

Title	<b>Firelight District Launch</b>	07/02/2025
	by <b>Rebecca Brockie</b> in <b>FY26 Microgrant Fund</b>	id. 50975563
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## Original Submission 07/02/2025

Score	n/a
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Request Name	Firelight District Launch
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Who will be the fiscal sponsor of this request?	Firelight Meadows County Water and Sewer District
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Description	<p>Formed by voters in the May 6, 2025, election and certified by the Montana Secretary of State on May 27, 2025, the Firelight Meadows County Water and Sewer District crowns nearly two-years of a grassroots effort led by residents determined to address longstanding deficiencies in the community's septic system. The newly elected volunteer board of five now faces the complex task of launching the district, navigating regulatory requirements by agencies like Montana DEQ, and pursuing annexation into the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District, without the technical experience to do so. Though newly formed, the board anticipates the annexation process will take more than two years, per initial meetings with the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District. A Microgrant from Resort Tax will help secure the essential professional services the district needs to begin this work.</p> <p>To guide this process, the Firelight District Board retained legal counsel from Jackson, Murdo &amp; Grant, a Montana firm experienced in water and sewer district law. Attorneys Aimee Hawkaluk and Nathan Bilyeu will bring critical expertise in local government compliance and finance. The district also secured engineering support from Mace Mangold, Vice President at WGM Group, who has extensive experience in designing, implementing, and connecting wastewater systems in the Big Sky region.</p>
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Select the projects Investment Type	Programming
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Select the projects Impact Area	Public Works
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Where will this project be taking place?	In the Firelight Meadows County Water and Sewer District, which consists of 216 landowners adjacent to local neighborhoods like West Fork and Town Center.
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Please explain the community benefit of the project	<p>The Firelight Water &amp; Sewer District includes 216 landowners and 152 registered voters, making it the largest HOA in Big Sky outside of BSOA. Located in the heart of the community, Firelight also plays a key role in providing residential housing. Because Big Sky relies on groundwater for its water supply, resolving septic issues in Firelight expands beyond the district's borders. The 2022 Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Study <i>Hydrogeology and Groundwater Availability at Big Sky, Montana</i> confirms that groundwater in the South Fork area flows east to west, carrying nitrogen from Firelight's failing septic system across the watershed. Transitioning from on-site septic to centralized sewer will satisfy Montana DEQ standards and reduce nitrogen loading that harms water quality. This project protects public health, supports local housing, and advances long-term stewardship of the Gallatin ecosystem.</p>
What is the Resort Tax request for this project?	25000
What is the total cost of this project?	8000000
Provide a list of the expenses this should this project be awarded funding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accounting and Legal Services estimated at \$10,000</li> <li>2. Engineering and Infrastructure Planning Services estimated at \$40,000</li> <li>3. <a href="#">FY26 BUDGET</a></li> </ol>
	<p>The total cost of this project from now until annexation is TBD. Prior to certification less than two months ago, the district did not exist and could not negotiate with Big Sky Water and Sewer District (BSWSD) or its current provider, Westfork Utilities. It also could not apply for grants. An appraisal of the existing Westfork-owned infrastructure, along with future construction estimates for physical connection costs, will help clarify the total cost of this project.</p>
When do you plan to have incurred the costs being requested?	11/1/2025
Please provide any additional information on this request if needed	<p>This Microgrant addresses startup needs, as outlined in the district's inaugural budget, modeled after Gallatin Canyon County Water &amp; Sewer District's first-year plan. It will also bridge the gap until other funding becomes available. Firelight homeowners previously contributed \$10,000 to support voter outreach and pay Gallatin County for the election. Those funds are depleted and the HOA cannot replenish them until it approves a new budget at the annual meeting in September. Meanwhile, system failures persist. Less than a month ago, residents faced a boil water advisory, underscoring the need to pursue connection to a centralized system. The Firelight Meadows County Water &amp; Sewer District also plans to apply for a Resort Tax FY2026 Government Interlocal Grant, requesting the same level of startup funding awarded to the Canyon Water &amp; Sewer District, minus any Microgrant funds received. This Microgrant allows us to get to work now while following the precedent set by the Canyon.</p>

Please provide the name(s) and email addresses of who will be representing this request at the next BSRAD board meeting

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Application Review & Final Submission

If your application is still in progress you may save your work using the "Save Draft" button. If your application is complete and ready for District review submit using the "Submit Form" button. Once submitted you may not make changes or edits to your application. Application Review: Applications generally will be reviewed at the next regularly scheduled Board Meeting. The board meeting schedule can be found on the District website. If received less than 10 days before the next regularly scheduled meeting it will not be reviewed until the following month/meeting. The applicant must be present at the review meeting to answer questions or provide more information requested by the Board. Application review will not occur during the regular Annual Allocation Meetings (generally in June).

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