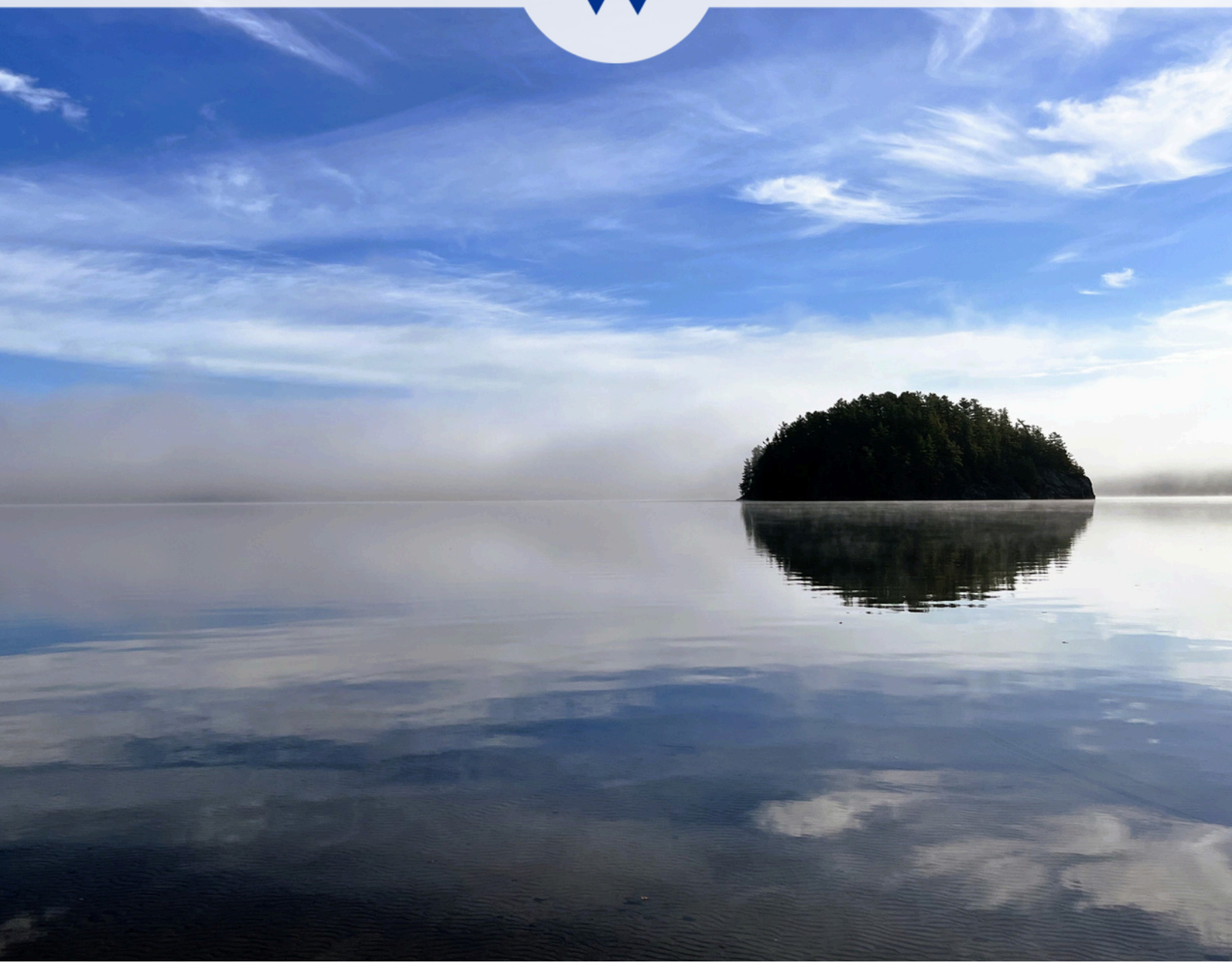
THE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OF MUSKOKA



