

Everything You Need To Know About Innovation Grants (and Planning Grants)



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The TogetherGreen Innovation Grants Program supports creative and ambitious projects that engage diverse communities and find innovative solutions to environmental challenges.

Each year, TogetherGreen grants fund projects that:

- Conserve or restore habitat and protect species, improve water quality or quantity, and reduce the threat of global warming;
- Engage new and diverse audiences in conservation actions; and
- Use innovative approaches and technologies to engage people and achieve conservation results.

Innovation Grant awards go to organizations within the Audubon network that are working with partners in their communities, and that have the passion, commitment, and vision to move people to take action and achieve lasting conservation results. If you are interested in applying but your organization is not part of the Audubon network, check www.audubon.org/search-by-zip to find an Audubon group you can partner with near you.

In 2012, we will award at least 40 grants, ranging from \$5,000 to \$80,000, with an average grant size of \$25,000. Note that requests above this amount are likely to face considerably more competition than requests of \$25,000 or less.

In addition, we will be offering three to five planning grants of \$5,000 or less. See Planning Grants on page 3 for details.



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BENEFITS OF AN INNOVATION GRANT

One of the goals of the Innovation Grants program is to build the capacity of conservation professionals. In addition to financial support, grantees receive opportunities for professional development, including a three-day, face-to-face workshop with other grantees, and web-based training offered throughout the year. Grantees also receive support from TogetherGreen program staff, have an opportunity to receive public recognition at the local, state, and national level, and are networked with other grantees to share best practices and learn from others.

What past Innovation Grant recipients have to say about the program:

We appreciated the focus on professional development, support and sharing among grantees, especially the webinars and the newsletter. We feel the conservation goals of TogetherGreen, along with the focus on community building and underserved audiences, are critically important.

– Center for Land Based Learning, which partnered with Audubon California's Landowner Stewardship Program to engage high school youth in oak woodland and riparian restoration

TogetherGreen funding has allowed us to do so much—forming new partnerships, leveraging funds, making connections between pre-existing programs, starting new programs, in addition to the hands-on conservation and outreach work we've been able to accomplish.

– Los Angeles Audubon Society, which involved high school and elementary students in habitat restoration and environmental education

The training was as valuable as the grant itself! Learning from experts about how to improve the design of our project and be more effective in reaching audiences was very helpful to us and our project partners.

– Audubon New York, which worked with landowners to identify and protect stopover sites for migratory birds in the Lake Ontario Basin

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

To be eligible for an Innovation Grant, the applying organization must meet the following requirements:

- Constitute a branch, office, or other operational unit of the National Audubon Society (including National or State Offices; field units such as Audubon Centers and Sanctuaries), or be an Audubon Certified Chapter, or Audubon Certified Chapter-run Center or Sanctuary. Independent Audubon entities that wish to participate in a cooperative arrangement with National Audubon Society for this purpose are also eligible. Other organizations are encouraged to apply if they partner with an Audubon group on their project. (Find an Audubon group near you at www.audubon.org/search-by-zip.) If you have questions, please contact the Innovation Grants manager at grants@togethergreen.org.
- Be a 501(c)3 tax-exempt public charity
- Have a commitment from at least one partner organization to serve as a collaborator
- Have adequate collective experience and organizational capacity to administer, implement, and evaluate the project



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PLANNING GRANTS

Organizations wishing to conduct preliminary work for a future project are encouraged to apply for a planning grant of \$5,000 or less. We will award three to five planning grants this year. Preliminary work might include building a relationship with a prospective partner, establishing credibility with a prospective audience, or conducting mapping work to determine priority conservation areas. To apply for a planning grant, see the complete downloadable Innovation Planning Grant application on the website and submit via email to grants@togethergreen.org by the **April 2, 2012** deadline.

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA FOR INNOVATION GRANTS

Successful projects will:

- Achieve measurable, on-the-ground conservation results that contribute to one or more of the conservation goals of the TogetherGreen program (see box below). Those changes may be ecological (for example, restoration of a wetland) or behavioral (for example, getting a particular audience to drive less).
- Reach under-represented and/or diverse audiences.
- Demonstrate innovation and/or replicability.
- Take place in the United States.
- Achieve results during the course of the one-year grant period, which will run from June 2012 - June 2013.

IMPORTANT: This will be the final year of our five-year grant from Toyota for Phase I of TogetherGreen, so we are unlikely to be able to offer any extensions to grant projects: all funds must be expended by June 2013. If your project will not fit within this schedule, please do not apply.

Applications will be reviewed by an expert selection committee composed of individuals from the Audubon network and other organizations representing a wide variety of fields, including conservation planning, evaluation, science, education, communications, and conservation biology. Each application will be reviewed by a team of three reviewers, from inside and outside the Audubon network. All applicants can contact grants@togethergreen.org to receive reviewers' feedback on their applications once decisions have been announced.

