# Sustainable Maryland Action Grants Program

## 2024 Application Information Packet

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# Sustainable Maryland Action Grants Program

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| Announcement Date: | September 18th, 2024 |
| Application Due Date: | November 8th, 2024 |
| Questions: | Email smgrants@umd.edu |
| | General questions regarding the Sustainable Maryland Program should be directed to Liv Pierce at sustainablemaryland@umd.edu or 301-405-9424. |

## A. Overview

Sustainable Maryland is pleased to announce the launch of the Sustainable Maryland Action Grants Program, established to further our mission of enhancing livability and sustainability across Maryland's municipalities. This program supports a wide range of community-scale sustainability initiatives, offering a vital funding resource for Sustainable Maryland registered and certified municipalities.

The Sustainable Maryland Action Grants Program was made possible through the creation of the Sustainable Maryland Program Fund in 2022, which allocates a portion of the state's annual budget to support local sustainability efforts. With $100,000 in grant funding available, this program aims to bridge the gap between local resource constraints and the need for local action, ensuring communities throughout Maryland can thrive.

Sustainable Maryland strongly encourages applications from municipalities across the state that seek to protect their natural assets, reduce their carbon footprint, and revitalize and improve the long-term quality of life for current and future generations. Prospective applicants are encouraged to consider collaborating with neighboring municipalities and/or local nonprofit organizations to propose projects with regional implications and benefits.

Grants can be used for outreach and education, planning and design, and direct implementation of any projects associated with one of the [Sustainable Maryland 10 action categories](#). Based on the applicant's status in the Sustainable Maryland program as either registered or certified, municipalities can apply under one of the following tracks:

| Registered Communities | Certified Communities |
|---|---|
| • Awards up to $5,000 <br><br> • Total of $20,000 <br><br> • Up to 4 awards expected. | • Awards up to $20,000 <br><br> • Total of $80,000 <br><br> • Up to 4 awards expected. |

ONLINE Applications are due by November 8th, 2024. Email submissions of grant proposals will NOT be accepted. All applications must be submitted online using the link below:

[https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/sustainable_md_action_grants](https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/sustainable_md_action_grants)

The grants will have a 12-month performance period. Notification of grant awards will be made by early-December. A grant announcement event will be held in late-January 2025. A final grant report will be due January 2026.

An informational webinar will be held on **October 9th from 1:00-2:00pm**. The webinar will include an overview of the program, a demonstration on how to use the online application portal and the ability to ask questions about the program. Register [here](#) for the webinar.

***Projects may begin January 2025 and are expected to be completed by January 2026. Checks will be made payable to the primary municipal applicant.***

## B. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be considered for an award. Sustainable Maryland staff will verify the information provided.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Projects already underway or completed are not eligible for funding. Funding cannot be used to reimburse municipalities who have already spent funds on the proposed project. It can be used for project expansions that have not yet been funded or "phase 2" of a previous project.

### Standard Eligibility Rules

To be eligible to apply for a Sustainable Maryland Action Grants, applicants must:

- Be a Maryland municipal government. Funding may be passed through to a non-profit, partner organization or contractor, but the municipality must be the applicant and will be responsible for the reporting requirements.
- Be registered or certified with the Sustainable Maryland program.
- Meet all previous grant recipient reporting requirements (outlined in specific grant cycle application packets).

Check here to see participating communities. Registering is easy, any incorporated Maryland municipality can become registered by creating an account on the Sustainable Maryland website and passing a municipal resolution. If your municipality isn't already registered, reach out to sustainablemaryland@umd.edu, and we can help you get your community registered.

### Limitations on the Number of Application Submissions

- Applicants may only submit one application per grant cycle.
- Grantees will not be awarded funding for two consecutive years.

## C. Use of Grant Funding

### Eligible Expenses

Eligible activities include projects that relate to any of the [Sustainable Maryland action categories](#).

Action categories outlined in the Sustainable Maryland Action menu are:

- Community Action
- Community Based Food
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas
- Health and Wellness

- Local Economies
- Natural Resources
- Planning and Land Use
- Historic Preservation
- Transportation

Eligible expenses include:

- Consultant/contractor service fees
- Staff stipends
- Equipment
- Project supplies
- Training and educational materials

- Outreach engagement inducements including translation and interpretation services, food, transportation, childcare, incentives or awards, etc.

### Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include:

- General operating expenses
- Submitting for reimbursement of a project that has already been completed

Cap on Indirect Costs:

Indirect costs or Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs are related to the overall infrastructure and administrative support necessary to conduct specific projects or grants. **Indirect costs cannot exceed 10% of project budget.** Examples include:

- Maintenance of office or lab space used for the project
- Administrative support staff (HR, finance) contributing to the project
- IT services, security, insurance, legal fees or utilities related to the project

NOTE: Matching or in-kind contributions (including volunteer time) are encouraged, but not required. Projects that leverage additional funds may be considered favorably.