Watershed Resilience Action Program

Application Guide

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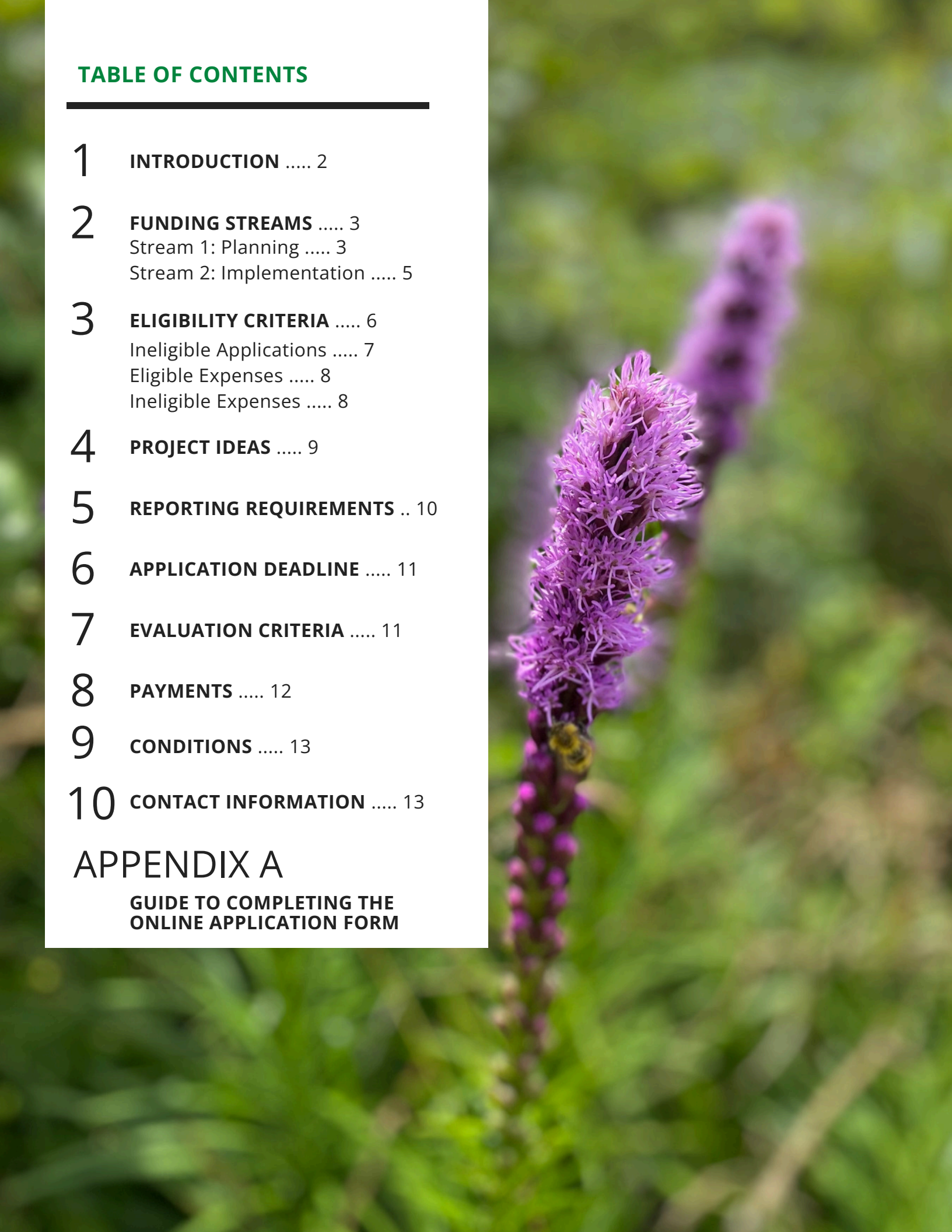



1. INTRODUCTION

Protecting Muskoka's water resources is a shared responsibility. Through the Watershed Resilience Action Program (WRAP), The District Municipality of Muskoka is committed to collaborating with partners to support projects that will improve the water quality and ecological health of waterbodies in Muskoka. WRAP funding is distributed by the District as part of implementing the Muskoka Water Strategy.

This guide is intended to support applicants in planning eligible initiatives and completing Watershed Resilience Action Program applications.

If you have questions throughout the process, please contact:

Rebecca Willison
Environmental Planning, Policy and Program Coordinator
Email: stewardship@muskoka.on.ca
Phone: 705-645-2100 x4387
Cell: 705-646-3274

2. FUNDING STREAMS

Total funds available annually is $39,000 subject to Council approval. Funding available to each applicant is dependent on the number of grant applications received but shall not exceed the limits set out below per applicant for each stream. Funding is not assured even if an application is submitted.

STREAM 1: PLANNING

Open to community groups on all waterbodies in Muskoka. See Section 3 for additional eligibility criteria.

