

Appendix I

Access Improvement Grants Fact Sheet

Purpose

Access improvement grants are available to enhance the public accessibility to land that is acquired with proceeds from the Land for Maine's Future Fund and the Public Access to Maine Waters Fund.

Access improvement grants enhance Land for Maine's Future (LMF) acquisition dollars by making conserved land more accessible to the public. Grants may be for the upgrade of access roads, the addition of parking, trails, and boat launches, or the installation of signage, information kiosks, and picnic tables. Grant funds must be applied to the purchase of materials or contracted services; staff time and expenses are not an eligible expense. Grant funds can be used to reimburse work that has already been done, assuming the Board approves funding for all aspects of the work completed.

Funding Availability

In statute, access improvement grants are limited to 5% of the appraised value of the acquired property, but the Land for Maine's Future Board (LMFB) routinely establishes a set-aside for these grants based on funds available. At the present, LMFB may fund access improvement grants in an amount up to 5% of the first \$200,000 in appraised value, then 2% of appraised value over \$200,000, up to a maximum access improvement grant of \$25,000.

Matching Funds

All LMF awards must be matched 1:1 by the applicant. Matching funds include funds spent by the applicant on the same expenses that would have been eligible for use of grant funds. With approval from LMF, excess match from the acquisition of the property may also be applied as match for an access improvement grant. Contact LMF staff prior to submitting your application if you would like to apply excess acquisition match to your access improvement grant.

Eligibility

A landowner of LMF funded land may apply for an access improvement grant to fund minor capital improvements to improve accessibility on the LMF funded land and on adjoining lands in the same ownership or under the same management. Access improvement grants are not offered for lands which are protected by conservation easements unless easement terms explicitly allow the easement holder to make access improvements to the land covered by the easement. LMF staff will contact the applicant to inform them of the application process and amount of funds available for their access improvement project.

Application Criteria

Projects must meet the following criteria for access improvement grants:

- The proposed improvements do not compromise the original intent for which the property

was purchased.

- The proposed project improves accessibility of the LMF funded lands, consistent with management objectives. If access improvement funding is for abutting lands under the same ownership or management, then the access improvements must offer a benefit to users of the LMF funded parcel.
- Public uses are supported and/or enhanced by the project.

Application Process

1. LMF staff will contact you with information about the funds available, application process and deadline for submissions.
2. Applications are reviewed by LMF staff to determine eligibility and completeness.
3. If the applicant is an entity other than the State (e.g. land trust or municipality), the application is reviewed by staff from the Designated State Agency: Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, or Maine Historic Preservation Commission, to ensure the project is consistent with the objectives of the original acquisition project.
4. LMF staff reviews the application against the purposes and objectives of the access improvement funds and makes a recommendation to the Board for their approval.

Application Format and Instructions

Applicants should complete an Application Summary Form and provide a proposal narrative that contains the following information:

1. Map(s) – General property map, map depicting the location of the primary access point of the site, any other public access points to the property, and the location of the property to which access improvements are proposed to be made. Maps should be at a scale suitable to show the location of the proposed improvements.
2. Project Description - Narrative of what improvements are proposed, how the improvements will enhance accessibility and public use of the LMF funded lands and how the project is consistent with the recreation, public access and conservation objectives of the original acquisition project.
3. Suitability of Intended Use - Description that demonstrates that the property has no legal constraints preventing the development and use of the proposed access and that the physical characteristics of the site are suitable for the intended access.
4. Impact on Natural Resources – Description of any impact the proposed access will have on the natural and cultural resources of the property and the surrounding land. Demonstrate that the intended access is consistent with property's management objectives. Consultation with the Maine Natural Areas Program, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Maine Historic Preservation is recommended.
5. Project timeline - Identify key milestones and dates for completion.
6. Signage - The Board requires that the Land for Maine's Future Program be acknowledged in permanent signage at the primary access point of the site. LMF provides silk-screened, metal signs with LMF logo for this purpose. Please indicate in your proposal if you will need

additional signs.

7. Project Budget - Itemization of how the funds will be used and identification of sources and amounts of matching funds

A hard copy of your proposal should be sent to:

Land for Maine's Future Program

Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry 22 State House Station

Augusta ME 04333-0022

Completion of Access Improvement Grant Projects

Projects must be completed within 18 months of the grant award date, unless the project finalist has prior written approval from the LMF project manager for an extension. A one year extension may be granted at the project manager's discretion if circumstances warrant, following notice to the LMF Director. Any additional extensions must be approved by the LMF board.

Grant Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients must submit a written report upon completion of the access improvement project. The report must describe the access improvements made and the ways it enhances public uses and include documentation of how the funds were expended and photographs of the completed work.

Completed access improvement projects will be included in the LMF Biennial Report, as part of the report to the public about progress achieved by the program.

Advance and return of access improvement funds

LMF will enter into a contract with each cooperating entity selected for an access improvement grant. LMF will be responsible for managing the contracts and ensuring funds are used consistent with the project proposal. LMF staff will approve payments for work that has been completed. Any unspent funds will remain available for future Board allocations.

For access improvement grants to state agencies, the funds will be journaled directly to the state agency upon approval of application. The agency is responsible for returning all unused funds within 6 months of completion of project. LMF shall enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the DSA for all access improvement grants. The MOA will state the terms and indicate the expiration dates and be signed by the Commissioner of the DSA.

Resources:

USFS trail accessibility guidelines: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/national-forests-grasslands/accessibility/resources>

American Trails: <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/accessibility-hub>

National Park Service boat launch guidelines:

<https://npshistory.com/publications/rtca/logical-lasting-launches.pdf>