TogetherGreen Conservation Goals

1) **Habitat Goal:** Protect habitat for targeted species and in targeted landscapes

Habitat Objectives:

- Reduce threats to habitats of species that need special protection
- Restore habitats for species of special concern

2) **Water Goal:** Protect our water resources

Water Objectives:

- Improve water supply to protect biodiversity
- Improve water quality to protect biodiversity

3) **Energy Goal:** Protect our climate

Energy Objectives:

- Reduce the threat of greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy use and improving efficiency



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Each proposal will be scored and ranked using the following criteria:

1. Project Team, Qualifications, and Roles

How capable is the applicant? Does the project team have the collective experience, education, and training to successfully implement the project? The application should describe relevant previous experience on projects that have resulted in measurable conservation results. Reviewers will also be looking for past experience managing project budgets of a similar size.

2. Project Description and Link to TogetherGreen Conservation Goals

To describe your project and how it will engage people and achieve conservation results, the application requires you to answer the questions posed in the Conservation Planning Guide, downloadable from the Innovation Grants website. Reviewers will be looking for the conservation significance of your project, the relevance of your project activities and audience to your stated objectives, and the clarity of thought behind the project design.

Conservation Results And Moving People To Take Action: We know that some projects will be designed to achieve measurable conservation results within one year, others will be targeting the behavior of participants with the intention of achieving measurable conservation results in the future, and others will focus on both behavior change and measurable conservation results. All successful proposals will need to articulate what conservation need or threat is being addressed, how those issues are related to the TogetherGreen conservation goals, and how the proposed project will address those issues. If your project is largely focused on education and outreach, you will need to demonstrate what behavior changes you are expecting participants in your programs to make, and how those changes in behavior will lead to specific conservation results. (For more on “people measures,” see Frequently Answered Questions on the Innovation Grants website.)

The most competitive grants will achieve on-the-ground conservation results or behavior change over the course of the grant period. If a project focuses only on monitoring or the identification of priority conservation areas without achieving on-the-ground results or targeting behavior change, it will most likely be less competitive.

Reaching Under-Represented And/Or New Audiences: Audubon believes that a diverse conservation constituency is essential to conservation success and a sustainable future. TogetherGreen is designed to reach under-represented* audiences as well as new audiences to increase the diversity and number of people taking part in conservation action. We are looking for projects that strive to do both: engage diverse and underrepresented audiences, as well as target large numbers of individuals. How will your project broaden opportunities and engage targeted citizens, including under-represented communities? Which under-represented audiences will your project target? How will you build credibility with audiences you haven't worked with before?

** We are defining under-represented participants as those who have traditionally not been a part of the conservation movement and who have not had opportunities to connect with nature or take part in conservation actions. Under-represented audiences include people of color and low-income families, as well as those environmental stakeholders who have not considered themselves part of the conservation movement.*

3. Evaluation Strategy

Applicants are asked to describe their objectives, the indicators they will use to track their success, and their strategy for using those indicators. Reviewers will be looking for methods for tracking selected indicators that are clearly articulated, methodologically sound, and realistic given resources (staff and funding).



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If your proposal is selected for funding, we will work with you to refine the targets, threats, and metrics to assess conservation results most effectively, and you will be asked to create or refine your project logic models. (Although you don't have to submit a logic model now, many previous grantees felt that the process of thinking through a logic model would have been helpful during the application process. Search online for the "W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Logic Model Development Guide" to find out how to create logic models for your project.) We are working with an external evaluation team with experts from Clemson University, Virginia Tech, and Stanford University to assist with the collective evaluation of this program. They will be available to help all grantees with the evaluation of their projects.

4. Innovation and Strategic Impact

Proposed projects should seek to advance the field of conservation by creatively using innovative* and strategic approaches to achieve community-based conservation results. How will the project help move our thinking ahead in conservation? What will the impact be beyond your community and this project? Will the results yield new thinking in how we grapple with an issue or expand our reach and impact?

** We are defining innovation as a new or better idea, practice, product, process, or strategy that adds value to conservation and more effectively achieves the conservation goals of this program. Innovation can include creative methods for planning and implementing programs; the application of new technologies or ideas for improving current technologies; creative ways of engaging new audiences; and new ways to evaluate success.*

5. Sustainability/Replicability

Proposals will describe, if appropriate, how the project will be sustained beyond the grant period including additional funding, staff resources, or partnerships. If the project is designed to last just one year, reviewers will be looking to see if it will provide a replicable model that might be used in other communities or by other organizations.

6. Risk and Challenges

Every project involves risk. You will be asked to describe the major risks and challenges you anticipate facing in achieving your goals, your strategies for overcoming the challenges, and an explanation of how you factored risk into your project plan. Reviewers will want to see evidence that you have carefully thought through the risks and challenges and are prepared to deal with them.

7. Partner Organization(s)

Each applicant must identify at least one partner organization that will play a meaningful role in the proposed project. What will be the role and degree of participation of each partner organization? What qualifications does each partner organization have to perform this role and add value to the project? Partners can include, but are not limited to, other non-profit organizations, businesses, government agencies, or universities. (If your applying organization is not part of the Audubon network, at least one of your partner organizations should be.) Reviewers will be looking for evidence that the partnership will allow both partners to achieve something they couldn't achieve alone (i.e., that the partnership is meaningful and true), and that you are expanding your reach by partnering with a group very different from your own.

