ASRP PROJECT DEVELOPMENT FUNDING GUIDANCE (2023–2025 BIENNIUM)

*Updated October 2023*

The Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP) Steering Committee understands that taking the first steps to develop a project requires an investment of both time and money. Sponsors need to take several actions before a project concept can be ready. This guidance document describes two pathways for providing sponsor capacity for these needs. **Local Strategy Grants** primarily involve outreach to landowners within large geographic areas, such as ASRP geospatial units (GSUs) or watersheds, with the intent to identify and prioritize opportunities for multiple future projects. **Project Initialization Grants** involve due diligence or other initial steps to identify or develop restoration or protection projects.

For either pathway, sponsors will work with the ASRP Regional Implementation Teams (RITs) and landowners to identify areas of interest and project types appropriate for the area as identified in the [Prioritization and Sequencing guidance](https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Chehalis_ASRP_PS-Memo_03182021_Tagged.pdf) provided by the ASRP Steering Committee. Sponsors must follow the outlined process in order to be eligible to receive Local Strategy or Project Initialization Grants.

To apply for project development funding, ASRP sponsors should submit a Project Development Form to their RIT Lead. The same form is used for both Local Strategy and Project Initialization Grants. All Project Development Grants are reviewed by both the RIT and the ASRP Steering Committee but are not subject to scoring by the ASRP Technical Review Team. However, communicating early and often with the Technical Review Team throughout the project development process is still recommended.

# **Local Strategy Grants**

Local Strategy Grants are a new funding category starting in 2023. Local Strategy Grants provide capacity for sponsors to conduct landowner outreach and site assessments to bridge the gap between basin-wide prioritization and project implementation. The ASRP Prioritization and Sequencing memorandum and near-term implementation [map](https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Chehalis-ASRP-Years-1-10-Near-Term-Priorities-for-ASRP-Implementation-20201029.pdf) and [table](https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ASRPTableGraphic-ProjectActionsbyGSU_Near-Term.pdf) provide direction on which GSUs should be targeted for near-term implementation. However, the Prioritization and Sequencing memorandum does not provide data on landowner willingness or specific project feasibility at a site-specific scale. The document only provides prioritization at the GSU scale; prioritization based on potential habitat uplift *within* a GSU requires additional site assessments and landowner outreach, which are the focus of this grant.

Local Strategy Grants must meet the following requirements:

* Be located within a near-term GSU as determined by the ASRP Prioritization and Sequencing
* Conduct landowner outreach and/or site assessment activities over a physically or biologically significant area, such as the entire GSU, a majority of the GSU, a large geographic area encompassing multiple GSUs, or a large geographic area that might include multiple reaches

There is no maximum funding amount for Local Strategy Grants. However, these grants are intended to cover large geographic areas for minimal investments. A typical GSU Local Strategy Grant is anticipated to cost between $50,000 and $150,000 in total and include one or more ASRP sponsor organizations.

## Eligible Local Strategy Grant Activities

The following activities are considered eligible for this grant:

* Compiling existing reports and datasets available for the focal area
* Outreach to landowners and other interested or affected parties to lay the groundwork to engage on project actions that align with ASRP priorities for the GSU
* For example, mailers, workshops, presenting at local community meetings, individual landowner meetings, and other targeted outreach activities
* Data collection for initial assessment
* For example, assessment that quantifies habitat characteristics, limiting factors present, current species use/distribution, geomorphology, land uses, legal constraints, and other potential project constraints within the focal area
* Development of project opportunities/project concept plans in coordination with landowner(s)
* Includes proposed restoration or protection actions, rationale, and a conceptual map with project area and concept features outlined
* Modeling activities related to concept-level site assessments and prioritization
* For example, hydrology, wood loading, and site suitability
* Coordination with technical and local experts to learn about the conditions in the focal areas and any potential projects’ merits or drawbacks
* Development of initial cost estimates for design, construction, and/or acquisition at the site level
* Participation in the RIT
* Costs of preparing ASRP grant materials and applications for additional work in the focal area
* Indirect/overhead costs

## Ineligible Local Strategy Grant Activities

* Educational events that would not result in a specific project as an outcome
* Design engineering
* Equipment (items costing $5,000 and above), unless sponsor has written approval by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

## Local Strategy Grant Deliverables

The goal of Local Strategy Grants is to create plans for implementing projects that achieve ASRP habitat objectives, as outlined within the [ASRP Phase 1 document](https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/asrp-phase-i-draft-plan/), within large geographical areas. It is expected that this will require coordination and collaboration across multiple organizations. Deliverables for Local Strategy Grants include all of the following:

