



Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program

Request for Proposals

Application Deadline: March 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

Contract period: June 2026-September 30, 2026

Funded by:

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

Administered by:

Michigan State University and the
Huron River Watershed Council



Funding Source and Authority

The information contained in this Request for Proposals (RFP) is based on Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and Michigan State University (MSU) guidance and administrative rules.

This RFP is for the Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program (VSCP) grants offered by the EGLE's Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) volunteer water quality program. A total of \$25,000 will be available for VSCP grants in fiscal year 2026.

Funding for VSCP grants originates from fees collected from the sale of the state's [Water Quality Protection license plates](#) (2000 PA 74).

MiCorps Contact for VSCP:

Dr. Paul Steen
Huron River Watershed Council
Phone: 734-519-0449
E-mail: psteen@hrwc.org

Description of MiCorps VSCP Grants

MiCorps VSCP provides small grants to local units of government to help implement trash cleanup of rivers, streams, and creeks to improve the waters in Michigan. Local units of government may partner with nonprofit organizations or other volunteer groups to carry out the cleanups.

- Successful applicants will be required to enter into a project contract with Michigan State University (MSU), who is administering the MiCorps Program on behalf of EGLE. A project contract consists of standard "boilerplate" language, the applicant's project description and budget information. Failure of a successful applicant to accept these obligations will result in cancellation of the grant award. The Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) has been contracted by MSU to lead the project management of these grants. Dr. Paul Steen, HRWC, will serve as the Project Officer for the grants awarded under this program, with oversight and fiduciary responsibility provided by the MSU.
- Grant request amounts may range from \$500 to \$5,000.
- A 25% local match of the total project cost is required. This may be comprised of volunteer labor on the day of the event, in-kind services, or materials.
- MSU may award grants for amounts other than those requested and/or request changes to, or clarification of, the proposed work plan.
- Grant period will begin after contract execution (likely in June 2026) and run until September 30, 2026. Final fact sheet and budget must be submitted by October 31, 2026.
- Grant funds are disbursed on a cost-reimbursement basis and will only be disbursed after satisfactory completion of the cleanup project and final reporting requirements. No start-up funds or requests for funding advances will be granted.
- Staffing costs can be covered by the grant, up to 30% of the total expenses of the grant.

Eligible Entities and Activities

Volunteer stream cleanup activities are the removal of non-natural trash from a river, stream, or creek, along the banks, and generally within fifty feet of the water's edge.

To be eligible, applicants must meet all the following:

- Local units of government defined as any of the following:
 -
 - County, city, village, or township or an agency thereof a
 - e.g.: county drain commissioner's office; a conservation district established under Part 93, Soil Conservation Districts, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA), 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.9301 to 324.9313; a watershed council established under Part 311 of the NREPA, MCL 324.31101 to 324.31119; a local health department as defined in Section 1105 of the Public Health Code, 1978 PA 368, MCL 333.1105; a community college or junior college established pursuant to Section 7 of Article VIII of the State Constitution of 1963; or a four-year institution of higher education, public or private, located in this state; or an authority or other public body created by or pursuant to state law [MCL 257.811(i)(4), revised January 1, 2007].
 - Local units of government may partner with nonprofit or other volunteer organizations to carry out the cleanups.
- **Supply proof of a successful financial audit** of the applicant organization conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards for a period ending within the two years immediately preceding the RFP due date, as demonstrated by an Independent Auditor's Report signed by a Certified Public Accountant from a Comprehensive Annual Report. Note: The audit date (on or after February 27, 2024) is based on the audit period and not the date of the audit or the audit letter.
 - To make sure you are submitting the proper documentation, be aware that these letters typically state something akin to the following accounting language: "In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of *Org Name* as of *Date*, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America."
- **Must not have had** a grant revoked or terminated or demonstrated an inability to manage a grant or meet the obligations in a project contract within the 24-month period immediately preceding the application.
- Entities that do not meet the requirements above may partner with an eligible local unit of government (defined above) that will serve as the primary applicant and fiduciary agent for the grant. Audit costs may also be eligible for an EGLE Watershed Council grant; more information can be found at [Nonpoint Source Program \(michigan.gov\)](http://Nonpoint Source Program (michigan.gov))

Ineligible Entities and Activities

- Entities who do not meet the specific eligibility criteria listed above will not be considered for a grant. Additionally, individuals, for-profit organizations, and federal and state agencies are not eligible to receive funding under this grant program.

- Cleanup of lakes or other bodies of water not characterized as a river, stream, or creek will not be funded (including lakes hydrologically classified as “drowned river mouths”).
- Applications proposing trash removal beyond the top of the bank or in any upland or flood plain (e.g., public park areas, access trails) will not be funded.
- Stream cleanup activities are not to involve the removal or repositioning of naturally occurring, in-stream or riparian woody debris. Applications proposing to remove or reposition naturally occurring debris will not be funded.

Other volunteer activities such as stream or lake monitoring, restoration efforts (e.g., seeding of grass, native plantings), invasive plant removal, trail maintenance, beach cleanups, and strictly educational activities will not be funded. Additional resources for environmental education can be found at [EGLE Classroom \(michigan.gov\)](https://egle.michigan.gov/Classroom).