## D. Online Application Portal

The grant applications can be accessed using this link, which will take you to this landing page:

[https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/sustainable_md_action_grants](https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/sustainable_md_action_grants)

Applications must be submitted using the online application portal by 11:59 PM on **November 8th, 2024.** At that time the portal will close. Only online application submissions will be considered for funding.

You may save your work, log out, and resume your in-progress application at any time by using the login feature. Even if you submit the application, you will still be able to access it up until the application deadline. Drafts of the application will automatically save every 5 minutes and a "save draft" button is available at the end of the application form. You are encouraged to manually save your application when you are logging out or stepping away from working on it.
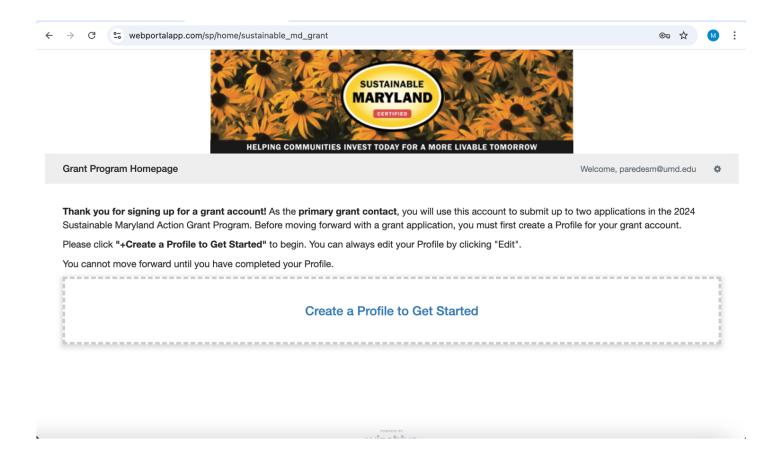
STEP ONE: First, **sign up** for an account. **Be sure to record the email address and password you used.** Grant recipients will need that information to log into the system to complete the required reports. The person signing up for the account will be considered the grant's **primary contact.** Sustainable Maryland will direct all communications about the grant application to this person. This account can be used to submit one grant application.



**Sign In/Sign Up Instructions**

**For New Users:**

By clicking **Sign Up**, you will be prompted to enter your email address and create a password. Once you have chosen your password, your account will be created and you will gain access to the portal.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS GRANT CYCLE IS ONLY OPEN TO MUNICIPALITIES REGISTERED OR CERTIFIED IN THE SUSTAINABLE MARYLAND PROGRAM. GET STARTED HERE.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Projects already underway or completed are not eligible for funding. Funding cannot be used to reimburse municipalities who have already spent funds on the proposed project. It can be used for project expansions that have not yet been funded or "phase 2" of a previous project.

**For Returning Users:**

Sign into the portal using the email address and the password you created when you originally signed up for the portal. If you have forgotten your password, click "**Forgot your password?**" and follow the prompts to reset your password.

**Sign In**

**Email**

**Password**

Log In                    Forgot your password?

**Need an Account?**

Sign Up

**STEP TWO:** After signing up for your grant account, you must create a profile before moving forward with filling out the grant application sections. Click "Create a Profile to Get Started" to access the Profile form.



**Grant Program Homepage**

Welcome, paredesm@umd.edu

**Thank you for signing up for a grant account!** As the **primary grant contact**, you will use this account to submit up to two applications in the 2024 Sustainable Maryland Action Grant Program. Before moving forward with a grant application, you must first create a Profile for your grant account.

Please click **"+Create a Profile to Get Started"** to begin. You can always edit your Profile by clicking "Edit".

You cannot move forward until you have completed your Profile.

**Create a Profile to Get Started**

STEP THREE: Fill out the Profile sections. Please note that for municipalities, the primary contact must be a municipal staff member or an elected/appointed official (green team member/volunteer). Click "Get Started" to access the application form. You are now ready to complete the different application sections.

webportalapp.com/sp/home/sustainable_md_grant

**Thank you for signing up for a grant account!** As the **primary grant contact**, you will use this account to submit your application in the 2024 Sustainable Maryland Action Grant Program. Before moving forward with a grant application, you must first create a Profile for your grant account.

Please click **"+Create a Profile to Get Started"** to begin. You can always edit your Profile by clicking "Edit".

You cannot move forward until you have completed your Profile.

| Profile | Complete | Edit |
| --- | --- | --- |

**Thank you for filling out the profile form for your grant account.** To begin an application, click **"+Get Started"** below. When you return to this Homepage, you can see the status of your submission by the colored status bar below the submission card.

