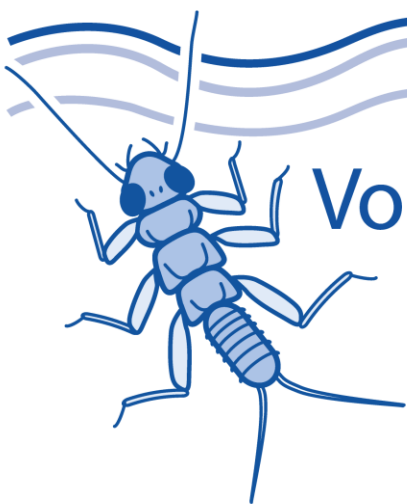# Michigan Clean Water Corps

Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program
Startup Grants
Request for Proposals

Application Deadline: March 6 2026, at 5:00 p.m.
Contract period: June 2026-June 2027

Funded by:
Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Administered by:
Michigan State University and the
Huron River Watershed Council

Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program

Michigan Streams – Ours to Protect
www.micorps.net

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 one of three Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program (VSMP) Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Survey grants offered by EGLE's Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) Program. A total of $75,000 will be available for grants in fiscal year 2026/2027, across the spectrum of available VSMP funding opportunities.

Startup Grants will comprise about$15,000 of the $75,000, with the other money spread across Implementation grants and Maintenance grants that have separate RFPs.

Up to three grants at approximately $5,000 each will be given under this MiCorps VSMP Startup Grant RFP. Grants will be announced in May 2026 with the grant period starting by June 1 and grant period ending one year later.

MiCorps Contact for VSMP:

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

Description of MiCorps VSMP Startup Grants

- Startup grants are seed money for newly forming volunteer monitoring groups that want to get involved in aquatic macroinvertebrate and stream habitat monitoring in wadable streams using MiCorps protocols (https://www.micorps.net/streams/docs)
- This is a "train the trainer" program. MiCorps staff will provide training and support to the grantees. Grantees use the information provided by MiCorps to train their own volunteers who will conduct most of the data collection work. Grantees together with volunteers identify macroinvertebrates, process the data and work to turn their data results into actions that improve and protect water quality and stream habitat.
- Startup grants support groups in learning these monitoring techniques and how to run them through volunteer monitoring events. They do not actually do monitoring and data collection except in a practice format.
- Startup grantees can spend the money to attend the MiCorps stream training and annual conferences, attend monitoring events held by other organizations, buy starter equipment, hold one pilot/mock monitoring event, and associated staff time and travel.
- There is a maximum dollar amount of $5,000 per grant award. However, the dollar amount requested should be based upon what is needed to carry out the tasks identified in the project proposal.
- Up to three grants will be awarded in each grant cycle.
- Grant funds are dispersed on a cost-reimbursement basis.
- There is no match requirement for the Start-up grants.
- Applicants may be contacted for clarification of proposed project activities, timetable, and grant amounts.
- The information provided in the grant application will not be kept confidential.
- Successful applicants will be required to enter into a project contract with Michigan State University (MSU), which is administering MiCorps on behalf of EGLE. A project contract consists of standard "boilerplate" language, the applicant's project description,

work plan/timeline, and budget information. The failure of a successful applicant to accept these obligations will result in the cancellation of the grant award. The Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) has been contracted by the Michigan State 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 MSU.

- Successful applicants are strongly encouraged to complete an application during the next available VSMP Implementation Grant cycle to implement the volunteer program plan and strategy designed during the start-up grant. The receipt of a start-up grant does not guarantee that funding will be provided for an Implementation Grant in future years.
- If you have questions about your project, you are welcome to contact Dr. Steen (contact information above) prior to submitting your application.

Eligibility

To be eligible, applicant must be one of the following:
- Federally recognized Tribe
- Local government
  - e.g. Michigan county, city, township, and village agencies
- Non-profit organization
  - e.g. 501 (c) (3); watershed and environmental action councils; universities; colleges; regional planning agencies; and incorporated not-for-profit organizations.

