have been satisfactorily completed.

ASSISTANCE

Applicants may contact Stacey Taylor-Burnell at Stacey.Taylor-Burnell@dca.nj.gov to discuss program and project needs up to submission of the application.