

Montana

Disadvantaged Community (DAC)

Communities seeking a DWSRF loan that meet the disadvantaged community criterion described below may receive an additional subsidy on their SRF loans, beyond the standard below-market rate financing, in the form of some principal forgiveness. This includes communities that will meet the disadvantaged criterion based on projected user rates as a result of the project.

A community is considered economically disadvantaged when its combined annual water and wastewater system rates are greater than or equal to 2.3% of the community's Median Household Income (MHI). If the community has only a water system, the percentage is 1.4% of the community's MHI. These percentages are consistent with affordability requirements for other state funding agencies in Montana. The water and sewer rates used for this calculation include new and existing debt service and required coverage, new and existing operation and maintenance charges, and normal depreciation and replacement expenses.

For SFY 2023, to assist these economically disadvantaged communities, the DWSRF loan program will provide to qualifying communities 75% principal forgiveness of the loan amount, up to a maximum of \$750,000. The regular interest rate will apply to the balance of the loan. Only one principal forgiveness subsidy, up to \$750,000 total, will be allowed per project. Projects with the highest user rates relative to MHI will be given priority status. Refinancing of existing debt is not eligible for principal forgiveness. SRF funding must be utilized to include actual project construction and not just for preliminary or design engineering only. A project must be ready to proceed to construction. That is defined to include having all required permits and approvals, complete project funding in place, and in a position to advertise for bids and make a contract award.

The total amount of principal forgiveness that the DWSRF may allocate under the FFY 2022 base capitalization grant will be limited to 30% of that capitalization grant. This measure is taken to ensure that the corpus of the DWSRF fund will be maintained and that the program will be able to operate in perpetuity, while still providing some additional assistance to economically disadvantaged communities. The total amount of principal forgiveness that the DWSRF may allocate under the FFY 2022 supplemental capitalization grant will be limited to 49% of that capitalization grant. This amount is stipulated in the BIL. If any capitalization grant funds are transferred to the WPCSRF program, the corresponding principal forgiveness amount (30% [base] or 49% [supplemental]) will also be transferred.