

ENRTF Community Grant Program advisory council member expectations

Purpose of the advisory council

The ENRTF Community Grant Program Advisory Council provides input and recommendations to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources commissioner and the Minnesota Legislature on the management and improvement of the Community Grant Program.

The council promotes transparency, accessibility, equity and effectiveness in how Community Grant Program resources are managed and distributed.

What the advisory council does

The advisory council:

- Provides input on grant application templates, forms and reporting requirements
- Reviews proposed program policies and budgets
- Proposes program changes when needed
- Reviews relevant program information
- Makes recommendations for improving program management
- Reviews and provides input on recipient eligibility

Advisory role

The council does not administer grants, score grant applications, select grant recipients or make final funding decisions. The DNR administers the program and retains decision-making responsibilities assigned by law and policy.

What members are expected to do

- Attend scheduled meetings and participate for the full meeting when possible
- Notify DNR staff in advance if they cannot attend
- Review meeting materials before meetings
- Participate actively in discussions
- Share relevant experience, knowledge and community perspective
- Listen to and work respectfully with members who hold different perspectives
- Contribute to recommendations and group decision making
- Support transparency and public trust

- Follow advisory council and DNR processes
- Disclose actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest
- Protect nonpublic information
- Check email regularly and use electronic meeting materials, with support or alternative arrangements available when needed

Regular participation is important to the council's ability to complete its work. Attendance concerns will be addressed under the advisory council charter, bylaws and applicable appointment procedures.

Meeting schedule and format

The advisory council is expected to hold approximately four to six public meetings each year. Additional meetings may occasionally be needed based on the council's work plan or Community Grant Program needs.

Meetings may be:

- In person
- Hybrid
- Virtual

The council will use a mix of meeting formats to support effective participation, public access and statewide representation. Members will help confirm the meeting schedule and locations after appointment. All advisory council meetings are open to the public.

Estimated time commitment

Members should expect to spend approximately 40 to 60 hours each year on advisory council responsibilities. This estimate may include:

- Attending four to six council meetings
- Reviewing materials and preparing before meetings
- Participating in onboarding or training
- Participating in work groups or other assignments authorized through the council's approved work plan or by DNR consistent with the council's advisory role
- Completing conflict-of-interest, reimbursement or other required documentation

Travel time for in-person meetings is not included in the annual estimate and will vary depending on the member's location and the meeting location. The actual time commitment may vary from year to year based on the council's work plan, meeting length and program needs.

Length of appointment

Members generally serve staggered three-year terms. Initial appointments may include shorter terms to establish a staggered rotation. Members may continue to serve until a replacement is appointed, consistent with applicable law and the final appointment terms.

Compensation and reimbursement

Advisory council members are not DNR employees. Members may be eligible for per diem compensation and reimbursement of eligible travel and other approved expenses in accordance with Minnesota law and state reimbursement requirements. The DNR will provide instructions and required forms during onboarding.

The current per diem compensation rate is \$55 per day for qualifying official council service. This rate is established under applicable Minnesota law and may change over time.

Onboarding and training

Members are expected to complete onboarding and any required training provided by the DNR. Topics may include:

- Community Grant Program purpose and structure
- Advisory council authority and responsibilities
- Open meeting and public records requirements
- Conflicts of interest and recusal
- Data practices and protection of nonpublic information
- Accessibility and inclusive participation
- Records and documentation expectations
- Compensation and reimbursement procedures

Collaboration expectations

Members are expected to:

- Be open and honest
- Respect others
- Work together
- Remain open to different viewpoints
- Focus disagreement on issues rather than individuals
- Avoid interruptions and side conversations
- Make space for all members to participate
- Support a positive and respectful working environment

Conflict of interest expectations

Members must avoid actual and potential conflicts of interest and disclose circumstances that could reasonably appear to affect their impartiality.

A conflict of interest may exist when a member has an actual or apparent duty or loyalty to more than one person or organization and those competing duties or loyalties could influence, or reasonably appear to influence, the member's advice, participation or recommendations.

