

ENRTF Community Grant Program Advisory Council Meeting

September 10, 2026

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

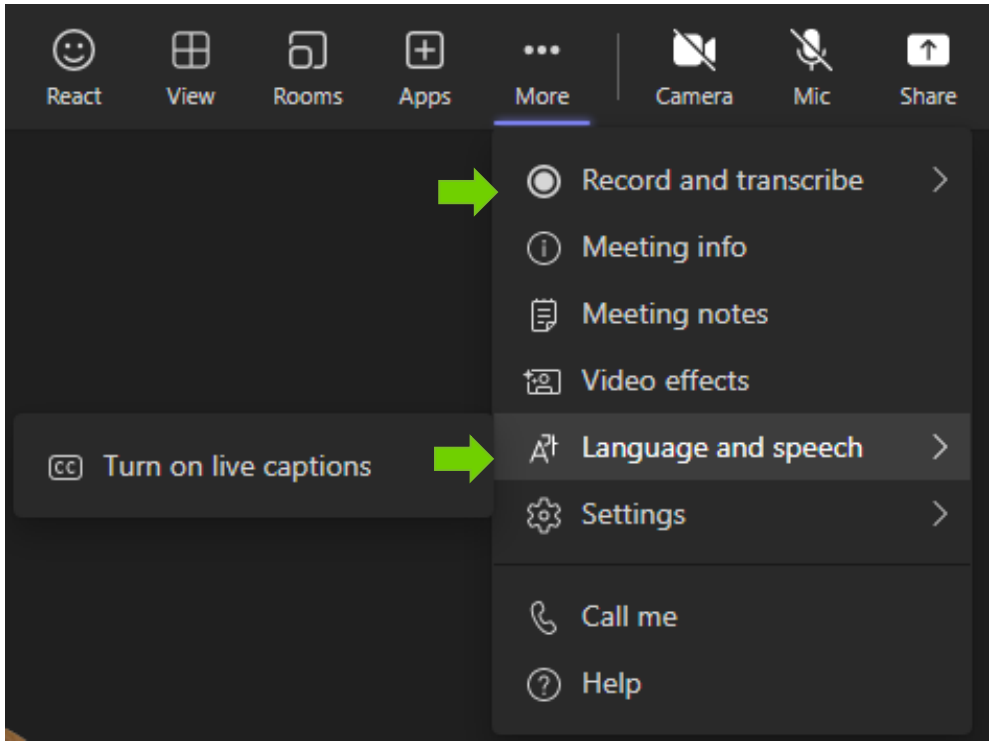
Technology and meeting material access

- Meeting documents are posted on the Advisory council meeting webpage under Sept 10 meeting.
- Assistance with technology: entrf.communitygrants.dnr@state.mn.us
- Mics and cameras are disabled for the public.
- Chat and Q & A are disabled for everyone.
- Reactions feature is disabled for everyone

Captions and subtitles

Auto captions

- Select the “More actions” option via the ellipses (3 dots) in the toolbar
- Language and speech > Turn on live captions



Today's Agenda

10:00 Welcome & meeting approach

10:05 **Approve July 21 meeting notes** (roll-call vote)

10:10 Program & RFP review update

10:20 Stage 1 & Stage 2 discussion

11:10 Break

11:20 **Funding-round name recommendation** (roll-call vote)

11:35 Applicant resources & launch preparation

11:50 Statewide outreach strategy

12:20 First-round learning & future outlook

12:45 Confirm advice, formal actions & next steps.

How we will discuss and decide today

Discussion

- Members share advice, concerns and unintended effects
- The DNR captures differing perspectives and follow-up
- Discussion does not automatically become formal council action

Fist to Five

- Optional concern-check after discussion
- Helps identify whether an important concern remains
- Not a vote, not counted, and does not establish council consensus

Formal Council Action

- Used when the council approves or formally recommends something
- Formal votes will be taken by **roll call**
- Each member's vote will be recorded

Today's formal actions are approval of the July 21 meeting notes and the funding-round name recommendation.

Advisory council role in the Community Grant Program







ADVISE

- Program policies, application processes and implementation
- Forms, applications, reporting, policies and recipient eligibility

RECOMMEND

- Improvements to the Commissioner
- Improvements that may warrant legislative considerations

LEARN

- Review implementation evidence
- Identify barriers, unintended effects and future improvements

Program Improvement

The advisory council advises and recommends; the DNR administers the grant competition and makes grant management decisions.