+
Get Started

# E. Grant Application

Applications must be submitted using the online application portal by midnight 11:59 PM on November 8th, 2024.

Complete this form requesting information on your requested grant track (Registered Communities and Certified Communities) funding amount (up to $5,000 or $20,000, depending on the grant type), and information on the proposed grant project.

**I.** Grant Track and Requested Funding Amount

SM Affiliation (Choose One)
- Registered Communities – up to $5,000
- Certified Communities – up to $20,000

  Note: Based on your affiliation, the form will automatically update to set a limit on how much funding you may request. Please note that SM staff will verify your SM affiliation.

SM Action Category Affiliation
Use the drop-down menu to select which action categories your project is most closely related to.

**II.** Applicant Information
Please enter your employee identification number and upload your municipality's W9.

**III.** Application Contacts
All application contacts will be notified once a final decision on the grant application is made. Provide the name, title, phone number, phone extension number (if applicable), and email address for each of the following:
- Mayor
- Fiscal - The fiscal contact must be a person authorized to manage official funds. Please also provide the mailing address of your business office if applicable.
- Media (Optional) - The person responsible for the promotion of your project with the community and news outlets.

**IV.** Grant Proposal

The applicant must provide the following information about the project:

- Project Title

- Brief Description (300-word limit): The description should be concise and focus on the specific effort that the grant will be used to support. This description will be used in program reports and communications materials.

- Project Team: List of the key people who will be involved in completing the proposed project that includes each person's name, organization, position (title), and other experience relevant to the completing the project.

- Key Audiences/Partners: Identify key audience and partners. Priority consideration will be given to projects that partner with community-based organizations led by and primarily serving communities of color and other underrepresented communities.

- Action Plan and Timeline: Describe the specific steps your team will take to complete the proposed project and identify the estimated target completion date for each step to ensure the project can be accomplished by the end of the grant performance period (12 months). Please include:
  - Project planning
  - Implementation
  - Community engagement
  - Promotional activities
  - Ribbon cutting ceremonies or milestone events evaluation

- Community Engagement: Describe how the proposed project will leverage collaborations between community members including staff, residents, and representatives from community-based organizations (i.e., green teams, municipal and county agencies, civic or community-based organizations, nonprofits, professional organizations and local businesses). Also include plans for sharing information on the project with the greater community. This can include plans to hold a "ribbon-cutting" ceremony, create project signage, give presentations to the governing body, distribute printed communications, create website content, and create social media postings. Promotion of the grant should include the Sustainable Maryland logos. Social media posts should utilize the #sustainablemaryland hashtag.

- Project Goals and Measurable Outcomes

- Evaluation: This grant does not require a rigorous or formal evaluation process, however, grant recipients are expected to report on specific and/or measurable results or outcomes and other non-quantifiable impacts on the community. Estimate who (staff, residents, etc.) and how many will benefit from the proposed project.

**V.** Budget Narrative and Detailed Project Budget:
- Budget Narrative: Provide a brief budget narrative explaining what the grant funds will be used for.
    - IMPORTANT NOTE: Only eligible expenses can be paid using grant funding. Awards will not be made for general operating funds, but up to 10% of a project budget may be used for indirect costs associated with managing the project (e.g., maintenance of space used for project, administrative personnel, IT services, security costs, insurance, legal fees, utilities, etc.)
    - Other eligible grant expenses vary depending on project type and can include:
        - Consultant/contractor service fees
        - Staff stipends
        - Materials, equipment, and project supplies
        - Training and educational materials
        - Expenses that support the acquisition (by purchase or donation) of open space or conservation such as planning, design, land cost, development rights, legal or consultant fees, surveying, environmental assessments, appraisals, etc.
        - Outreach engagement inducements including translation and interpretation services, food, transportation, childcare, incentives or awards, etc.
- SM Financial Management Spreadsheet: The [SM Financial Management Spreadsheet](#) is a one-stop shop for financial information about your project that will be used to manage the financial components of your request/award from the time of application through (if your award request is approved) the time of award close-out. The Application Budget tab is an itemized list of all project expenses by category and must be filled out during the application process.
- IMPORTANT NOTE: In-kind contributions or matching funds are not required but do help demonstrate an applicant's commitment to a project. Sources of matching funds can include municipal funding, other grant funds, or in-kind contributions such as non-cash donations, staff time, and volunteer time. If using another grant to fund part of your project, the status of the grant award should be clear in the SM Financial Management Spreadsheet. Projects where its completion is contingent upon receiving uncommitted funding will not be viewed favorably by the selection committee.

**VI.** Optional Information

Applicants are encouraged to upload letters of commitment and/or letters of support from project partners that will participate in the proposed project and/or organizations or community members that will benefit from it. The additional file upload option can also be used to provide more detailed project information, such as surveys or other data supporting the need for the project.