Lake associations play an important role in promoting environmental stewardship, communicating to lake residents, educating them on good waterfront practices to protect water quality, and coordinating responses on local issues that affect roads and waterways, resources, land use and development, best practices, and more. Lake associations are an integral component of the lake planning process, which provides lake residents and stakeholders with the opportunity identify and protect the physical, environmental and social values of a lake or river system. A lake plan provides a long-range vision for the lake community that can be implemented through a series of stewardship initiatives and potential land-use policies. Addressing issues and concerns identified in a lake plan can be formalized through a stewardship action plan, outlining actions to protect, improve or restore the elements that contribute to the ecological health of a lake or river, including water quality, hydrology, key natural heritage features and their functions, and key hydrologic features and their functions.





To increase the capacity of residents to contribute meaningfully to the protection of Muskoka's water resources, funding and in-kind support is available to groups interested in developing or improving member communication and engagement, creating a lake plan or stewardship action plan, developing a citizen science program or organizing a stewardship event.

- Up to **$1,000** is available to support lake associations and community groups to develop methods of communicating with and engaging waterbody residents (i.e. developing a logo, website, newsletter, email distribution list, etc.).

- Up to **$10,000** is available to lake associations towards the creation a new lake plan, or up to $3,000 to update an existing lake plan. Additional in-kind support is available from the District, including organizing and/or facilitating meetings and open houses to gather input from residents, providing meeting space, providing mapping support, reviewing the plan, etc.

- Up to **$5,000** is available to lake associations with lake plans to develop a stewardship action plan for the lake.

- Up to **$1,000** is available to lake associations for other projects not included above.

STREAM 2: IMPLEMENTATION

Open to associations on waterbodies listed in Schedule E2 of the Muskoka Official Plan (MOP). See Section 3 for additional eligibility criteria.

Funding is available for up to 50% of total project costs, to a maximum of **$20,000**, for projects that will protect or improve water quality on MOP Schedule E2 waterbodies by:

- demonstrating innovative approaches or technologies,
- implementing best management practices and promoting their broad uptake and application by others,
- supporting community-based monitoring, or
- incorporating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into critical decisions and actions.

While it is not required, preference will be given to Applicants that have a lake plan. Stream 2 funding should be used to support actions identified in a lake plan or stewardship action plan, if there is one.

No more than half of the 50% matching funding can be from in-kind sources. Ideally, Stream 2 funding is used as matching dollars to secure funding from other sources, and you will be required to specify whether matching funding is confirmed or potential when applying.



3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In addition to the Stream 1 and Stream 2 eligibility requirements above, Applicants must:

- Be an organized lake group and recognized by the District of Muskoka as a lake stewardship group that is based in the District of Muskoka.
- Have a stable volunteer base in place to carry out activities (i.e., demonstrate authority and partners).
- Demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and/or partner with other related community groups.
- Submit a complete application in the prescribed form by the prescribed deadline.
- Not be in default in reporting or other requirements under a prior approved grant.



Only one application per stewardship group per year will be accepted for consideration and the funds shall only be applied to that successful stewardship group. Applications for a project involving more than one stewardship group (i.e., pooled resources) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the Applicant is working in or around water, they should contact the Ministry of Natural Resources to obtain a work permit, if required.

Projects must:

- Have a distinct start and end date.
- Identify specific deliverables based on the project.
- Benefit the residents of the lake and/or watershed for which the funds apply.
- Be in accordance with all applicable legislation, by-laws, policies, procedures, standards, and guidelines.

Priority will be given to:

- Projects near water.
- Projects that demonstrably or measurably improve water quality.
- Projects with applicability to other lakes in Muskoka (if research-based).
- First-time applicants.



INELIGIBLE APPLICATIONS

Applications are ineligible and will not be considered if the application:

- Relates to a project which is currently being done locally by another agency (government, non-profit, etc.);
- Relates to proposed activities which duplicate support provided by the District of Muskoka or other agencies directly;
- Relates to work which will be carried out for the benefit one individual;
- Is for capital or permanent infrastructure projects;
- Relates to work required by law, a planning application or through enforcement;
- Is submitted by a stewardship group on behalf of another stewardship group;
- Is for a project that has already begun or been completed;
- Is submitted by an applicant who is in default to the District of Muskoka due to failure to report satisfactorily for previous funding;
- Is submitted by an applicant not in good standing or in litigation with the District; or
- Includes lobbying activities (activities that attempt to influence specific pieces of legislation).

