



KANSAS

Land and Water Conservation Fund: Open Project Selection Process

Central Park Sports Complex – Independence, KS

Introduction

The Kansas Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) establishes a transparent and equitable method for evaluating and selecting projects for LWCF funding. The OPSP aligns with the Kansas Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and federal LWCF guidelines to ensure strategic investments in outdoor recreation resources. It provides clear eligibility requirements, objective selection criteria, and a structured application process to ensure that all potential applicants, including state and local agencies, are aware of and have access to funding opportunities. The OPSP establishes a priority rating system to evaluate projects based on their alignment with SCORP priorities, adherence to LWCF eligibility standards, and overall feasibility, ensuring a fair and effective allocation of funds to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in Kansas.

Program Overview

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program is a federal grant initiative established in 1965 to support the acquisition, development, and preservation of public outdoor recreation areas across the United States. Funded primarily through offshore oil and gas lease revenues, LWCF provides matching grants to state and local governments to enhance parks, trails, and natural spaces for public use. The program prioritizes projects that align with statewide outdoor recreation plans, promote accessibility, and ensure long-term conservation. By investing in recreation infrastructure and land conservation, LWCF helps expand outdoor opportunities for all communities while preserving natural resources for future generations.

The Kansas LWCF program is overseen by the State Liaison Officer (SLO) and Alternate State Liaison Officer(s) (ASLO), who are appointed by the Governor. These officials are responsible for ensuring that all LWCF projects comply with federal and state guidelines, align with the Kansas Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and support the state's outdoor recreation and conservation priorities. Their oversight helps maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the program while facilitating funding opportunities for eligible projects across Kansas.

Funding

The annual apportionment for the Land and Water Conservation Fund stateside program is determined by the National Park Service (NPS) and allocated to each state based on a formula set by federal law. This formula considers factors such as the state's population and total land area, ensuring a fair distribution of funds. Each fiscal year, Congress determines the total LWCF appropriation, from which a portion is set aside for the

stateside program. The apportioned funds are then distributed to state governments, which administer grant programs for local outdoor recreation projects. Each project sponsor must provide at least 50% of eligible matching funds for awarded grants, ensuring shared investment in public recreation and conservation. In recent years, Kansas' annual stateside apportionment has ranged between 3 to 5 million dollars.

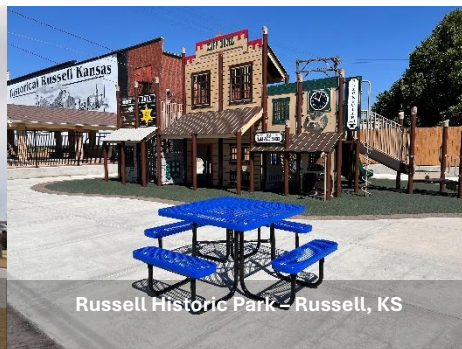
Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for LWCF funding, projects must:

- Be sponsored by a state agency or local government entity.
- Align with the priorities outlined in the Kansas SCORP.
- Provide public outdoor recreation benefits.
- Meet accessibility and environmental compliance requirements.
- Secure at least a 50% match in eligible funds.

Common projects that are generally eligible for LWCF funding include:

- Outdoor sport and playfields
- Picnic facilities
- Trails
- Swimming facilities
- Camping facilities
- Facilities directly supporting outdoor recreation:
 - Restrooms, lighting, benches, and other accessibility facilities



Project Selection Criteria

Projects will be evaluated and ranked based on the following criteria:

1. **Needs Assessment** – The project will meet the recreational needs identified by the sponsor/community.
2. **SCORP Priority** – The project meets the priority needs as defined in Kansas’ Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.
3. **Planning and Design** – The sponsor has carried out sufficient planning and design measures to effectively execute the project.
4. **Public Engagement** – The grant proposal was formulated using input from the community and other stakeholders.
5. **Accessibility** – The project recognizes the importance of providing accessible facilities and opportunities for all members of the public, including those with limited mobility or other special needs.
6. **Cost Effectiveness** – The cost associated with the project is relative to the outcomes proposed.
7. **Eligibility** – The project is designed to offer basic facilities for outdoor recreation and is considered eligible in accordance with the LWCF manual.
8. **Risk Assessment** – The applicant appears capable of completing the project as proposed and can maintain the site in perpetuity as required under the LWCF Act.



Milford State Park Splashpad

Application Process

KDWP generally accepts applications once annually for LWCF funding. This may vary depending on current available funding. A local sponsor may submit only one application in the calendar year. Current funding

opportunities, program information, and application documents can be found at <https://ksoutdoors.com/KDWP-Info/Grants>.

Local sponsors must first complete an application and submit it to KDWP as instructed from the website. The application will include materials such as project narrative, budget narrative, community engagement documentation, and other relevant information. This will be used by the State Liaison Officer (SLO) and Alternate State Liaison Officer (ASLO) to determine project eligibility and will be submitted to the LWCF review board for ranking. If a project is selected to move forward for official submission to the National Park Service (NPS), the sponsor will then be required to complete additional application documents with assistance from KDWP's LWCF program staff. These documents will form the full application submitted to NPS for final review and funding consideration.