What changed in law in 2026, and where DNR retains flexibility

Requirement	What the 2026 law now requires
Monitoring	Unannounced in-person monitoring before final payment; only grants under $50,000 may be sampled
Preaward + fiscal controls	Risk assessment for grants under $50,000 and sampled financial reconciliation before final payment
Cash flow	Reimbursement is the default; advance payment requires a surety bond or an approved fiscal agent
Reporting	Quarterly written progress reports until funds are spent and agreement terms are met

DNR implementation choices

- Simplify forms
- Collect information at the stage when it is actually needed
- Provide plain-language guidance
- Support applicants
- Use fiscal-agent structures where authorized
- Coordinate requirements to reduce duplication
- Administer proportionately where law permits

Some council concerns cannot be addressed by removing statutory requirements. DNR can still reduce unnecessary burden in how those requirements are implemented.

What changed because of your written review

August 20 review draft	Current DNR direction
More complicated Priority Placement architecture	10-point Stage 1 assessment
Seven Stage 2 criteria	4 Technical criteria in Stage 2
70-point qualification threshold	No predetermined passing percentage
Stage relationship difficult to follow	Stage 1 score does not carry into Stage 2
Too much information risked being requested too early	Stage-specific documentation
Project and grant-agreement timing were easily conflated	Approximately 12 months substantive implementation, with appropriate administrative time
Fiscal-agent role needed clarification	Fiscal agents recognized as an access-support mechanism

Your feedback is going to more than one place

Final RFP

Eligibility, competition rules, scoring, selection, applicant commitments

Applicant Resources

Examples, pathways, FAQs, language and accessibility support, Stage 2 guidance



DNR implementation

Grants management system, Reviewer calibration, technical review, monitoring, question tracking

Future rounds

Evidence from applicant experience and implementation

Your input helps shape the current RFP, how we support applicants, how we implement the program, and how we improve future rounds

Beyond Scoring: reducing burden across the applicant pathway

Stage 1

Understand the idea

- Short Concept Note
- Minimum information
- Less-than-two hour design target
- DNR verifies information where reasonably possible

Stage 2

Develop the project

- Fuller information only for invited applicants
- Structured project-development and technical support

PreAward

Confirm State requirements

- Due diligence when it is actually needed
- Do not turn stage 1 into a preaward process

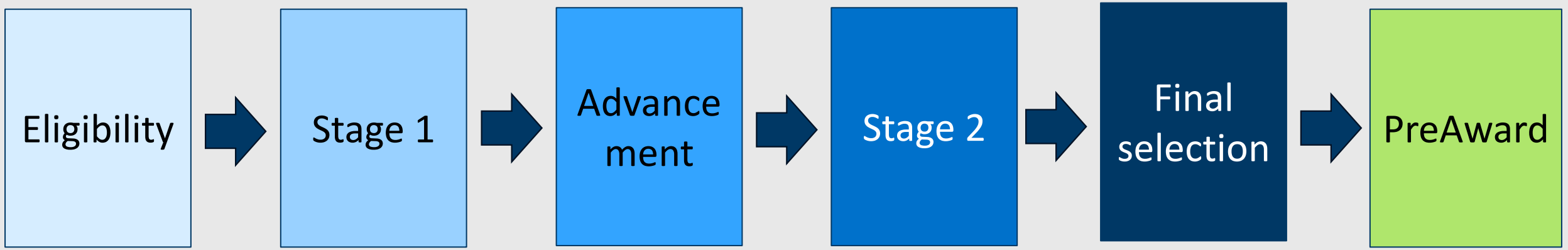
Grant Implementation

Administer proportionately

- Approximately 12 months substantive implementation
- Startup and closeout where appropriate
- Required State controls implemented as proportionately as allowed

Ask applicants for information when DNR needs it to make the next decision, not earlier.

Revised competitive pathway



Confirm eligibility and basic fit

10-point Concept Note

Review by Community Grants Panel

Full application and technical evaluation

Technical ranking & statutory portfolio check

Finalist due diligence before award

Stage 1 priority scores do not carry into Stage 2

STAGE 1
Proposed 10-point assessment

Criteria	Point Range
Adversely affected community	0-3
Expanding access to ENRTF	0-1
Need & community/public benefit	0-3
Potential to develop into a workable Stage 2 project	0-3
TOTAL	**10 points possible**

- No published passing percentage
- No automatic criterion cutoff
- No fixed score guarantees Stage 2

Discussion Question 1: Stage 1 Access and Scoring

Does the proposed Stage 1 balance reflect the Community Grant Program's access purpose while preserving a real pathway for strong eligible projects across Minnesota?