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Only costs directly attributed to carrying out the project will be eligible for funding, including:

- Human resource costs, including salaries and benefits.
- Management and professional service costs, such as accounting, monitoring, communications, official languages translation, audit and legal charges.
- Monetary honoraria for Indigenous Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers.
- Hospitality.
- Travel.
- Material and supplies.
- Printing, production and distribution costs.
- Equipment and Capital Assets purchase or rental.
- Vehicle rental and operation costs.
- Contractors required to perform activities related to the project.
- A reasonable share of overhead and/or administrative costs.
- Other incremental expenditures directly related to the project (as pre-approved by the WRAP Review Committee or the District of Muskoka).

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Fees associated with municipal Official Plan Amendments.
- Installation of hardened shoreline structures.
- Purchase of non-native or invasive plant species.
- On-going operating or maintenance costs.
- Laboratory analysis that is offered through other programs (i.e. Lake Partner Program) or done through the District of Muskoka or another agency, unless the project falls outside of the scope of these programs. This includes total phosphorus (TP), calcium (Ca) and chloride (Cl) lab analysis.
- Purchase of significant equipment and machinery, except for Stream 2 initiatives related to on-going monitoring. Rental equipment may be considered.
- In-kind labour, equipment and personal expenses of the applicant, the applicant's business or family members.
- Research studies, surveys and sampling that do not provide direct benefits to the project.
- Stocking of ponds, or stocking of property with game, for the purpose of harvesting.
- Alcohol-related expenses.
- Other expenses not recommended by the WRAP Review Committee or approved by the District of Muskoka.

4. PROJECT IDEAS

The following are examples of projects that may be eligible to receive funding. It is recommended for Applicants to book a pre-consultation with the Environmental Planning, Policy and Program Coordinator to discuss project ideas before applying to confirm eligibility.



STREAM 1: PLANNING

- Creating a website
- Creating or updating a lake plan
- Developing a stewardship action plan
- Developing a community stewardship or citizen science program
- Organizing an event to educate and engage the community



STREAM 2: ACTION

- Restoring degraded habitat and shorelines
- Managing invasive species
- Controlling or mitigating point and non-point sources of pollution
- Creating or restoring wildlife habitat (i.e. pollinator gardens, nesting sites, fish habitat)
- Managing stormwater (i.e. rain gardens)
- Implementing or expanding a community stewardship or citizen science program



STREAM 2: RESEARCH

- Conducting research and monitoring to inform stewardship action planning and implementation
- Implementing a monitoring program to track the effectiveness of remedial measures and confirm improved condition

5. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



Successful applicants will be required to submit a Final Report within three (3) months of the project's conclusion or the project's end date as outlined in the application, whichever is sooner. In addition to a written report, applicants may be invited to give a presentation about their project to District Council/Committee and/or at a District stewardship event (e.g. EnviroHub Day).

The Final Report is to be submitted online and must include the following information:

- A summary of the project or initiative completed as a part of the Watershed Resilience Action Program application;
- Project timeline and the number of stewardship or community members involved/engaged;
- Outcome of the project and how it benefitted the lake, including any measurable outcomes or effects as outlined in the application (performance indicators);
- Hurdles or setbacks during planning and/or implementation of the project or initiative;
- Expense report, including financial reconciliation (budget vs actual), itemized expenditures, and proof of payment/receipts;
- Photos of any associated events, projects, or initiatives; and
- Other pertinent information requested by the District.

Staff will report to District Council annually with a summary of the WRAP recipients and use of funds distributed.

6. APPLICATION DEADLINE

Completed applications must be submitted using the online application form (Appendix A) by **August 31st at 4:00 pm EST** annually. Submissions will be reviewed by the WRAP Review Committee, which is comprised of District staff from the Watershed and Finance teams with annual inclusion of representatives from other departments, depending on staff availability.



7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The WRAP Review Committee will evaluate applications on an individual basis using a set list of criteria while taking into consideration the amount of funding requested. For instance, an application for Stream 2 research funding requires more detail than an application by individuals applying for Stream 1 funding to develop a website. Where possible, the WRAP Review Committee will consider the quality of the organization's structure, the ability to deliver, and the outcomes of the organization's project or plans when reviewing applications.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- There is a demonstrated need for financial assistance from the District of Muskoka and the current proposal is well planned and achievable.
- There is a positive impact to the lake, the lake residents, and the watershed.
- There is a clear mandate, competent administration, and effective governance structure.
- The applicant demonstrates initiative and success in generating revenue other than municipal funding and encourages partnerships.
- There is support for the project by lake and community residents.
- There is a recognized level of engagement with lake residents and lake users and community groups.



