

Montana Accessible Playgrounds Grant Program

Guidelines

HB 294 creates a grant program that encourages municipalities and school districts to develop accessible playgrounds. Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Parks Division, administers this grant program. This program provides grants only to supplement local and private funds in order to secure other grant funding that require a match for developing accessible playgrounds.

The legislature appropriated \$100,000 for the biennium beginning July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2019. Any state funds distributed must be matched at a rate of 1 to 1 minimum, with \$1 in state funds to \$1 or more in other grant funds. A grant may not exceed \$10,000.

The department (Fish, Wildlife & Parks) shall ensure that funds are distributed only as necessary to secure other grant funding that will increase accessibility in existing playgrounds or for the costs of accessibility features in new playgrounds. The money may not be used during initial construction for accessibility features required by The Americans With Disabilities Act for newly constructed playgrounds or to upgrade existing restroom or parking facilities that are not compliant with applicable accessibility standards.

Effective March 15, 2012, federal law requires that public play areas include wheelchair-friendly surfaces and equipment that help kids with physical challenges move around (2010 ADA Standards for Accessibility Design, 1008 Play Areas). If a town or school district builds a new playground, that playground must meet the 2010 ADA Standards for Play Areas. **Projects involving the construction of a new playground meeting the minimum 2010 ADA Standards for Play Areas are not eligible for the Montana Accessible Playgrounds Grant Program.**

If a town or school makes alterations to existing play areas, such as removing and replacing a play component, or changing the ground surfacing, the playground must meet 2010 ADA Standards for Play Areas. In addition, local governments must make their services, programs, and activities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, which may require that one or more existing playgrounds in a community be made accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities even if no alterations are otherwise planned. **These types of projects are eligible for the Montana Accessible Playgrounds Grant Program.**

In summary, the 2010 ADA Standards for Play Areas require the following in a public play area:

- 1) At least one of each type of play component provided at ground level in a play area must be on an accessible route
- 2) Based on the number of elevated play components provided in a play area, a minimum number of different types of ground-level play components must be provided;

- 3) At least 50 percent of the elevated play components provided in a play area must be on an accessible route
- 4) Elevated accessible routes must connect the entry and exit points of at least 50 percent of the elevated play components in the play area through ramps or transfer systems; and
- 5) All accessible routes within a play area must continuously comply with the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F 1951-99, which provides a surface that requires a force less than that required to propel a wheelchair up a ramp with a slope of 1:14.

The requirements set forth in the 2010 ADA Standards reflect the minimum accessibility that must be provided in public play areas. In contrast, many communities seek to go above and beyond these minimum requirements, and create fully inclusive playgrounds that enhance the play experience for physically disabled children and provide safe experiences for children with sensory deficits and other developmental issues. These inclusive playgrounds reflect the seven principles of universal design created by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University: Equitable Use, Flexibility in Use, Simple and Intuitive Use, Perceptible Information, Tolerance for Error, Low Physical Effort, and Size and Space for Approach and Use. These principles can create a play environment usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. A playground that meets the 2010 ADA Standards provides accessible routes within the play area; a playground that is fully inclusive provides permanently installed rubberized pour in place surfacing throughout the entire play area. A playground that meets the 2010 ADA Standards provides transfer stations to access elevated play components; a playground that is fully inclusive provides a ramp to a composite play structure connected by elevated ramps and bridges. **Projects that seek to make an existing or new playground more accessible than required under the 2010 ADA Standards are eligible for the Montana Accessible Playgrounds Grant Program.**

Purchase and installation of any of the following are eligible for funding under the Montana Accessible Playgrounds Grant Program:

- Any ground-level or elevated play component, including manufactured or natural swings, spring riders, interactive panels, activity tables, playhouses, rockers, slides, or climbers;
- Ramps, transfer systems, steps, decks, or roofs used to connect elements in the play area or on a composite play structure; or
- Permanently installed rubberized pour-in-place surfacing or synthetic turf ground surfacing
 - for accessible routes connecting elements in the play area with elements outside the play area
 - for accessible routes connecting elements within the play area
 - covering more than the required accessible routes in and to the play area, up to and including the entire play area.

Application Submission

Project Applicant: Name of municipality or school district applying for this grant. Include primary contact person, telephone number and email address.

Project Name & Location: Provide detailed information about location including name of park or school facility, location in community or county. Provide a map showing the location of the project.

History of Playground: Describe in detail all work that has been accomplished to date to meet or exceed ADA accessibility standards at this playground and current and future plans to improve accessibility. Provide photos.

Project Description: Describe in specific detail how you will use these grant funds to increase accessibility at an existing playground/s or exceed the 2010 ADA Standards at an existing or new playground. Provide photos, commercial pictures if appropriate. Keep in mind that your project will receive a higher score if you seek to create a fully inclusive playground.

Other Grant/s for Which This Montana Accessible Playgrounds Grant Serves As Match: Provide the name/s of other grant program/s for which this Montana Accessible Playgrounds grant serves as a match. A Montana Accessible Playgrounds grant will provide a 1 to 1 minimum match. In other words, if this program provides a \$10,000 grant, the applicant must find another program/s that provides, at a minimum, \$10,000 or more!

Applicant Investment:

Describe in detail the sources of and amount of locally raised funds for the project applied for in this application.

Describe in detail the sources of and hours of volunteer labor expected to complete the project applied for in this application.

Describe in detail donated materials and equipment and their value to complete the project applied for in this application.

Timeline: Provide dates when the project applied for in this application will begin and completion. To get projects on the ground, it is recommend that project completion should happen within one (1) year of project agreement but within a maximum of three (3) years.

Cooperators: Name all organizations and agencies that will cooperate with this project. This includes, but not limited to, planning, fund raising, donations, volunteer coordination, MEPA Compliance, on-site labor and supervision.

ADA Compliance: Describe actions and decisions the applicant has taken in the past to meet or exceed compliance with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. The U.S. Access Board “Accessible Play Areas: A Summary of Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas” provides details

on the accessibility standards applicable to play areas. Remember that funds from this grant program may not be used during initial construction for accessibility features required by the ADA for newly constructed playgrounds or to upgrade existing restroom or parking facilities that are not compliant with applicable accessibility standards.

MEPA Compliance: Is NOT required at time of application submittal. If a project is conditionally awarded the grant applicant will be asked to provide the necessary environmental information. Conditionally awarded grant applicants must satisfy the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Environmental Analysis form on the Montana State Parks website must be completed, including consideration of all reasonable alternatives. Public comment must have occurred within 24 months of the grant application deadline.

References:

HB 294: Montana Accessible Playgrounds Grant Program:

<http://leg.mt.gov/bills/2017/billpdf/HB0294.pdf>

Access Board Play Areas Guide: <https://www.access-board.gov/attachments/article/1369/play-guide.pdf>

Frequently Asked Questions About Play Areas: <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities/guides/play-areas/frequently-asked-questions>

Inclusive Playground: <http://info.mayrecreation.com/blog/what-is-an-inclusive-playground>
<http://shanesinspiration.org/category/inclusive-play-and-playgrounds/>
<http://www.ncaonline.org/resources/articles/playground-universaldesign.shtml> <http://www.npr.org/2013/08/27/213827534/for-kids-with-special-needs-more-places-to-play>

Recreation Management Article: How Inclusive Playgrounds Benefit Everyone:

http://recmanagement.com/feature_print.php?fid=201301fe01