## F. Selection Process

The selection committee will evaluate applications that meet the grant eligibility requirements based on criteria listed in [Attachment 1](#). Sustainable Maryland reserves the right to reallocate the funding based on the quality and quantity of grant applications received. The selection committee will also consider the needs of the community and the distribution of grants throughout the state.

## G. Grant Awards and Additional Terms

### Grant Awards

Applicants selected to receive a grant will be notified through their designated contacts. Grant awards will be announced by **early-December** and a grant announcement event will be held in late-January.

Awardees will be required to fill out an award agreement. More information will be shared with awardees upon receiving their award announcement.

- **Project Promotion and Recognition:** The Sustainable Maryland Program should be acknowledged on reports or other materials developed with grant funds. Copies of materials acknowledging the funder will be required attachments in the final grant report for all grants. Promotion of the grant should include the [Sustainable Maryland](#) logos. Social media posts should utilize the #sustainablemaryland hashtag.

- During the grant period, award recipients will agree to participate in press conferences or events, to be quoted in Sustainable Maryland literature describing the program and to identify Sustainable Maryland as a funder in any materials produced to explain or promote the funded project.

- **All grant recipients are required to notify Sustainable Maryland of any project-related milestone events so that media outreach can be coordinated with Sustainable Maryland.**
Consider different ways to share the success of the project with the rest of the community such as ribbon-cutting ceremonies, presenting grant accomplishments in public meetings, distributing printed communications, creating website content and social media postings. Any promotion of the grant should include [Sustainable Maryland](#) logos. Social media posts should utilize the #sustainablemaryland hashtag. Copies of materials documenting recognition Sustainable Maryland are required as part of the final grant report.

    Project Photos: Whenever possible, grant recipients should include photographs depicting the grant project and/or related activities with their final report. Photographs are encouraged to include members of the community. Sustainable Maryland reserves the right to use these photographs in reports, presentations, and other program-related materials. Additionally consider taking before and after pictures of a project if applicable.

## H. Grant Recipient Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be required to complete a final report using an online report form. Reminders will be emailed to the primary project contact at least 30 days in advance of the reporting submission deadline.

**Final Report (January 2026):** Document completion of the project described in the original application. For a project to be considered complete all funds must be spent and all activities listed in the application must be completed. Recipients will be asked to provide:

- A project summary and lessons learned
- Describe the impact of the grant on the community
- A summary of community outreach efforts
- Documentation that Sustainable Maryland was acknowledged in promotional materials and signage
- [SM Financial Management Spreadsheet](#) and supporting documentation

Failure to submit the required documentation will result in the grantee being ineligible to apply for future Sustainable Maryland grants.

## Attachment 1: Grant Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Applications that meet the grant eligibility requirements will be evaluated using the criteria listed below:

| |
|---|
| Project Description (10 points)<br><br>• The description concisely summarizes the specific project to be funded by the grant award. |
| Project Goals and Measurable Outcomes (15 points)<br><br>• Goals have been well defined.<br>• Deliverables are clear.<br>• Measurable outcomes have been well articulated. |
| Project Team Members (10 points)<br><br>• The designated project team appears qualified to undertake the proposed project.<br>• The project team includes representation from municipal and community stakeholder groups that will be involved in or impacted by the implementation of the proposed project. |
| Action Plan & Timeline (15 points)<br><br>• The proposed project action plan addresses the steps needed to successfully complete the project.<br>• Target completion dates are realistic and will enable the project to be completed within the 12-month performance period.<br>• Events where the grant will be promoted, such as a ribbon cutting ceremony, and materials will be distributed are identified. |

Community Engagement and Key Audiences (15 points)

- The proposed project will capitalize on collaborations between community stakeholders including representatives from the Green Teams, schools, municipal and county agencies, civic or community-based organizations, nonprofits, professional organizations and local businesses.
- Details on how the project will be shared with the community are included.
- Engages organizations led by and primarily serving communities of color and other underrepresented communities.

Project Impact and Evaluation (20 points)

- The proposed project will address the community needs identified in the proposal.
- The project will preserve, protect, and improve public spaces designated as open space or used for passive recreation or contribute to a more resilient community.
- Some consideration has been given to how this project will be evaluated over time.

Budget (15 points)

- The Budget Narrative clearly summarizes project expenses and identifies all the sources of funding needed to complete the proposed project, including in-kind contributions such as volunteer hours.
- The project leverages no or low-cost resources to cost-effectively complete the proposed project.
- It is clear that all additional funding besides the grant is in-hand or committed.
- The detailed project budget is consistent with the Budget Narrative and clearly identifies the eligible project expenses that will be billed to the grant.
- The budget is realistic, costs are justified and resource contributions, including in-kind, have a reasonable value.