WRAP funds will be allocated based on the merit of the application and funds available. Applicants are not guaranteed funding. There is no set amount of funding available for each stream. Allocation of funds between the two streams will depend on the number and quality of applications received in any given year.

Successful applicants will be notified by November 30th annually, with funding contingent on budget approval. Successful applicants must agree to the Terms and Conditions before funds will be released.

Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified by November 30th annually and will be provided with the rationale for the decision.

8. PAYMENTS

Following budget approval in December and acceptance of the Terms and Conditions, an initial payment for 85% of the total amount will be issued. The remaining 15% will be paid upon the District's acceptance of a completed Final Report.



9. CONDITIONS

- Funds awarded in any one year or over several years is not to be interpreted as a commitment to future year's funding. Funds are not automatically awarded based on a previous year's application.
- Implementation of the Watershed Resilience Action Program is at the discretion of District Council and the program may be cancelled at any time.
- Unspent funds from the Watershed Resilience Action Program may be reallocated to support other Muskoka Water Strategy projects.

10. CONTACT INFORMATION

Applicants are encouraged to schedule a pre-consultation with the District's Environmental Planning, Policy and Program Coordinator.

To schedule a pre-consultation or if you have any questions regarding the Watershed Resilience Action Program, please contact:

Rebecca Willison, BSc.
Environmental Planning, Policy and Program Coordinator
The District Municipality of Muskoka
Phone: (705) 645-2100 x4387
Cell: (705) 646-3274
Email: stewardship@muskoka.on.ca

APPENDIX A:

GUIDE TO COMPLETING THE ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

You must submit your project application online at www.muskoka.on.ca/en/environment/watershed-project-funding-in-muskoka.aspx. The application period closes on August 31st at 4 pm.

The following information will help you complete the online WRAP project application by providing guidance on the application questions.

Funding Stream - Select which funding stream your application falls under: Stream 1 (Planning), Stream 2 (Action) or Stream 2 (Research).

Applicant Information - This section is a summary of organizational and contact information. The following information is needed:

- Organization Name
- Website (if applicable)
- Not-For-Profit Incorporation Number or Charitable Registration Number (if applicable)
- Lead Contact Person, Role in the Organization, and Contact Information

Organization Information - This section requests more information about your organization, including:

- When it was founded
- Its mission or mandate (100 words max.)
- Other programs or initiatives currently undertaken (100 words max.)
- Number of members
- Methods used to engage your membership (100 words max.)

Project Information

Project Title - Provide a short, descriptive title to identify your project. It should describe the work undertaken, the project purpose, the project location if possible, and be easily understood by an external audience. Do not use acronyms. Example: *Encouraging Landowners' Participation in Monitoring Wetlands in the Buck Lake Watershed.*

Project Location - Provide the location of your project including the waterbody and/or watershed name.

Project Timing - What are the anticipated starting and ending dates for the project? Start dates must be in the following calendar year (i.e. applications submitted in 2026 cannot start until 2027).

Project Goals and Objectives - Clearly define the goal(s) and objective(s) of your project and explain how it will benefit the water quality in your waterbody or the health of your watershed. (250 words max.)

Project Summary - Provide a brief synopsis of your project including the activities to be accomplished using WRAP funding as outlined in the rest of your application. It must contain sufficient information to "stand alone" during the review and approval phases. Be sure to spell out acronyms. (250 words max.)
Consider the following items in developing your project description:

- Type of project (e.g., outreach, education, monitoring, research, citizen science, renaturalization, lake plan, etc)
- Overall project purpose: Outline the project goal(s) and objective(s) (one to two sentences).
- Location of project: Identify the waterbody or watershed where the work is taking place.
- Threats: Describe the main threat(s) to water quality in the waterbody that the project will address.

- Main activities: List the proposed activities to address the threat. Do not repeat the detailed activities provided in the work plan, but rather provide an explanation of how the activities will achieve the project objective(s). These should be listed as measurable deliverables (e.g., number of hectares to be restored, and how). Do not use global terms like "enhancement activities will be undertaken" without describing what they will be.
- Project timing: Provide a timeline for when the activities need to be carried out to achieve the project objective(s).
- Anticipated project benefits/outcomes: Describe how the project will benefit the waterbody/watershed.
- Performance evaluation: Describe how you will measure and report the impact of each project activity on water quality and/or watershed health. Include baseline data to evaluate the post-project status and specify the indicators that will be used to assess the project's success.

