

# Michigan Clean Water Corps

## **Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program Startup Grants Request for Proposals**

Application Deadline: March 8, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

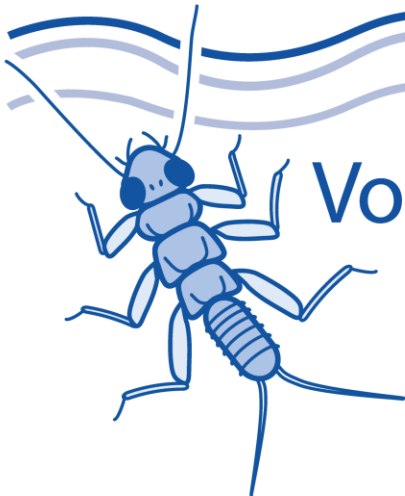
Contract period: June 2024-June 2025

Administered by

Michigan State University and the

Huron River Watershed Council for the

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy



## **Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program**

Michigan Streams – Ours to Protect  
[www.micorps.net](http://www.micorps.net)

## **Funding Source and Authority**

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is for the Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program (VSMP) Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Survey grants offered under the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy's (EGLE) Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) Program. A total of \$75,000 will be available for grants in fiscal year 2022/2024, across the spectrum of available VSMP funding opportunities. Startup Grants will comprise \$15,000 of the \$75,000, with the other money spread across Implementation grants and Maintenance grants ([see those RFPs separately for more detail](#)).

Three grants at approximately \$5,000 each will be given under this MiCorps VSMP Startup Grant. The information contained in this RFP is based on EGLE and Michigan State University (MSU) guidance and administrative rules. Grants will be announced in May 2024 with the grant period starting upon contract execution 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](mailto: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.
- 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 a 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.
- 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, entities must meet all of the following:

- Any local government or non-profit group that can supply proof of a successful financial audit and meet the other stated eligibility requirements noted below are eligible to receive grant funding. Nonprofit entities are those exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Eligible entities generally include county, city, township, and village agencies; watershed and environmental action councils; universities; regional planning agencies; and incorporated not-for-profit organizations. Federally recognized tribes are also eligible for these grants.
- 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 March 8, 2022) is based on the audit period and not the date of the audit or the audit letter.
- Entities that do not have an audit can 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 \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/nonpoint))

### **Ineligible Entities and Activities**

- Individuals, for-profit organizations, and federal and state agencies are not eligible to receive funding.
- River cleanups, lake monitoring, restoration efforts, and strictly education or school activities will not be funded. (There is a separate MiCorps grant opportunity for river cleanups, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RFP-VSCP-2024.pdf> ).
- School or classroom-based programs using students as the primary volunteer source are not eligible for grant funding. It is acceptable to have some students as volunteers but adults must be involved as well; the goal of this program is to develop long term monitoring through long term volunteers.
- Costs associated with chemical and thermal analysis are not eligible activities in the MiCorps VSMP.

## **Submittal Deadline and Instructions**

- Complete applications – including the required supporting documentation – must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 8, 2024**. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered for funding.
- All grant applicants must complete the Web Application Form and upload attachments to the MiCorps VSMP application system at: <https://micorps.net/stream-monitoring/stream-grants/>
- Once the Web Application Form and uploaded file(s) have been submitted, a confirmation e-mail will be sent to the e-mail address that was listed for the project's Contact Person in the completed Form. This will be your only notification that the Web Application Form and uploaded file have been submitted successfully.
- If you are unable to access and submit the Web Application Form, you must notify Dr. Paul Steen listed above to determine an acceptable alternative method for submitting your application materials prior to the application deadline.

## **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

## **List of Information Required for the Application**

The following items are required for all grant applications (further details given on each one below).

1. Web Application Form.
2. Project Narrative. PDF(s) and/or Document(s) containing:
  - A. Project Description (maximum two pages).
  - B. A Work Plan listing the mandatory tasks and other tasks deemed important by the applicant along with estimated dates (maximum one page).
  - C. Letter(s) of support from partner organizations and advisors stating their role in the project.
  - D. Resume or curriculum(a) vitae for project manager and/or scientific advisor (whoever will provide the necessary ecological knowledge for the program.)
  - E. One-page letter from a Certified Public Accountant demonstrating proof of a successful financial audit within the previous two years (see Page 2).
3. Excel Budget Workbook using the given template: <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/VSMP-FinancialStatusReportForm.xlsx>

All other information provided by the applicant – including binders, extraneous reports, and general letters of support – will not be considered.

## **Web Application Form**

The Web Application Form is to be filled out by all applicants. The form is on the grant application Web page at: <https://micorps.net/stream-monitoring/stream-grants/>

- *Project Name*: The name of the proposed project being submitted for funding.
- *Grant Type*: From the drop-down menu, select Startup VSMP.
- *Project Location*: Primary county or counties in which the project will be conducted.
- *Waterbody*: Name of the primary stream(s) affected by the project.
- *Watershed Impacted by Project*: The watershed in which the project will be conducted.
- *Grant Total Requested*: The amount of money you are requesting in this proposal.
- *Local Match Proposed*: The startup grant requires \$0 match, so write \$0 here.
- *Organization Name*: Organization, local unit of government, or federally recognized tribe applying for funding.
- *Organization Address and Telephone* numbers.
- *Contact Person*: The person in the organization who can be contacted by MiCorps staff for any needed information.
- *Contact Person's Contact Email* A confirmation e-mail will be sent to this address once the Web Application Form and uploaded file have been submitted successfully.
- *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.
- *File uploads*: Upload the Project Narrative and the Excel Budget Workbook.

