

# Burlington County Board of County Commissioners



## **MUNICIPAL PARK DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

### **2025 Application Form and Policy and Procedure Manual**

Burlington County Department of Resource Conservation  
P.O. Box 6000  
Mount Holly, NJ 08060

Telephone: (856) 642-3850

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. INTRODUCTION
- II. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
- III. GRANT AMOUNT
- IV. MATCHING FUNDS
- V. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND PROJECT COSTS
- VI. PUBLIC HEARING REQUIREMENTS
- VII. REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS
- VIII. PROJECT EVALUTATION
- IX. GRANT AWARD PROCEDURES
- X. TIME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION
- XI. GRANT CONDITIONS
- XII. GRANT DISBURSEMENT
- XIII. APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT

## ATTACHMENTS

1. APPLICATION FORM
2. SAMPLE MUNICIPAL RESOLUTION
3. FORM OF GRANT AGREEMENT

## **Introduction**

The Board of Chosen Freeholders, now the Board of County Commissioners, established the Burlington County Municipal Park Development Program to assist its partner municipalities in the development and improvement of parks for outdoor passive and active recreation and in their efforts to preserve open space and farmland. Through this program, the Commissioners will offer grants to build or improve municipal parks, to offset the local cost share required by the County's Farmland Preservation Program, or to provide additional financial assistance for the acquisition of locally important open space.

Funds for this program are currently available in the Burlington County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund ("Trust Fund"). The Freeholders created the Trust Fund pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.1 following overwhelming voter approval of three ballot questions in 1996, 1998, and 2006. Voters authorized the Commissioners to collect a levy of up to 4 cents per \$100 of assessed property value each year through 2036 for deposit in the Trust Fund. On July 14, 2010, the Freeholders adopted Amendment 2010-01 to the Burlington County Parks and Open Space Master Plan to allow for use of Trust Fund revenues for this grant program.

The duration of the grant program and the amount to be allocated from the Trust Fund will be decided an annual basis by the Commissioners. Municipalities that are interested in obtaining grant funding will be required to submit an application to the County in accordance with a schedule to be developed each year. Because funding is limited, this is a competitive program. It is also important to note that grant funds will reimburse municipalities for expenditures on eligible project costs.

This manual provides information on the application process and the evaluation and ranking of applications, describes eligible project costs, and establishes procedures for reimbursement of grant funds.

## **II. Eligible Applicants**

Only Burlington County municipalities are eligible to receive grant funding through this program. Municipalities that form partnerships with other towns for the purpose of constructing or improving shared recreational facilities will receive special consideration when applications are ranked.

Municipalities that have outstanding obligations over one year for local cost share under the Farmland Preservation Program will not be eligible to apply unless that municipality has executed an agreement with the County that sets forth terms for repayment of that obligation.

## **III. Grant Amounts**

The maximum grant award shall be \$250,000. Municipalities may only submit one application per annual grant cycle.

## **IV. Matching Funds**

No matching funds are required. However, if the total cost of the project exceeds the grant request, municipalities must indicate in the application the source of the additional funds needed to complete the project.

## **V. Eligible Projects & Project Costs**

### ***Park Development/Improvement Projects***

Grant funds may be used for the capital (hard) costs associated with the development and improvements to public parklands that are owned, controlled and maintained by the municipality or held by the municipality pursuant to a long-term lease entered into for recreation or conservation purposes with the State or Federal government or local school district. Lease terms must extend at least 25 years beyond the anticipated date of project completion.

Park development and improvement projects include, but are not limited to: rehabilitation of parkland, green space or greenways; development and redevelopment of playgrounds and outdoor passive recreation areas; and the development and redevelopment of active recreation areas. The grant amount will be based on the projected construction costs of the approved project elements.

**Soft costs (engineering, architectural and permit fees), purchase of equipment, and operation and maintenance costs are not eligible project costs.**

### ***Open Space Acquisition***

Municipalities may apply grant funds to the cost of acquisition of locally important open space. Municipalities are encouraged to seek cost share funding through the State Green Acres Program and use County funds to supplement the 50% Green Acre's cost share. The municipality must grant the Burlington County Board of County Commissioners a conservation easement for any property preserved using these County funds.