Submittal Deadline and Instructions

- All grant applicants will email their application materials as email attachments to Dr. Paul Steen, psteen@hrwc.org, by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 6, 2026**.
- Attach one PDF including the narrative and one excel file including the budget. Instructions are below.

Narrative Submission

Submit one compiled PDF containing:

A. Quick facts (Front page)

- 1) Project Name: The name of the proposed project being submitted for funding.
- 2) Project Type: Write “Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program” (to distinguish this from other offered MiCorps grants)
- 3) Local unit of government: The government/organization applying for funding.
- 4) Contact Person: The person in the organization who can be contacted by MiCorps staff for any needed information.
- 5) Contact information: Email, mailing address, and telephone number.
- 6) County: Primary county or counties in which the project will be conducted.
- 7) Waterbody: Name of the primary stream(s) affected by the project.
- 8) Watershed Impacted by Project: The watershed in which the project will be conducted.
- 9) Grant Total Requested: The amount of money you are requesting in this proposal.
- 10) Local Match Proposed: The amount of proposed local match.
- 11) Person with Grant Acceptance Authority and Their Title. This is the person who will accept responsibility for the terms and conditions of the contract. This may be the contact person, or it may be someone else in the organization, or a board member.

B. Project Description (two pages maximum)

- Describe your project goals (what you hope to achieve) and objectives (measurable, if possible). At a minimum, describe the body of water to be cleaned including its general location (county and watershed), how many stream miles you expect to clean,

how many volunteers you expect to recruit for the day of the event (or for each event, as applicable), and why a clean-up is important in this area.

- Repeat grant recipients should describe what new challenges or goals they wish to address with a cleanup event in 2026.
- List key activities that will take place and the estimated dates from the contract period of approximately June 1, 2026 through September 30, 2026. The following items must be included:
 - Proposed date(s) for the cleanup event(s)
 - Submission of a project fact sheet using a given template, and financial spreadsheet at the end of the project. Templates are linked at the bottom of this document. (Due by October 31, 2026)
- Describe how the project will be evaluated, including how accomplishments will be defined and measured. Additional information could include reporting on cubic yards of debris removed, weight of debris removed, unusual items removed from the stream, stream miles cleaned, number of volunteers, etc.

C. Organization Information (one page maximum)

- Briefly describe how your organization meets the specific grant eligibility criteria described on pages 2-3.
- State the organization's mission, goals, relevant programs, activities, and accomplishments.
- Describe the relevant qualifications of key project staff and/or volunteers who will carry out and ensure the success of the project.
- If grantee is partnering with one or more volunteer organizations, describe/identify other partners in the project, their roles, and commitments.
- Describe any other sources of funding or other grants you have received that relate to this application. Be sure to include all eligible funding as match in the project budget if you anticipate using funding from other sources to support the project, and all local match must be backed by letters of commitment.

D. Audit Letter

- a. Provide a one-page letter from a Certified Public Accountant demonstrating proof of a successful financial audit within the previous two years (see page 3)

E. Letter(s) of commitment

- Include letters from partner organizations and advisors stating their role in the project and the amount and type of local match commitments. Partners letters are not needed if not referencing local match commitment.

Excel Budget Spreadsheet

Submit a project budget as an .xlsx file, using the first tab on the template given at
<https://www.micorps.net/files/08fab55d-aeb7-4043-8c92-18445284820a-srn53k.xlsx>

Fill out the first tab only. The remaining tabs are for quarterly reports if you receive the grant.

1. Staffing

- List each staff person, their title or role, the estimated number of hours each person will work on the project, and their hourly rate. Place the costs for each staff person (number of hours times hourly rate) in column B.
- Each staff person listed under staffing cost should also be included in the work plan.
- Staffing costs for staff in agencies other than the grant recipient should be budgeted under Contractual.

2. Fringe Benefits

This can include insurance, FICA, federal, state, and local taxes, vacation and sick time, and workers compensation.

- List each staff person and their fringe rate. Multiply the rate by their Staffing budget to get the Fringe Benefit cost.
- MiCorps reserves the right to request that applicants supply information indicating how their fringe benefits were calculated.

3. Contractual

- Contractual costs are services provided by staff or agencies other than the grant recipient. Any services not provided by the grant recipient should be listed here. If any part of the work in the grant is to be contracted, include an explanation somewhere in the submission.

4. Project Equipment, Supplies, and Materials.

- Grant funds may be used to purchase equipment, supplies, and materials needed to complete the cleanup, advertising, volunteer appreciation (e.g., food, t-shirts, bags), tipping fees and tire disposal.
- Equipment is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year (e.g., waders, shovels, hoes, rope).
- The purchase of equipment less than or equal to \$1,000 per unit is allowed using grant funds. Equipment greater than \$1,000 per unit cannot be purchased using grant funds. Itemize equipment on the budget form and explain any cost that may appear out of the ordinary. Computers and other electronic equipment (e.g., digital cameras, GPS, cell phones) are not eligible for grant funds.
- Supplies and materials: This may include costs for printing, postage, advertising, and event promotion, “expendable” materials that will be used for cleanup purposes (e.g., trash bags, gloves, other items having a useful life of less than one year), tipping fees, or other disposal-related needs, and volunteer appreciation items (e.g., t-shirts, bags, buttons, refreshments). Explain any cost that may appear out of the ordinary.
- Project funds may be used to cover the cost of tire removal and disposal/recycling associated with the cleanup event. If disposal costs are being contracted out (e.g., tipping fees, rental of heavy equipment), these items should be listed under Contractual Services rather than in this section.