Circumstances that may require disclosure include a matter involving:

- the member or an immediate family member
- the member's employer, business or source of compensation
- an organization for which the member serves as an officer, employee, board member, fiduciary or authorized representative
- an organization in which the member or an immediate family member has a direct or indirect financial interest
- another entity with which the member has a significant financial, governance, professional or decision-making relationship

Membership in, citizenship in or a general affiliation with a Tribal Nation or community does not by itself establish a conflict of interest. An affiliation with an organization that may apply for or receive Community Grant Program funding also does not automatically disqualify a member. The DNR will evaluate the specific circumstances, including the nature of the member's relationship, role, influence, access and potential benefit.

Members must disclose an actual, potential or perceived conflict as soon as they know or reasonably should know that it may exist. Disclosures must be made to designated DNR staff and, when applicable, the advisory council chair.

The DNR will determine how a disclosed conflict will be managed under applicable law, [Office of Grants Management Policy 08-01](#), DNR requirements, and advisory council governance documents. Depending on the circumstances, a member may be required to:

- refrain from receiving or reviewing particular information
- refrain from discussing or advocating for or against a matter
- refrain from making or participating in a recommendation
- leave a portion of a meeting
- take another action necessary to avoid, reduce or manage the conflict

Until the DNR provides direction, a member should not participate in an affected matter when the member believes an actual conflict exists or when continued participation could reasonably call the integrity of the council's work into question.

Conflict disclosures, determinations and management actions will be documented and retained as official program records, subject to applicable data-practices requirements.

Members should ask designated DNR staff for guidance whenever they are uncertain whether a circumstance should be disclosed.

Public service and communication expectations

Members serve in a public advisory role. Members should:

- Support transparent and accountable public processes

- Understand that meetings are open to the public
- Avoid disclosing nonpublic information
- Communicate accurately about the advisory council's role and authority
- Clearly distinguish personal views from official advisory council or DNR positions

Members may speak about their own experience and views but should not represent an individual position as the official position of the advisory council or DNR. Members should coordinate with the chair or DNR staff before communicating on behalf of the council.

Relationship with DNR

The DNR:

- Administers the Community Grant Program
- Supports advisory council meeting logistics
- Prepares meeting materials
- Provides facilitation
- Supports records, reports and communications
- Provides legal and policy guidance
- Implements final grant administration decisions

The advisory council provides input and recommendations. The DNR administers the program and retains decision-making responsibilities assigned by law and policy.

Support, accommodation and technology access

If you are an individual with a disability who needs a reasonable accommodation to apply for or participate in this advisory council, please contact Wendy Thompson at wendy.thompson@state.mn.us or 218-308-2076 for assistance. Calls from Telecommunications Relay Service users are welcome. Any accessibility information you provide will only be used to facilitate reasonable accommodations.

It is the policy of the DNR to take reasonable steps to provide individuals with Limited English Proficiency timely and meaningful access to DNR information, programs and activities. To request translation of this application, please contact Wendy Thompson at wendy.thompson@state.mn.us or 218-308-2076.

You are not required to disclose your accessibility needs, and there are no consequences for choosing not to provide this information. Accessibility needs information will only be available to DNR staff with a business need to know and will be shared only as required or allowed by state or federal law or pursuant to a court order.

DNR will provide reasonable accommodation for members with disabilities and will support participation through meeting planning, accessible materials, virtual participation options and other appropriate assistance. Members should communicate accommodation needs to DNR staff as early as possible.

Members will generally receive materials and communications electronically. The DNR will work with members to identify reasonable options when technology access creates a participation barrier.

Document status

This is an initial DNR resource developed to support advisory council recruitment, appointment and startup. It may be revised as program requirements and operating practices develop.

After the inaugural advisory council is fully seated, the DNR will work with the council during the first quarter of fiscal year 2027 to review the initial member resources, governance documents, standard operating procedures and guidance. The council may recommend changes consistent with its advisory role. The DNR will approve and issue DNR-owned policies, procedures, guidance and public resources. The current version remains in effect until revised or replaced.