Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program
Implementation Grants
Request for Proposals

Application Deadline: March 8, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.
Contract period: June 2024-June 2026

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

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 2024/2025, across the spectrum of available VSMP funding opportunities. Implementation grants will comprise about $40,000 of the $75,000, with the other money spread across Startup grants and Maintenance grants ([see those RFPs separately for more detail](#)).

Two grants at approximately $20,000 each will be given under this MiCorps VSMP Implementation Grant specific RFP. 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 a grant period start upon grant execution (usually beginning of June) and an end date two years 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 Implementation Grants

- In an implementation grant, the grantee organization conducts aquatic macroinvertebrate surveys and stream habitat assessment with a volunteer labor force in wadable streams and rivers in specific stream locations throughout Michigan.
- 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. Staff 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.
- While the grant lasts two years, it is expected that organizations will use this money to start a long-term, sustainable monitoring program that lasts beyond the grant period.
- This grant money is meant to launch groups into macroinvertebrate monitoring, not to fund groups who already conduct MiCorps monitoring (that would be a Maintenance grant, which has its own RFP).
- This grant will require you to hit the ground running and hold a volunteer monitoring event in the Fall of 2024. If this timeline is too fast, consider applying for a Startup grant instead (which also has its own RFP).
- All grantees and volunteers must use MiCorps standard operating procedures in collecting their data.
- There is a maximum dollar amount of $20,000 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.
- Two grants will be awarded each year.
- Grant funds are dispersed on a cost-reimbursement basis.

- Grants require a minimum 25% local match of funds or in-kind services.
- Successful applicants will be required to enter into a project contract with MSU, which is administering the MiCorps Program on behalf of EGLE. A project contract consists of standard "boilerplate" language, the applicant's project description, work plan/timeline, 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 the 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 MSU.
- If you have questions about your project, you are welcome to contact Dr. Steen (contact information provided above) prior to submitting your application.

Eligibility

- Any local unit of 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.
- 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 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))
- 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.

Ineligible Entities and Activities

- Individuals, for-profit organizations, and federal and state agencies are not eligible to receive funding.
- Volunteer activities such as river cleanups, lake monitoring, restoration efforts, and strictly educational 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 under the MiCorps VSMP and may not be included as local match.

Submittal Deadline and Instructions

- Complete applications – including all required supporting documentation – must be received by **5 p.m. 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 the required documents to the MiCorps VSMP application system at: https://micorps.net/stream-monitoring/stream-grants/
- Once the Web Application Form and uploaded file 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.
- Requirements spelled out in the Work Plan, below.
- Plan for data use and education of the community.
- Quality/past performance of the organization.
- Anticipated number of volunteers and quality of recruitment and methods to retain volunteers.
- Location/watershed priority and links to other programs and projects.
- Useful partnerships, verified by letters of commitment.
- Plans to continue the project beyond the grant period.
- Costs reasonable for project scope, including 25% minimum matching funds, and appropriate allocation of the grant funds.
- Likely to generate useful data for EGLE.

List of Information Required for the Application

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

1. Web Application Form.

2. Project Narrative. PDF(s) and/or Document(s) containing:

   A. Project Description (maximum four pages).

B. A Work Plan listing the mandatory tasks and other tasks deemed important by the applicant along with an estimated timeline (maximum two pages).
C. Letter(s) of commitment from partner organizations and advisors stating their role in the project and local match commitment.
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, reviewed, or returned.

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 Implementation 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 or the watershed that may be affected by the project.
- *Grant Total Requested:* The amount of money you are requesting in this proposal.
- *Local Match Proposed:* The amount of money/in-kind service you are proposing to serve as local match.
- O*rganization Name*: Group, 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:

Project Description (Four 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 conducting this monitoring? If possible, include the following details:

   - Location (as specific as you can provide) and water body name(s)
   - Anticipated number of sites to be monitored, with locations, if already determined. (You must commit to at least 6 monitoring sites; more is fine)
   - 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)
   - Describe 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 how much of the watershed will 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.