5. Travel Costs.

- Mileage reimbursement rate is based on IRS guidance and is currently \$0.725/mile.

- Travel costs shall include only those directly related to carrying out the project. Conferences and training fees will not be funded. Lodging and meals for staff will have to be defended in the narrative as they typically will not be needed for stream clean-ups.

6. Indirect Costs:

- Most organizations have a set indirect rate between 10-20% that covers rent, utilities, office equipment, etc. The maximum acceptable rate is 20% of the total of the other budget line items.

Volunteer Appreciation Funding

Applicants are encouraged to consider the best use of grant funds to address the objectives of the program. While volunteer appreciation items are important incentives to generate participation and enthusiasm for the cleanup events, applicants may wish to find matching funds or services to supplement grant funding for this aspect of the project. Volunteer appreciation items are not weighted as high as staff expenses or cleanup equipment during the proposal evaluation.

In total, it is acceptable to spend \$30 per volunteer on appreciation items and food; up to \$10 of this can be food or beverages. Costs in excess of this amount will not be reimbursed and should be covered through local match.

Local Match and In-Kind Donations

Local match is a financial commitment made by the grant recipient and other local partners to help implement the project. When determining the local match portion of your budget, please note the following:

- A 25% match is required of all applications and will become part of your contractual obligation if your project is selected for funding.
- In-kind services, equipment, supplies, and materials can count as match if they are donated for the purpose of carrying out the cleanup event or as volunteer appreciation items. In-kind services might include items such as advertisement fees, dumpster rental fees, tire disposal, or the use of heavy equipment during the project.
- Staff and fringe costs for leading and organizing the event can't be used for local match.
- Any items or services that would be eligible for purchase using grant funds are also eligible for use as match, if they are contributed to the project during the timeframe established by the project contract. Match cannot be earned until the starting date in your contract.
- Previously purchased items with a useful life of more than one year (e.g., canoes, waders, etc.) that are being donated for use during the project may not be listed at full value as match for this project (use the rental fee for local match, if there is one, or a value no higher than 10% of the retail price.).
- Potential cash donations or other sources of funding must be used to purchase eligible items or services in support of the project in order to qualify as match for the project.

- Volunteer labor can be included as match. As per EGLE Grant Contract Administration policy 10-001), there are three different rates for volunteer labor:
 - Unskilled laborers: The acceptable rate for these workers is the prevailing minimum wage for the State of Michigan (2026: \$13.73/hour).
 - Professionals not working in a professional capacity: The acceptable rate for these professionals is based on the national value (Independent Sector) for volunteer time (updated January 2026: \$34.79/hour).
 - Professionals, including skilled labor, working in their normal professional capacity: The acceptable rate for these professionals would be equivalent to their normal hourly rate of pay.
- Match that exceeds the 25% requirement, including items or services other than volunteer labor, and/or comes from external partners or sources outside the applicant entity will strengthen your application.
- Please note that recipients of grant awards will be required to provide documentation (e.g., invoices, receipts) for all project expenditures and match items as part of the project reporting requirements. If receipts are not available for match items, the basis for the value of the match item must be documented in writing. Please keep this in mind as you prepare your project budget.
- There is a location at the bottom of the budget for you to list your sources and amount of local match.

Grant Application Criteria

Grant applications will be reviewed, and funding awarded based on the following criteria:

- The clarity and quality of goals and objectives of the cleanup project.
- Level of volunteer commitment to carry out the project.
- Volunteer appreciation items (like t-shirts) and food are less competitive. Allocating >25% of your budget to these items makes your application distinctly less competitive and allocating >50% of your budget to these items will disqualify your application. Including these items as match is encouraged.
- Quality and quantity of local match provided; match beyond the minimum 25% requirement will strengthen the application.
- Applicant's budget request in relation to goals and objectives of the project.

Summary of Links

- Grant page, <https://www.micorps.net/streams/cleanups>
- Excel Budget Spreadsheet, <https://www.micorps.net/files/08fab55d-aeb7-4043-8c92-18445284820a-srn53k.xlsx>
- Project Fact Sheet Template for closeout, <https://www.micorps.net/files/b9c9a1a7-ef42-4c97-ad68-8c31f34ff484-f8jxdm.docx>
- EGLE Environmental Education Resources <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/public/egle-classroom>
- Selected cities for increased food reimbursement, <https://www.michigan.gov/dtmb-/media/Project/Websites/dtmb/Services/Travel/Travel-Rates-FY2026-and-High-Cost-Cities-effective-1-1-2026.pdf>