Note that we require a short letter of support from your primary partner(s), detailing why they are supporting the project and how they will take part in it. Letters should be uploaded as part of the online application. (As a rough guide, if a partner is involved in more than 30 percent of the project in terms of time or money, it should be considered a primary partner. We will expect at least one primary partner and a letter of support from them. Letters should be in PDF or Word format and should contain the partner's logo or letterhead.)



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8. Project Budget

Reviewers will be looking to determine whether the project's budget is realistic, whether budget categories and justifications are clear and detailed, and whether matching funds have been secured and/or in-kind support identified. They will also be looking out for uses of funds that are disallowed by TogetherGreen (see "Grant Restrictions," on page 7).

The application will also ask for background information about your organization and past accomplishments for previously funded grantees.

REQUIREMENTS OF GRANTEES

Each successful grantee must meet the following requirements:

1. Partner organization: Grantees must partner with at least one organization from outside the Audubon network. (Non-Audubon applicants must have an Audubon group as one of their partners.) Our goal in requiring partners is to help applicants engage new audiences in their work, get new perspectives, and achieve results that they would not otherwise be able to achieve. We encourage you to think of organizations whose missions differ from your own but with whom you can find common ground, and how your project might help reach their goals as well as yours. A successful partnership helps each partner achieve something it could not achieve alone.

Partners' roles will vary; in some cases, they might receive the majority of the funding, but in other cases they might play a smaller role. However, there should be a meaningful role for all partner organizations.

2. Training commitment: The Innovation Grants program is designed not just to fund projects but to provide professional development opportunities for all grantees. Thanks to Toyota, we have funding for one representative from each project team to attend a professional development workshop in early summer 2012. Workshop sessions will focus on conservation planning, communications, outreach, evaluation, fundraising, and other topics that will help strengthen participants' conservation work beyond the scope of individual projects. The workshop will also provide participants with opportunities to network with other grantees, as well as discuss conservation strategies, grant administration, evaluation, reporting, and other issues related to project management. Direct costs associated with the workshop, including travel and lodging, will be covered by TogetherGreen.

In applying for this grant, you are committing to send a key member of your project team to attend this three-day event.

3. Financial and program reporting: Grantees will be responsible for financial and program reporting twice during the grant period. The first report will be due after the mid-point of the grant term. A final report describing all actions associated with the grant will be due after the completion of the grant period. Reporting guidelines will be discussed at the summer workshop. Audubon staff may visit grantees for on-site and off-site audits.

4. Evaluation: Grantees are responsible for evaluating the success of their projects. In addition, they will work with the external evaluation team that Audubon has hired to assess the overall impact of the TogetherGreen initiative. That will mean completing a baseline survey towards the beginning of the grant period (completing the survey took past grantees anywhere from one to six hours), collecting information on project outcomes throughout the year, and completing surveys at the end of the grant period.



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5. **Communications and public relations:** Audubon will promote TogetherGreen projects and people through a website, media, and other outlets. Grantees will be expected to provide periodic stories, photographs, and interviews. Grantees will coordinate regularly with the TogetherGreen Communications team to highlight their projects and the results and to assist in the broader promotion of TogetherGreen objectives. All project materials, events, and other activities need to clearly note the sponsorship of TogetherGreen and Audubon/Toyota.

During the grants workshop, grantees will receive training in strategic communications, media relations, and how to develop communications plans for their projects. They will then be expected to submit their communications plans to the TogetherGreen team, describing their strategies for communicating with the media and other audiences important to their project.

6. **Grant Agreement:** Grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement; offices and programs of National Audubon Society will also be required to obtain their partner organizations' signatures on a sub-award agreement.

GRANT RESTRICTIONS

TogetherGreen Innovation Grants may not be used for indirect costs, overhead, or other expenses not directly related to the project. Funds may not be used for travel to scientific or professional meetings or conferences, legal actions, land acquisitions, endowments, lobbying, electioneering, or construction of buildings.

Projects can receive a maximum of two Innovation Grants.

All grant funds must be expended during the course of the grant period, which will run from June 2012 to June 2013. We will be unable to award extensions beyond that date.

HOW TO APPLY AND DEADLINE

All Innovation Grant applications must be submitted using the online form on the website, unless you are applying for one of the small Planning Grants. (Planning Grant applications can be downloaded from the website and once completed should be submitted via email to grants@togethergreen.org.) To help you fill out the Innovation Grants application, we have posted the application questions in a Word document on the website so that you can work on your answers offline. When you are ready, create an account and copy and paste your answers to each question into the online form.

The deadline for submission is 11:59 pm PDT April 2, 2012.

Awards will be announced by early June 2012.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions about the TogetherGreen Innovation Grants Program, consult the list of Frequently Asked Questions on the Innovation Grants website, or contact Florence Miller at grants@togethergreen.org.



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