### ***Farmland Preservation Program, Municipal Cost-Share***

A municipality may apply grant funds to offset all or a portion of municipal cost share obligations required by the Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program. Grant funds may be used to offset prior due or current obligations. Future obligations for farms will not be funded.

A municipality may apply grant funds to the acquisition of locally important farms by fee simple or easement acquisition. These locally important farms need not meet the criteria for inclusion into the County Farmland Preservation Program. All other conditions and restrictions of the County Farmland Preservation Program shall apply. The per acre cost of the development easement, not the fee simple cost, will be considered the basis for the grant funds. Properties acquired by eminent domain will not be eligible.

## VI. Public Hearing Requirements

Applicants are reminded that Green Acres regulations require that a local government unit hold at least one public hearing when a change in use of parkland is being proposed. This includes the development of lands for public outdoor recreation or construction of buildings or other structures for public indoor recreation. Applicants that propose to use grant funding for such a change in use of parkland, must comply with the public hearing requirements at N.J.A.C. 7:36-25.6.

## VII. Review of Applications

Applications will be reviewed by a committee comprised of the Commissioner to the Department of Resource Conservation and County staff representing the Resource Conservation and Engineering Departments. The Committee will evaluate and rank the applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth below. Committee recommendations will be presented to the Board of Commissioners, who then adopt a resolution formalizing the grant awards and authorizing the execution of grant agreements with the selected applicants.

Please be reminded that this is a competitive grant program. A complete, well-written and well-organized application that is responsive to the project evaluation criteria and application requirements will be more likely to receive funding.

## VIII. Project Evaluation

Each project will be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the criteria and point system listed below. The Application Narrative prepared as part of the application should be used by the applicant to demonstrate how the project meets the following criteria.

- **Regional Significance** - does the project meet not only local but regionally significant goals? Does the project provide connectivity to other public preserved lands? Is the project being proposed by a partnership of municipalities? Will facilities to be constructed be shared with other towns?
- **Strength of Local Program** - is there evidence of a pattern of municipal investment in and commitment to the local parks, recreation, and open space program? Is the municipality committed to moving the project forward? Have local funds been committed to meet costs not covered by grant or other funding sources? Have other matching funds been obtained? Use of in-house forces and/or volunteers for park development projects will demonstrate strong community support; however, grant funds cannot be used to reimburse the cost of the municipal workforce.
- **Relationship to Other Planning Efforts** - is the project included as part of an officially adopted local plan and does it address documented local needs? How does the project conform with or augment County plans.
- **Community Support/Need** - is there clear public support for the project? Does the project provide recreational facilities to meet documented unmet needs of the township? Letters of support, participation of other partners and volunteers and outside funding sources will be considered.)

- **Program Priorities** - does the project consider or provide for physically and developmentally challenged populations, further sustainability goals such as use of renewable or alternative energies, access to public transportation, hiking or biking trails, and/or provide public water access?
- **Design** - is project design sensitive to or enhance special natural, cultural, and historic features on the site? Does the project demonstrate compatibility with adjacent land uses? Use of sustainable design features? )

## **IX. Grant Award Procedures**

A municipality that has been selected to receive grant funding will be required to execute a grant agreement with the County. A sample grant agreement is enclosed, although the form and content of the grant agreement are subject to change. Grant agreement language is non-negotiable.

## **X. Time for Project Completion**

Project completion or closing on an acquisition must occur within two (2) years of the date of the resolution adopted by the Board awarding grants.

If more time is needed to complete the project, the municipal governing body may submit a written request for a time extension. The request should also set forth the municipality's due diligence in pursuing the project, an explanation for the unforeseen difficulties encountered by the municipality in completing the project within the allotted period, and a proposed schedule for completion. Requests for extension must be submitted prior to the expiration of the period allowed for project completion.

If a timely request for extension is not received or if a request is denied, the funding award may be cancelled.

## **XI. Grant Conditions**

A copy of the grant agreement to be executed by a municipality selected to receive a grant is attached. Please be aware that, in addition to the terms related to project completion, the agreement includes the following conditions:

The facility/property must be open to the general public.

Municipalities shall work with the County to promote public awareness of the grant when it is awarded and when said grant funds are utilized for the purposes of conservation and park development consistent with the Municipal Park Development Program. A sign, to be provided by the County, must be posted acknowledging funding from the County of Burlington.