Please describe any other partners and advisors in the project, their roles, and commitments. Describe any sub-contracts that you need to establish.

4) Training and Volunteer Information

Please describe how you plan to recruit and train volunteers. If you already have an existing pool of volunteers, briefly describe their previous training and experience.

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).

5) Procedures and Data Use

Please describe the work to be done. Include a short description of the procedures (Procedure and QAPP guidance). Please state actions to be taken or outcomes expected from the resulting monitoring data. Include the role your organization will play in assisting in such actions.

6) Sustainability

Please describe any watershed monitoring activities that will continue after the project is completed. Please describe your plan for funding the monitoring program following the end of this grant.

Work Plan (Two pages max)

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

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 2024).
2) Prior to writing your Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), consult the EGLE biologist for your watershed (names will be provided by MiCorps) on monitoring site locations.
3) Develop a QAPP that meets MiCorps standards and uses MiCorps procedures. The QAPP must be submitted to Dr. Paul Steen (MiCorps project officer) 30 days prior to the first monitoring event and approved prior to any monitoring.
4) Arrange and complete a "side-by-side" sampling session with MiCorps staff prior to the first macroinvertebrate collection event (usually August/September)
5) Hold monitoring events in the fall of 2024, spring and fall of 2025, and spring of 2026.
6) Participate in the annual MiCorps conferences both years (2024 and 2025) of the grant (to be held October 3rd-4th, 2024 in Grand Rapids).
7) Give a short (20-30 minute) presentation on the process and results of your project at the second year (2025) of your attendance at the MiCorps conference.
8) Enter all monitoring data into the MiCorps online database.
9) Submit quarterly reports which contain your workplan and comments on progress of each task, along with Excel budget, to Dr. Paul Steen within 30 days of the closing of each quarter of the grant period. Reports are due one month after the quarter ends. Quarters are: June-September 2024 (4 months), October-December 2024, January-March 2025, April-June 2025, July-September 2025, October-December 2025, and January-March 2026, April-May 2026.
10) Upon grant closing, submit a 3-5 page final report reviewing the program's accomplishments and challenges, one page fact sheet using the given template, and final financial status report, by June 30, 2026.

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.

Resume or curriculum(a) vitae

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

Audit

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

Excel Budget Spreadsheet

Fill out the excel grant budget spreadsheet, using the directions below. The spreadsheet is available at https://micorps.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/VSMP-FinancialStatusReportForm.xlsx. Fill out the first tab only. The remaining tabs are for quarterly reports if you receive the grant.

Please note the following:

- Local match is a financial commitment made by the grant recipient and partner agencies to help implement the project.
- A 25% match is required of all applications.
- Labor, in-kind services, and materials can count as match.
- 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 (2024: $10.33/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 (update April 2022: $31.80/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.
- Any original source (i.e., federal, state, local, or private) of match funds is acceptable, except for grants funded by other programs Renew Michigan funds or the federal Clean Water Act.
- Whatever you commit to as match will become part of your contractual obligation if your project is selected for funding. Be sure match commitment is realistic.
- Match activities will be held to the same standards as grant-funded activities.
- Match cannot be earned until the starting date of the contract.

1. 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.

2. 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 applicants to supply information indicating how their fringe benefits were calculated.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Project Equipment, Supplies, and Materials.

Appropriate costs are for equipment, supplies and materials that are to be used in the macroinvertebrate/habitat monitoring program.

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- 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. This equipment can be noted as match funds if an applicable expense.
- 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 but can be included as match.

6. 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 traveling, with rates set by EGLE. Maximum per meal: Breakfast ($9.75), Lunch ($9.75), Dinner ($22.00).

7. Sources of Match.

At the bottom of the grant budget, there is an area to record local match. Indicate the description of the item, the source(s) of local match, and the corresponding dollar value provided by the applicant or other partner organizations. Local match from partner organizations must be proven with a letter of commitment that specifically mentions that amount.

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
- 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 Environmental 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)