## **Project Narrative**

PDF(s) and/or Document(s) containing:

### **A. 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) Site Description.

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

- Location (as specific as you can provide) and water body name(s)
- 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 \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com/storymaps/view/90511386000000000000000000000000)
- Describe the surrounding environment (wetland, commercial, residential, agricultural, proximity to combined sewer outfalls, holding ponds, storm drains, etc.).
- A 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.

#### 3) Organization Information / Partner Information

State the organization's mission, goals, relevant programs and accomplishments. Describe the relevant qualifications of project staff/volunteers

and consultants/advisors that will carry out and ensure the success of the project.

#### 4) Partners and Volunteers

Please describe how you would plan on bringing volunteers in for your monitoring program. What other groups could you partner with, or what specific pools of people? If you already have an existing pool of volunteers, briefly describe their previous training and experience. If you already have an interested partner organization, include a letter of support from them.

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. Additional resources for environmental education can be found at [EGLE Classroom \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/egle/classroom).

#### B. A Work Plan (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:

- One staff member must attend (and more is better, to build in organizational redundancy) a full day MiCorps Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Survey training session led by MiCorps staff, held in Ann Arbor in June or July 2024.
- Attend at least one active MiCorps group's macroinvertebrate monitoring event as a participant to better understand how other people run the event (Fall 2024).
- Send at least 1 staff member to the annual MiCorps conference (held in Grand Rapids, October 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, 2024).
- Submit a 6-month progress report and financial statement (October 31, 2024).
- Hold a pilot monitoring event at one sampling site, where you recruit a few volunteers to help and run through the procedures (Spring 2025).
- Consult the EGLE biologist for your watershed (names will be provided by MiCorps) on monitoring site locations. (By the end of the grant).
- Upon grant closing, submit a final report that summarizes what you learned over the past year and final financial status report, by June 30, 2025.

#### Optional tasks

- Meetings with possible partners; developing interest in and recruiting future volunteers.
- 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.

- You may spend staff time developing the proposal for next year's Implementation Grant proposal.

C. Letter of support

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

D. 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.)

E. Audit letter (see p.2)

**Excel Budget Spreadsheet**

Fill out the first tab on the Excel grant budget spreadsheet, using the directions below. The spreadsheet is available at <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/V/SMP-FinancialStatusReportForm.xlsx>

A. Staffing Costs

- List each staff person (project manager, analyst, clerical, etc.), 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.

B. Fringe Benefits

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

- Most organizations have set fringe benefit rates. Use your agency's fringe benefit rate, up to 40% maximum.
- List each staff person and if their fringe rate is different than the generic organization's fringe rate, include that by the staff person's name. 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.

C. Indirect Costs

Indirect costs have been referred to as the cost of doing business. Typical indirect costs are associated with, but not limited to, office space, telephones, office equipment rental and usage, and general office supplies.

- Most agencies have a set indirect rate. Use your agency's indirect rate, up to 20% of salary and fringe benefits.
- Multiply the sum of all Staffing and Fringe Benefit costs by the Indirect rate to get the total Indirect costs.
- MiCorps reserves the right to request applicants to supply information indicating how their indirect costs were calculated.

D. Contractual Services

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 subcontracted, your grant application must include a description in the workplan.

#### E. 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., an expensive 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://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/VSMP-monitoring-equip.docx>. Costs related to food and drinks for volunteers are not funded under this grant.

#### F. 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 stream monitoring training and MiCorps Conference changes 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.
- For current mileage rate, individuals should refer to the Federal Mileage Reimbursement Rate Web page at: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100715>.
- 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 EGLE. Maximum per meal: Breakfast (\$9.75), Lunch (\$9.75), Dinner (\$22.00).

#### Summary of Links

- Grant Submission page, <https://micorps.net/stream-monitoring/stream-grants/>
- Excel Budget Spreadsheet, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/VSMP-FinancialStatusReportForm.xlsx>
- Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Equipment List, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/VSMP-monitoring-equip.docx>
- Stream Monitoring Procedures, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/VSMP-MonitoringProcedures.docx>
- Fact Sheet Template, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/MiCorps-fact-sheet-template.docx>



- Quarterly Report Template, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/MiCorps-quarterly-report-template.docx>
- MiCorps QAPP Guidance, [https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Qapp\\_guidance\\_2020.pdf](https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Qapp_guidance_2020.pdf)
- Federal Mileage Reimbursement Rate, <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100715>.
- MiCorps Stream Monitoring Implementation Grant RFP, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RFP-Implementation-VSMP-2024.pdf>
- MiCorps Stream Monitoring Startup Grant RFP, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RFP-Startup-VSMP-2024.pdf>
- MiCorps Stream Monitoring Maintenance RFP, <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RFP-Maintenance-VSMP-2024.pdf>
- MiCorps Stream Cleanup Grants RFP <https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RFP-VSCP-2024.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 \(arcgis.com\)](https://www.arcgis.com)