In addition, applicants 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.
- **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."
  - Entities that do not meet this requirement must partner with an eligible local unit of government or a nonprofit organization with a current audit 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)

Ineligible Entities and Activities

- Individuals, for-profit organizations, and federal and state agencies are not eligible to receive funding.
- River cleanups, lake monitoring, and restoration efforts activities will not be funded. There is a separate MiCorps grant opportunity for river cleanups (https://www.micorps.net/streams/cleanups) and lake monitoring is done through MiCorps Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program (https://www.micorps.net/lakes).
- Role of school programs: The MiCorps Program uses adults as the primary volunteers and does not fund projects based completely on school programs. However, you are welcome to work with schools and work with school-aged children, provided adult volunteers remain the project's focus. If you plan to work with a school, please elaborate on how this relationship will be structured in the submission. Additional resources for environmental education can be found at EGLE Classroom (michigan.gov).
- Costs associated with chemical and thermal analysis are not eligible activities in the MiCorps VSMP.

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 Monitoring Program Startup Grant" (to distinguish this from other offered MiCorps grants)
   3) Organization Name: Organization, local unit of government, or Federally recognized Tribe 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 startup grant requires $0 match, so write $0 here.
   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 max)*

1) Overview: Describe the purpose of this project, the stream quality issues you wish to address, and what you hope to achieve. Why is it important to monitor these specific rivers and streams?

2) Watershed, river, and/or site description: In which river system or watershed(s) do you plan on targeting with your monitoring plan? If possible, include the following details:

   a. Location (as specific as you can provide) and water body name(s)

   b. Past monitoring efforts conducted in this area, if any. You can view past EGLE macroinvertebrate efforts using the Story Map [Biological Monitoring of Michigan's Rivers and Streams (arcgis.com)](arcgis.com)

   c. Describe the surrounding environment (wetland, commercial, residential, agricultural, proximity to combined sewer outfalls, holding ponds, storm drains, etc.).

3) Organization Information / Partner Information: State the organization's/Tribe's mission, goals, relevant programs and accomplishments. Describe the relevant qualifications of project staff that will carry out and ensure the success of the project.

4) Volunteers and Partners: Describe how you would plan on bringing volunteers in for your monitoring program. If you already have an existing pool of volunteers, briefly describe their previous experience. If you already have an interested partner organization, describe their role.

C. Map (One page)

Include map of the area to be studied that indicates the watershed, creeks, or area to be monitored. This map does not need to be produced by your organization.

D. A Work Plan/Timeline (One page max)

List the mandatory tasks and other tasks deemed important by the applicant along with estimated dates.

The plan should be presented by task (with sub-tasks, as necessary), with an estimated percentage of time given to each task, and the approximate dates given for each task. The estimated percentage of time for all tasks should total 100%. Identify who will be responsible for carrying out each task.

All work plans must include the following mandatory tasks:

1) Send at least 1 staff member to a full day MiCorps stream monitoring training session led by MiCorps staff, in Ann Arbor (Held in June or July 2026).
2) Attend at least one active MiCorps group's macroinvertebrate monitoring event as a participant to better understand how other organizations run the event (Fall 2026).
3) Send at least one staff member to the annual MiCorps conference (Fall 2026, location/dates TBD).
4) Submit a 6-month progress report and financial statement (October 31, 2026).
5) Hold a pilot monitoring event at one sampling site, where you recruit a few volunteers to help and run through the procedures (Spring 2027).

6) Consult the EGLE biologist for your watershed (names will be provided by MiCorps) on monitoring site locations and other concerns. (By the end of the grant).
7) Submit a final report that summarizes what you learned over the past year and final financial status report, by June 30, 2027.