Project Selection Process

KDWP generally accepts LWCF project applications only once each year; funding opportunities and deadlines will be posted on <https://ksoutdoors.com/KDWP-Info/Grants>. Once the application round has closed, the State Liaison Officer (SLO), Assistant State Liaison Officer (ASLO), and/or LWCF program staff will review each project to ensure eligibility. Each program-eligible project will then undergo a site visit and inspection conducted by the SLO, ASLO, and/or LWCF program staff.

Once all eligible projects have been determined and inspected, applications will be evaluated and ranked according to Kansas' project selection criteria by the LWCF review board. The LWCF review board consists of park and recreational professionals with broad and varied knowledge of outdoor recreation from across the State of Kansas. These individuals are appointed each year by the SLO, ASLO and/or LWCF Program Staff. Each board member will read, score, and provide comments or recommendations for each project application. Once all completed score sheets are returned to KDWP, the SLO, ASLO, and/or LWCF Program staff will average the scores and consider reviewer comments.

Final funding selection decisions will be made by the SLO, ASLO, and/or LWCF Program Staff. The number of projects funded each year will depend on various factors, including available funding, number of applications received, federal funding requested, quality of applications, ranking scores, reviewer comments and recommendations, and other relevant considerations.

As the primary agency overseeing the LWCF program in Kansas, KDWP retains the discretion to submit project applications outside the standard OPSP process, provided they align with the current SCORP and have the support of the SLO or ASLO.

Awarding Process

Once a project has been reviewed and selected for potential funding by KDWP, it must go through several steps before the National Park Service (NPS) produces an official award. The final preparation of an application before a federal award includes:

- NEPA/NHPA Reviews & Agency Consideration – The project will undergo a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review and be evaluated by various offices, including the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), KDWP Ecological Services, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, relevant Native American tribes, and other applicable agencies.
- Final Application Preparation – The SLO, ASLO, and/or LWCF staff will work with each local sponsor to assemble a final application draft to comply with NPS requirements and the LWCF manual.
- Final Submission to NPS – KDWP will submit the final application, which will be officially received by the NPS LWCF team.
- Issuance of Federal Award – The NPS LWCF team will issue a federal award agreement between NPS and KDWP. Once received, KDWP will prepare a grant agreement between KDWP and the local sponsor.
- Execution of Local Agreement – The project construction or acquisition may begin only after the local sponsor and KDWP have completed and signed the local agreement. Any activities or work conducted before this agreement is finalized may affect the project's eligibility for LWCF funding.



Project Amendments

Amendments to change the scope, funding or period of performance of a project may be considered if the action is deemed allowable per the LWCF manual and is supported by the State Liaison Officer (SLO) or Alternate State Liaison Officer (ASLO). Amendments that align with the current Kansas Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor

Recreation Plan (SCORP) and maintain program compliance do not require review by the project review board. These amendments ensure flexibility in project execution while upholding the integrity of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) objectives.

Program Compliance

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program carries long-term requirements to ensure funded projects remain in compliance with federal and state guidelines. As part of this responsibility, KDWP conducts inspections of LWCF-assisted sites every five years to assess continued compliance with program requirements. These inspections help verify that sites are properly maintained, remain accessible for public outdoor recreation, and adhere to the terms of their original grant agreements.

In addition to site inspections, sponsors are required to submit an Annual Operations and Maintenance Assurance Statement to confirm their commitment to maintaining LWCF-funded properties. Any compliance issues, such as unauthorized conversions of funded sites to non-recreational use, may negatively impact a sponsor’s future application ranking and eligibility for additional LWCF funding. The State Liaison Officer (SLO) or Alternate State Liaison Officer (ASLO) reserves the right to deny an application if the sponsor has unresolved compliance issues, ensuring that funding is awarded to projects that uphold the integrity of the LWCF program.

Technical Assistance

KDWP grant staff are available to assist potential applicants throughout the application process. This includes guidance on project development, proposal preparation, understanding project evaluation criteria, and overall grant management. Applicants are encouraged to seek technical assistance to ensure their projects align with program requirements and maximize their potential for funding. KDWP staff are committed to providing the necessary support to facilitate successful project applications and implementation.



Hutchinson Zoo - Hutchinson, KS

Conclusion

The Kansas LWCF Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) is a critical framework that ensures strategic distribution of federal funds to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities across the state. By maintaining a structured and transparent application and selection process, KDWP supports local communities in developing high-quality, accessible outdoor recreation projects that align with state and federal priorities. Through public engagement, rigorous project evaluation, and adherence to SCORP priorities, the LWCF program plays an essential role in conserving Kansas' natural resources while expanding recreational access for residents and visitors alike.

Ensuring the integrity and sustainability of these investments requires ongoing collaboration between state agencies, local project sponsors, and federal partners. The commitment to accessibility, environmental stewardship, and fiscal responsibility reinforces the program's long-term success. By following the established OPSP guidelines, Kansas can continue to develop outdoor spaces that foster community well-being, promote healthy lifestyles, and preserve natural landscapes for future generations to enjoy.

