

TogetherGreen

INNOVATION GRANTS PROGRAM 2009

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW: PROGRAM OVERVIEW, APPLICATION GUIDELINES, GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS AND PLANNING GRANTS

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
- Inspire and use innovative approaches and technologies to engage people and achieve conservation results.

Innovation Grants awards go to organizations in the Audubon network, working with partners in their communities, who have the passion, commitment, and vision to move people to take action and achieve lasting conservation results.

In 2009, we will award at least 40 grants, ranging from \$5,000 to \$100,000, with an average grant size of \$25,000.

Note that requests above this amount are likely to face considerably more competition than requests of or below \$25,000.

In addition, this year we will be offering three to five planning grants of \$5,000 or less.

See Planning Grants box on page 8 for details.

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 2008 Innovation Grant recipients have to say about the program:

Our *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grant helped us in several significant ways. The prestige of a competitive, national grant raised the profile of our project, which in turn provided us easier access to matching funds. Additionally, the skills developed through the *TogetherGreen* training sessions will benefit all our programming.

—Jim Bonner, Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, “Three Rivers Rain Garden Alliance”

Our Audubon chapter is very small and in a remote area. This grant allowed us to try new things and reach new people. And we’ve had great feedback. One volunteer told us, “As I’m sure you know, our walks together at Virgin Creek have forever enlightened my life.”

—Becky Bowen, Mendocino Coast Audubon Society, “Save Our Shorebirds”

TogetherGreen has allowed us to build deeper relationships with the community we serve.

Our weekend events have already grown, thanks to our expanded school programs. Kids visit us during the week and then bring their parents on the weekend. We are looking forward to even more family engagement in conservation as our project unfolds.

—Jeff Chapman, Audubon Center at Debs Park, “Nature’s Open House”

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.
- Be a 501(c)3 tax exempt public charity
- Have a commitment from at least one non-Audubon partner organization to serve as a collaborator
- Have adequate collective experience and organizational capacity to administer, implement, and evaluate the project

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

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 on page 3). 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

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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, with at least one reviewer from Audubon and one reviewer external to Audubon, and at least one reviewer with a science and/or conservation management background and one reviewer with an education/communications background. All applicants can contact grants@togethergreen.org to receive reviewers' feedback on their applications once decisions have been announced (by August 1, 2009).

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

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 to see 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. Successful proposals will clearly outline how the project will engage people and achieve measurable conservation results. You will be asked to describe and explain your project's conservation target in terms of the

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TogetherGreen conservation goals (Habitat/Land, Water, and/or Energy), the need for your project, the threat your project addresses, your project's objectives, the audience you plan to work with, your project activities, and indicators of success. Reviewers will be looking for conservation significance, 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 still 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 under-represented 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?

**In this project 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 how they will monitor indicators of success. Reviewers will be looking for methods for tracking selected indicators that are clearly articulated, methodologically sound, and realistic given resources (staff and funding).

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 of the grantees from year one felt that the process of thinking through a logic model would have been helpful during the application process. See the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Logic Model Development Guide at www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf to find out how to create logic models for your project.) In addition, we will work with all funded grantees to finalize metrics and

create consistent measures that will allow for the collective evaluation of TogetherGreen's success. 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, and universities. 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.)

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 requests for funds that cannot be met by *TogetherGreen* (see "Grant Restrictions," below).

The application will also ask for background information about your organization and a general timeline of activities.

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.

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 May 1, 2009. Awards will be announced by August 1, 2009.

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 or 802-505-0839.

TogetherGreen Innovation Grants Program
National Audubon Society
1150 Connecticut Ave., NW #600
Washington, DC 20036

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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. Our goal in requiring non-Audubon 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 September 20-23, 2009 at the National Conservation and Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Workshop sessions will focus 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 award winners, 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*. Unfortunately, we do not have funding for more than one representative from each project team to attend. 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 workshop in September. 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 2008 grantees anywhere from one to six hours) and collecting information on project outcomes throughout the year. Some grantees may also be asked to complete interviews at the end of the grant period with the evaluation team.

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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.
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 the partner organization's signature on a sub-award agreement.

PLANNING GRANTS

Organizations wishing to conduct preliminary work for a potential Innovation Grant 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 May 1, 2009 deadline.

www.togethergreen.org/grants

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