Optional tasks

1) Meetings with possible partners; developing interest in and recruiting future volunteers.
2) This grant does not require the development of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). Completing a QAPP is part of the Implementation grant effort. However, you can choose to use staff time to work on the QAPP if that is your wish.
3) You may spend staff time developing the proposal for next year's Implementation Grant proposal.

E. Resume or curriculum(a) vitae

Include a resume or CV for project manager and/or scientific advisor (whoever will provide the necessary ecological knowledge for the program.)

F. Audit letter (see p.2)

Provide a letter from a Certified Public Accountant demonstrating proof of a successful financial audit within the previous two years (see p. 2).

G. Letter of support (optional)

Letters from partner organizations and advisors stating their anticipated role in the project.

Budget Spreadsheet

Submit a project budget as an .xlsx file, using the first tab on the template given at
https://www.micorps.net/files/5c1ef5b2-b4ee-4508-a710-649287b823e2-3qxh6e.xlsx

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

Appropriate costs are for equipment, supplies and materials that are to be used in the macroinvertebrate/habitat monitoring program.
- Equipment is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year (e.g., microscope, nets, waders). Supplies and materials are consumable goods (e.g., ethanol, insect jars, printing costs, postage).
- The purchase of any single piece of equipment greater than $1,000 (e.g., a microscope, or computer) is not allowed using grant funds.
- You can get estimates of equipment and supplies commonly needed in the MiCorps program from the Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Equipment list, https://www.micorps.net/streams/docs
- Costs related to food and drinks for volunteers are not funded under this grant.

5. Travel Costs

Travel costs related to attending the annual stream training, the annual MiCorps Conference, and driving to related meetings and to monitoring sites are acceptable costs.
- Mileage, lodging, and meals should all be listed separately.
- Mileage costs should be shown as number of miles times mileage rate. The location of the MiCorps Conference changes year to year but historically has been somewhere in the central Lower Peninsula. If you live in the Lower Peninsula, an estimate of 150 miles each way is reasonable for these trips. If you live in the Upper Peninsula, an estimate of 250 miles each way is reasonable; more if you are in the far Western Upper Peninsula.
- Mileage reimbursement rate is based on IRS guidance and is currently $0.725/mile.
- Registration and overnight stay for the MiCorps Conference can be estimated at $200 per person. The annual stream training will not have a required overnight stay but may be needed depending on your travel time.
- Staff can be reimbursed for food while travelling, with rates set by the State of Michigan. Maximum per meal: Breakfast ($12), Lunch ($14), Dinner ($27), with more in select cities (https://www.michigan.gov/dtmb/-/media/Project/Websites/dtmb/Services/Travel/Travel-Rates-FY2026-and-High-Cost-Cities-effective-1-1-2026.pdf)

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.

Grant Application Criteria

The grants will be reviewed and awarded based on the following criteria:
- Clarity and reasonableness of project description, goals, and objectives.
- The work plan includes the required elements as described below.
- Location/watershed priority, i.e., not a repeated effort of other groups
- Useful partnerships and links to other programs and projects like Watershed Management Plans.
- Plans to continue the project beyond the grant period.
- Costs reasonable for project scope

Summary of Links

- Location of MiCorps RFPs, https://www.micorps.net/streams/grants/rfps
- Startup grant Excel Budget Spreadsheet, https://www.micorps.net/files/5c1ef5b2-b4ee-4508-a710-649287b823e2-3qxh6e.xlsx
- MiCorps Stream Monitoring Documents and Resources (equipment, procedures, etc): https://www.micorps.net/streams/docs
- MiCorps Grants Documents (financial, reporting, fact sheet templates), https://www.micorps.net/streams/grants/docs
- 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)
- EGLE Watershed Council Grants, https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/nonpoint-source
- EGLE Environmental Education Resources https://www.michigan.gov/egle/public/egle-classroom
- EGLE Story Map Biological Monitoring of Michigan's Rivers and Streams (arcgis.com)