* A presentation of the local strategy results to both the ASRP RITs and the ASRP Steering Committee using a template provided by the ASRP
* A report documenting landowner willingness and/or site assessment information using a [template](https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ASRP_Site-Assessment-Template_10132023.docx):
* This report will provide data that will be added to a project development database maintained by the RIT Leads but not otherwise publicly accessible.
* Landowners interested in potential ASRP projects will formalize their interest by signing the [ASRP landowner acknowledgement form](https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ASRP_LandownerAcknowledgementForm_10132023.docx). These forms should be attached to the summary report.
* Sponsors should indicate their level of capacity and interest in taking on the projects identified in their final report.
* Sponsors should allocate 8 to 16 hours within their grant for coordination on next steps for implementing their local strategies.

Local Strategy Grants do not guarantee that resulting project concepts will be included in the ASRP Steering Committee’s project portfolio. Sponsors may have multiple Local Strategy Grants active.

# **Project Initialization Grants**

Project Initialization Grants are for projects with a specific location, willing landowner, and the first stages of a preliminary project concept already in place but that still need a basis of design or other due diligence before being ready to apply for design funding.

The ASRP allows for projects of any dollar amount to receive funding for design through construction without having to go through multiple rounds of grant applications. This can increase a sponsor’s willingness to work on a project because it allows for project sponsors to commit time and resources toward design knowing that they have a higher certainty of construction funding. However, in order to receive a design-build grant through the ASRP, a concept basis of design is expected at the time of application. Project Initialization Grants ensure a concept is ready for a design grant or a design-build grant.

There is no maximum funding amount for Project Initialization Grants. However, funding amounts are expected to scale with project size and scope; an example is outlined in the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PROJECT TYPE** | **ANTICIPATED FUNDS FOR PROJECT INITIALIZATION PER SPONSOR PER AREA OF INTEREST** |
| Reach Scale (Over 1 Contiguous River Mile) | $80,000 |
| Fish Passage Barriers and Other Small-Scale Projects | $30,000 |
| Protection | $25,000 |

## Eligible Project Initialization Grant Activities

* Development of and data collection for site assessment report for a particular project, including:
* Summary of pre-existing habitat assessments within the project location, if available
* Mapped habitat survey of site
* Mapped biological information for ASRP indicator species life-stage-specific use of the site and surrounding areas as defined by the ASRP Phase 1 document
* Development of and data collection for a concept level design report as outlined in Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) [Manual 18](https://rco.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SAL-Manual18.pdf)
* Modeling activities related to concept-level site assessments and prioritization
* For example, hydrology, wood loading, and site suitability
* Costs of preparing ASRP grant materials and applications for additional work in the focal area
* Indirect/overhead costs
* Coordination with landowners and other interested or affected parties
* Pre-acquisition tasks such as:
* Site visits
* Title review
* Appraisals and appraisal reviews
* Boundary surveys
* Environmental site assessments for hazardous waste

## Ineligible Project Initialization Activities

The following activities are considered ineligible for funding through the Project Initialization Grants:

* Educational events that would not result in a specific project as an outcome
* Preliminary or final design engineering
* Equipment (items costing $5,000 and above), unless sponsor has written approval by WDFW
* Permitting

## Project Initialization Grant Deliverables

The goal of the Project Initialization Grant phase is to develop projects that are supported by landowners and can be advanced to the project design stage. Expected deliverables from this grant include:

* At least one completed Site Assessment and Project Proposal (SAPP) form
* At least one signed landowner acknowledgement form
* A concept basis of design report
* Data delivery

If no SAPP is delivered: The ASRP Steering Committee recognizes that priorities identified through the ASRP Prioritization and Sequencing and opportunities for project implementation on the ground may not align. Sponsors will be paid for their time in project development, but if the sponsor is unable to complete at least one SAPP form over the course of the project contract, they will be expected to brief the ASRP Steering Committee on the results of their project initialization efforts and discuss planned next steps. Discussion with the ASRP Steering Committee could result in alternative actions or shifting efforts to focus in other priority areas. All Project Initialization Grants will have RCO-specific contract reporting deliverables in addition to ASRP program requirements.

Project Initialization Grants do not guarantee that the resulting concepts will be included in the ASRP Steering Committee's project portfolio for funding. Sponsors may have multiple Project Initialization Grants active.

# **Project Identification, Prioritization, and Development Pipeline**

The combination of Local Strategy and Project Initialization Grants fund all the initial steps before advancing to funding requests for design and construction. This process is intended to result in developing projects for implementation that are feasible and address the limiting factors in the geographic spatial unit.