What unintended effects should the DNR monitor during the first funding round?

Council discussion: Fist to Five may be used as a concern check, not a vote

STAGE 2
Technical evaluation

Criteria	Weighted percentage
Project design and technical approach	35%
Work plan, feasibility and implementation readiness	30%
Results and performance	20%
Budget and value	15%
TOTAL	**100%**

- 0-5 rating scale
- No 70-point threshold.
- Stage 1 score does not carry forward.

Discussion Question 2: Applicant and Project Barriers

Do the revised two-stage design, project timeframe, and support model leave any important applicant or project-type barrier we should address before launch?

What unintended burden or technical blind spot should the DNR watch for?

Council discussion: No formal action required

What should we call the first funding round?

Advisory council recommendation requested

- ❑ Community Impact Grants
- ❑ Community Stewardship Grants
- ❑ Small Grants
- ❑ Community Action Grants
- ❑ Community Initiative Grants
- ❑ Inaugural Community Grants Round
- ❑ Community Environmental Initiative Grants
- ❑ Community & Environment Action Grants

RFP is one part of the applicant experience

Applicant Pathway

Full grant lifecycle

Five Eligible Activity Areas

Understand statutory pathways

Is This Grant Right for Us?

Decide whether the opportunity fits

Community Grants Funding Opportunity Overview

Understand the opportunity

Stage 1-specific support

Core applicant resources available in English, Spanish, Hmong and Somali

Stage 1 guidance | Submission checklist | Key dates | FAQs | Webinars and office hours

Later Stage 2: project development tools

The RFP contains the rules. Applicant resources help people understand whether the opportunity fits and what they need to do next.

Statewide outreach is more than announcing an RFP

Outreach is both an access strategy and a relationship function.

It helps ensure that diverse communities know about the opportunity, understand how to apply, and know where to find clear information and support throughout the process.



INFORM

Raise awareness about the opportunity and who is eligible



BUILD TRUST

Work with trusted partners and existing networks



REMOVE BARRIERS

Provide clear information, in multiple languages, with accessible support



REACH MORE COMMUNITIES

Ensure the opportunity reaches the communities that have not historically accessed ENRTF funding

The statewide outreach strategy we are building



Who do we need to understand and reach?

Trusted Intermediaries

These groups can help us reach more communities and reduce barriers to participate

- AIS, trails and education networks
- Culturally specific organizations
- Organizations that connect or influence these audiences
- Environmental networks
- Community-based organizations
- Local governments and regional partners
- Education networks

Applicant and Community Audiences

Communities across MN

Tribal Nations + Tribal organizations

Organizations new to State grants

Underserved communities

Where we need your help with launch outreach

WHO OR WHERE ARE WE MISSING?

Communities, organizations, networks and geographic areas

WHERE CAN THE DNR SHOW UP?

Existing meetings, webinars, association calls, conferences, coalitions, newsletters and listservs

WHO CAN HELP OPEN A DOOR?

Trusted messengers, potential hosts, warm introductions and distribution partners

WHAT SHOULD WE WATCH FOR?

Language, format, timing or DNR practices that could create barriers

Council members can help connect the DNR to networks. The DNR will provide the official program information and applicant guidance.

First round: implement, observe, improve

January 2027



Early Learning

- Who applies & where
- New to ENRTF participation
- Stage 1 burden & applicant questions
- Technical assistance demand/use
- Stage 1 scoring patterns
- Resource and translation use
- Submission-system barriers
- Applicant experience and willingness to reapply

Longer-Term Learning



Through implementation

- Project implementation
- Monitoring and Reporting
- Grantee and community experience
- Outcomes and real-world impact
- What to keep, adjust or change for future rounds
- Project timing
- Burden & cash flow

Discussion question 3 and next steps

What should the DNR monitor and learn from during the first funding round?

What additional advice do you have to set us up for a successful launch and first round

Sept 10

council discussion

Sept 11-15

CG Incorporate council input and complete public-ready RFP

The DNR Finalize RFP

Complete DNR internal review

Public RFP Release

Outreach, applicant resources and community preparation begin

Application Window Opens

Submission system opens after readiness is confirmed

Nov 16

Current Stage 1 close

Before we close

- What advice did we hear?
- What formal actions did the council take?
- What will the DNR carry forward