



History and Purpose

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program is a federal program authorized by Congress. LWCF's purpose is to acquire federal lands known as the Federal side. The other purpose is to provide grants to states and local governments to acquire lands and develop outdoor recreation facilities. The program was reauthorized in the Dingell Act of March 2019 and received full and permanent funding in August 2020 in the Great American Outdoors Act.

Allocation to Local Governments for the 2026-2027 Funding Cycle

Grant funds are derived from two sources: annual disbursements from the Outer Continental Shelf mineral receipts (Great American Outdoors Act, Public Law 116-152) and a mandatory set aside from other qualified offshore revenues pursuant to the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act also known as GOMESA. The U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service (NPS) allocates the funds through state agencies as a grants program to state and local governments. The LWCF Program, first authorized in 1965, has resulted in Georgia receiving an accumulative total of over \$125 million in matching funds. In order to efficiently administer the grant funds, LWCF is offered on a bi-annual grant cycle. Georgia's two years' worth of allocations to award in the **2026-2027 funding cycle is estimated to be \$18 million.**

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include incorporated municipalities, counties, and legally constituted recreation authorities and recreation commissions. Applicants must have an approved Comprehensive Plan as authorized by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 (Growth Strategies Law). Additionally, applicants must have a verified Service Delivery Strategy as mandated by House Bill 489 (The Service Delivery Strategy Law, O.C.G.A 36-70-20 et seq.). The Georgia Department of Community Affairs provides information to state agencies regarding the eligibility status of local governments to participate in state-administered financial assistance programs. Local governments need not apply if they are not eligible to receive state and federal grants under the Georgia Planning Act and the Growth Strategies Law.

Division of Available Funds

DNR reserves the right to set minimum scores. If there is an insufficient number of high-scoring-high caliber projects, DNR may delay grant awards and solicit new grant applications/proposals the following year.

The minimum grant request is set at **\$25,000** (total project cost = \$50,000).

The maximum grant request is set at **\$750,000** (total project cost of \$1,500,000).

Competitive Pre-applications

SCORP 2022-2026 is the guiding document for funding projects from the LWCF and can be found at <https://gadnr.org/scorp>. Statewide issues were gathered and new criteria were developed to evaluate projects. These criteria are a major component of the pre-application. Funds will be allocated to the highest-ranking projects based on scores derived from the evaluation criteria. Only those local governments with the highest scoring pre-applications will be recommended for funding and asked to submit a second-level application for processing through NPS.

A pre-application will contain the following items:

- Evaluation criteria answers and documentation to support
- Narrative description of the project
- Budget / Cost estimate
- Transmittal letter

Resolution
Survey boundary and/or legal description of the project area
Location map showing surrounding roads and landmarks
Preliminary site map

Formal Applications

Local governments receiving the highest-ranking scores on their pre-applications will be asked to submit second-level applications. A workshop for the second-level application process will be conducted.

In conjunction with the pre-application documents, the formal application will require the following documents:

- Application and Revision Form
- Proof of Ownership
- DCA State Historic Preservation Office Review
- US Fish and Wildlife Review
- Environmental Assessment (Pending on Georgia LWCF/NPS review of project)

Target Timeline

May 1, 2026

Funding cycle for 2026-2027 is announced to all municipalities, counties, parks and recreation departments, and regional commissions using the mailing list of the following: Georgia Municipal Association, Associated County Commissions of Georgia, and the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association.

August 3, 2026

Pre-application portal open

October 2, 2026 (11:59 PM)

Pre-application portal closes

October 2026 – November 2026

Grants Unit reviews pre-applications for priority rankings based on evaluation criteria. Selected applications announced to the DNR Board.

December 2027

Notifications of selection and request for a second level application emailed and mailed to local governments who received the highest. Formal application workshops scheduled.

May 2027

Federal/formal applications due to NPS. Grants personnel will coordinate and correspond as needed with each successful applicant to determine if additional documents are needed based on any NPS feedback received.

Fall 2027

NPS formally approves grant.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

These are requirements that an applicant must meet in order to be considered for an LWCF grant. There are no points attached to these requirements. Only one of two situations may occur: (1) Yes, the applicant meets all minimum requirements and is therefore eligible for consideration of funding based on how the proposed project scores under the Evaluation Criteria; or (2) No, the applicant does not meet all the minimum requirements and is therefore ineligible for funding under the LWCF program.

Any questions concerning the minimum requirements should be addressed to the LWCF Grant staff.

Equal Opportunity:

Applicants must comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended; and all other State and Federal laws and regulations on nondiscrimination. This means that no person shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age or disability for recreation programs and facilities sponsored by applicants.

Legally Constituted Entity

The applicant must be a legally constituted governmental entity. This includes a municipality, county or a legally constituted recreation commission or recreation authority with legislative sanction.

State and Federal Laws / Regulations

Applicants must comply with existing laws and regulations for receiving and expending state and federal grant money including, but not limited to, public notices, Georgia Planning Act, bidding and purchasing requirements, Uniform Relocation Act, Architectural Barriers (ADAAG) regulations, Energy Standards, laws and regulations regarding Historic Preservation and archaeological concerns, Georgia Environmental Policies Act, and National Environmental Policies Act, and related environmental rules and regulations. Applicants must not have been debarred, suspended, or otherwise ruled ineligible to participate in federal programs by any federal department or agency.

Grants Administration & Maintenance

Applicants must have demonstrated a capability for administering grants and the operation & maintenance of public recreation areas and facilities. An applicant is not ruled out if a grant has never been awarded to that local government. It is possible that applicants who have received previous recreation grants and have ongoing or stagnant compliance issue(s) may be deemed ineligible for assistance. Contact LWCF Grant staff for clarification or questions.

Fifty Percent Match

Applicants must document the availability of the required fifty percent (50%) match for each application. This requires that each applicant submit a resolution passed by its governing authority that, if a grant were awarded, the required match would be forthcoming.

User Fees

Applicants must agree that any and all user fees either resulting from this application or as part of the applicant's system of public parks and recreations areas cannot be so large as to be exclusionary.

Eligibility (per GA Planning Act of 1989 & Service Delivery Strategy Law)

Applicants must be in compliance with these planning requirements. Local Governments whose eligibility cannot be verified by the Department of Community Affairs shall be deemed ineligible to apply.