

Appendix L

Access Improvement Grants Fact Sheet for Applicants

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.

Access improvement grants may also be used for farmland projects to fund the development of a business plan and capital improvements on the farm, such as improving drainage or constructing storage sheds.

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, the LMFB has agreed to fund access improvement grants in an amount up to 2% of the LMF board's financial contribution to the project, if funding is available.

In addition, the LFMB has adopted incentives for access improvement projects that are designed to facilitate use by people who may have physical limitations or impairments, sometimes called adaptive recreation. Currently, the Board has approved an additional 2% to support access improvement projects that encourage increased use by persons with physical limitations or impairments. The Bureau of Parks and Lands is available to provide resources and Best Management Practices for the development of ADA compliant and adaptive recreational opportunities.

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 applicants Designated State Agency to ensure the project is consistent with the objectives of the original acquisition project.
4. A sub-committee of the board 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

Your proposal should contain the following information:

1. Applicant Name - Name, address, phone number, and email of the applicant and the primary contact person.
2. Date of Application - Date you submitted application for access improvement funds.
3. Project Title & LMF Property – name of your access improvement project and name of project and date of closing of the LMF-funded project for which access improvements are proposed.

4. Geographic Location of Project - town and county including the land on which the access improvements will be made.
5. 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.
6. Grant Amount - Amount of funds being requested from LMF.
7. Project Budget - Itemization of how the funds will be used and identification of sources and amounts of matching funds.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Project timeline - Identify key milestones and dates for completion.
12. Adaptive Access – If the applicant is seeking supplemental funding for adaptive access, include a description of the specific design aspects of the project that will encourage and increase use of the property by people with physical impairments or disabilities. Describe what resources you have used to ensure your improvements are consistent with accessibility guidelines.
13. 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.

Eight copies 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 grant award date, unless the project 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 and upon receipt of all paid invoices. 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 their 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:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/accessibility/>
- American Trails: <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/trailbuilding/>
- National Park Service boat launch guidelines:
<https://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/launchguide.pdf>

References

- *Memo to LMF Board - November 2014 (Attachment B to meeting agenda)*
- *Jody Harris memo to LMF Board - July 12, 2011 (Attachment H to meeting agenda)*
- *Fact Sheet for Applicants - November 2011*
- *Tim Glidden memo to Board - July 12, 2010*

- *Format for Application – Bureau of Parks and Lands developed a good template May 7, 2012 (Seboeis Lake Unit, Bigelow Timber acquisition)*
- *Board criteria for evaluating applications - January 2006*

Document locations: L/Access Improvement Grants/ Access Improvement Grants fact sheet for applicants UPDATED Nov. 2014