Example of a good project summary *(from the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk):*

This single-year Habitat Stewardship Program project will focus on targeted outreach and education to assist in the conservation and recovery of species at risk and their habitats in Saskatchewan. The project will take place between May and October 2026 within the Milk River Watershed (South of Divide). Six Species at Risk Act-listed species will be targeted, including Greater Sage-grouse and Burrowing Owl (both endangered and Prairie Region priority species) and Loggerhead Shrike (threatened). Project activities will include a prairie-wide workshop where stakeholders will discuss the benefits and incentives of conserving natural landscapes and best agricultural management practices and outreach events to increase awareness of the importance of native prairie stewardship. The project will deliver on results by implementing an educational program where students are educated by farmers about stewardship and species at risk. The project will contribute to the recovery strategy actions of each target species by engaging the community and raising awareness of the species and their threats, including wetland habitat degradation through conversion to agricultural use or invasive species, and increasing the network of stakeholders concerned with prairie conservation. Project performance will be evaluated with measurable direct (e.g., number of people engaged) and indirect (e.g., survey of changes made by farmers to promote native landscapes) outcomes.

Project Team - List the key personnel that will work on the project (e.g., project coordinator, financial manager, volunteers, consultants, technical experts, etc.), their roles and experience. Include your organization's experience and ability to carry out the proposed project. (250 words max.)

Project Work Plan and Deliverables - The work plan is the blueprint for your project. Using the required Work Plan Template, clearly identify what needs to be accomplished to meet each objective, the resources needed for each task, and how progress will be measured.

- ***Objectives***: The specific, measurable actions that contribute to achieving the goal(s) of the project.
- ***Tasks***: For each objective, outline the key tasks that you will complete.
- ***Timing***: Include the timeframe for each task.
- ***Resources***: Include the human and financial resources you need to complete each task and explain how they relate to items in your Project Budget.
- ***Milestones & Deliverables***: Identify the key indicators of progress, such as significant achievements or points in time when specific tasks should be completed. Include specific deliverables as needed.

Performance Indicators - How will the expected results and successes of the project be measured? Using the required Performance Indicators Template, describe specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic performance indicators that can be evaluated within the project's timeframe. Include targets to measure the progress and success of your project and the methodology that will be used to capture results.

Examples of performance indicators:

- Amount of native plants, trees and shrubs planted (# of plants/trees/shrubs).
- The percentage of plants planted in year one that survive until the end of year two.
- Area of shoreline protected, stabilized or improved (# of hectares).
- Area of habitat in which management or restoration actions have been implemented through project activities (# of hectares).
- The number of participants attending project activities (# of people).
- People reached who indicated they would modify their behaviour as a result of project activities (% of target audience).
- The number of volunteers participating in restoration activities (# of people).
- The number of partners engaged (# partners).
- The amount of toxic or harmful substances removed, diverted or reduced (# of kg).
- The number of methods, tools, and/or techniques developed to improve water quality.
- Percentage of recommendations from Lake/Action Plans implemented (% of recommendations).
- Number of studies/reports/plans/ publications developed and distributed.
- Amount of area in which freshwater management improvements have been achieved through the use of innovative and/or clean technology solutions (# of hectares).
- Number of users with improved access to data and knowledge (e.g. # of users).

Project Benefits - How will the benefits of the project be sustained beyond the funding period? Will the project result in any outcomes or approaches that can be replicated or scaled in other contexts or waterbodies in Muskoka? (150 words max.)

Financial Information

Amount Requested - How much WRAP funding are you requesting for your project?

Project Budget - Using the Project Budget Template, itemize the cost of your project as well as all additional sources of funding that will be used for your project.

Please note that Stream 2 funding will only cover up to 50% of the total project costs, and that no more than half of the Applicant's matching funding can be in-kind. For example, a Stream 2 application request for $20,000 must have an additional $20,000 matching funding from other sources, of which up to $10,000 can be in-kind (volunteer hours, donated materials, etc.).

Supplemental Information - Attach any additional information you feel is important to your application (maps, photos, news articles, letters of support, etc.).

Certification - You must certify that the information stated in the application is complete and accurate and that you have the authority to sign on behalf of the organization.

Do you have questions about the Watershed Resilience Action Program?

Email:
stewardship@muskoka.on.ca