Proposed changes to the scope of the project must be submitted in writing with a full description of the changes and the funding implications.

Changes to a project deemed "Major" by the County may not be permitted. Major changes

may include, but are not limited to, selection of new project location, deletion of key project elements, substantial budget changes, and loss of municipal commitment.

Changes that negatively impact the fundamental merits of the project that resulted in its selection for funding may not be approved. Unauthorized changes in project scope may result in the withholding of all or some of the County grant funds.

## **XII. Grant Disbursement**

Grant funds will not be disbursed prior to the execution of the grant agreement between the County and the municipality. Grant funds will be disbursed only after all required documentation as described below has been submitted to the County and found to be acceptable.

### ***Park Development/Improvement Projects***

Grant funds will be distributed to municipalities on a reimbursement basis in two installments: 1) upon demonstration that 50% of the grant amount has been expended; and 2) upon project completion.

Requests for reimbursement for 50% of the grant amount must include:

- A signed County voucher for payment (to be provided);
- Detailed breakdown showing how funds were expended and evidence of expenditures (paid invoices, contractor payment applications, etc.); and
- Certification by a township official that funds were expended in the manner described.

Requests for final reimbursement upon project completion must include:

- A signed County voucher for payment (to be provided);
- A certified copy of a resolution by the governing body determining that the project is complete and authorizing final payment to the contractor.;
- Final payment application (AIA Form) signed by project engineer; and
- Certification by a township official or project professional verifying that the project was completed in substantial conformance to the project scope as described in the application and the grant agreement.

Upon request by the County, the applicant must make available for review and/or submission to the County copies of construction contracts, the detailed bid proposal, any approved project change orders, and record or as-built drawings.

Applicants will only be reimbursed for actual eligible costs. An applicant will not receive the full grant amount if the final actual project cost is less than the grant award.

### ***Open Space Acquisition***

Payment up to the grant amount will be made for that portion of the purchase price or the fair market value, whichever is less, that is not covered by other funding sources. In no case shall payment exceed the amount represented by the purchase price/fair market value minus any partner cost-share funding.

County funds may be provided at closing if all pre-disbursement conditions of the award have been satisfied and notice of closing is provided to the County at least thirty (30) days prior to the closing date. Otherwise, funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis after all conditions are satisfied.

### ***Farmland Preservation Program, Municipal Cost-Share***

If grant funds are to be used to offset local cost share obligations for a County farmland preservation project, applicants will be provided a voucher to submit to the County in lieu of remitting payment. The voucher will be provided to the applicant once the final cost share amount is known. This will occur after County and/or municipal final approval of the specific project but before settlement. Grant funding will be directly applied by the County to offset municipal cost-share obligations.

## **XIII. Application Submission Requirements**

### **Application Forms**

The application is available in a fillable PDF format at: [www.co.burlington.nj.us/resourceconservation](http://www.co.burlington.nj.us/resourceconservation)

### **Submission Information**

Applications must be submitted by the deadline stated below to the Department of Resource Conservation. Send by regular mail to: P.O. Box 6000, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060 or, by overnight courier or hand delivery, to: 50 Rancocas Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060.

### **Deadline for Submission**

Applications for 2025 funding must be postmarked or delivered to the Burlington County Resource Conservation Department on or before close of business on **JUNE 27, 2025**.

### **Projected Award Schedule**

Application Due Date:	June 27, 2025
Tentative Date for Freeholder Resolution Awarding Grants:	August 13, 2025

## **Municipal Resolution**

The municipality must adopt and submit with its application a resolution which authorizes submission of the application to the County and memorializes the governing body's approval and financial commitment to the project. A form of resolution is attached hereto. Applicants may not modify the language in the municipal resolution and must identify the project by name, street address, and tax block and lot.

## **Contents of Applications**

Please provide five (5) copies of the application to facilitate review of the proposal. All applications must be submitted with the following:

- Application Cover Page
- Completed Application Form
- Project Map/Tax Map
- Project Narrative
- Certified Copy of Municipal Resolution
- Other Supporting Documentation

The **Project Narrative** is the applicant's opportunity to identify how its project meets the project evaluation criteria by which the project will be ranked. The applicant should include in the **Supporting Documentation** any documents that are deemed necessary to enhance its application.