Both Local Strategy and Project Initialization Grants can be proposed throughout the biennium as new opportunities arise to develop projects that align with the ASRP’s guidance. Both pathways require RIT and ASRP Steering Committee approval to receive funding but do not require a recommendation for funding from the Technical Review Team.

# Appendix 1: FAQs

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| --- | --- |
| QUESTION | ANSWER |
| Do project sponsors have to wait for a local strategy to be completed before implementing or developing projects in that GSU or local strategy region? | * Projects can be proposed at any time. * All aquatic species habitat projects, in development or active, within the local strategy area should be referenced within the final local strategy report. * If multiple projects are being proposed for a GSU without a local strategy, then the RIT may identify an organization(s) to create a local strategy for that GSU. |
| Do all projects have to be part of a local strategy? | * Local strategy reports are static documents produced during a specific moment in time, but the RIT also manages a living project development database that is updated as new opportunities arise or as new science becomes available to potentially prompt reprioritization. * New opportunities in the local strategy region should be assessed relative to projects identified in the local strategy report. |
| Do all projects need a Project Initialization Grant? | * Project Initialization Grants provide a funding pathway for (especially larger) projects to develop application materials. If a project already has sufficient materials for technical review, then they do not need a Project Initialization Grant. |
| Do local strategy reports require both a landowner willingness and habitat assessment components? | * No; these components can be separated into different, but ideally concurrent, Local Strategy Grants. * Both habitat characteristics and landowner willingness need to be known in order to prioritize projects. |

# Appendix 2: Local Strategy Process for Project Prioritization

After a local strategy is completed and the identified willing landowners and project opportunities have been added to the ASRP project development database, project sponsors will participate in a prioritization process to help sequence implementation.

Project prioritization and sponsor matching will occur at twice-yearly RIT meetings (or another frequency determined by the RIT) that replace the scheduled RIT meeting for that month. The ASRP project development database will be used to group potential project locations and actions by sub‑basin. This database includes both the results of Local Strategy Grants and other project opportunities identified outside of a Local Strategy Grant.

ASRP sponsors who work in each sub-basin, including those who worked on the relevant local strategy(s), will meet to prioritize these project locations and actions. Other interested ASRP parties, such as members of the Technical Review Team, Technical Advisory Group, or ASRP Steering Committee, may also assist with this prioritization as needed. Each potential location or action will be assigned a high, medium, low, or non-priority status as follows:

1. **High Priority**
   1. These projects meet all of the following criteria:
      1. The project is appropriately sited, with appropriate actions identified, to address the identified limiting factors within the GSU(s) with preliminary assessments indicating the potential for significant habitat uplift.
      2. The project is ready for application for project funding within 1 year.
      3. There is an identified sponsor with interest and capacity to do this project.
   2. All high-priority projects should be matched with a sponsor organization with the expectation to apply for ASRP funding within 1 year.
2. **Medium Priority**
   1. These projects meet all of the following criteria:
      1. The project is appropriately sited, with appropriate actions identified to address the identified limiting factors within that GSU, with preliminary assessments indicating the potential for moderate to significant habitat uplift.
      2. The project is ready for application for project funding within 1 to 2 years.
      3. There is **not** sufficient sponsor capacity within the ASRP RIT to do this project in addition to all of the high-priority projects.
   2. As high-priority projects are completed or sponsor capacity changes, medium-priority projects can be re-evaluated to become high-priority projects.
   3. Medium-priority projects can also be good candidates for receiving non-ASRP grants.
3. **Low Priority**
   1. These projects meet all of the following criteria:
      1. The project is appropriately sited, with appropriate actions identified to address the identified limiting factors within that GSU.
      2. The project is not ready for project funding application within 2 years.
   2. Low-priority projects can become medium- or high-priority projects through additional project development, such as what would be obtained through a Project Initialization Grant.
4. **Non-Priority**
   1. Non-priority projects do not address limiting factors within the GSU and do not merit further development from ASRP sponsor organizations regardless of capacity.
   2. It would be more effective to reach out to additional landowners rather than to continue development on non-priority sites.
   3. Non-priority projects may be good candidates for receiving non-ASRP funds.

It’s possible that a Local Strategy Grant might generate all high-priority opportunities or any combination of high-, medium-, and low-priority opportunities. Prioritization incorporates not just relative project merit as determined by habitat uplift potential but also program-wide sponsor capacity and implementation feasibility.