Youth environmental stewardship guidelines and request for proposals

Hennepin County Environment and Energy works to protect water, land, and air, and conserve our natural resources for future generations. But we can’t do it alone! Through the Green Partners environmental education grant program, Hennepin County supports organizations to actively educate, engage and motivate residents to become environmental stewards and make positive behavior changes, such as taking action to prevent waste, recycle, reduce household hazardous waste, conserve energy, care for trees, protect pollinators, and improve our air and water quality.

**Application due date**

Proposals are due by 3 p.m. on Monday, May 6, 2019. Submit your application through the new Hennepin County supplier portal. View instructions at hennepin.us/greenpartners.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the county for feedback on project ideas before applying. For more information visit hennepin.us/greenpartners or contact Patience Caso at patience.caso@hennepin.us or 612-348-9352.

Contact the Hennepin County Supplier Portal Help Desk for assistance with viewing the application materials, registering to apply, and uploading your application at 612-543-5412 (M-F, 8-4:30 p.m.) or supplierportal@hennepin.us.

**2019 Green Partners information meetings**

- Webinar: April 9, 2-3 p.m., www.hennepin.us/greenpartners link under Environmental Education Grants
- April 23, from 10-12 p.m. at Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, 2522 Marshall St NE, Minneapolis

Please RSVP for April 23 to patience.caso@hennepin.us or 612-348-9352. RSVP appreciated but not required.

**Youth environmental stewardship application: projects to encourage environmental stewardship**

The focus for youth projects is to develop an environmental ethic and motivate long-term environmental stewardship. Projects must incorporate best practices for youth environmental education:

- Encourage youth leadership
- Promote community partnerships
- Develop awareness and increase knowledge of environmental issues
- Engage critical thinking skills by being inquiry-driven and interdisciplinary
- Incorporate outdoor, experiential, service learning, or place-based education
• Promote environmental stewardship through hands-on, skill-building activities
• Provide a physically and emotionally safe and inclusive environment for learning

Why are there two applications?
The Green Partners environmental education grants program is ultimately focused on motivating individuals to take action to protect the environment. We recognize that environmental education is a process that involves developing the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, motivation, and opportunity for participation in environmental issues and action.

Environmental education strategies should be tailored to the age of the audience. With younger audiences, we are seeking education projects that focus more on raising awareness of environmental issues, fostering a connection with the environment, and developing an interest in lifelong environmental stewardship. With adults, we are seeking projects that focus more on identifying solutions to environmental problems and taking action to improve the environment.

Which application should I use?
The Green Partners environmental education grants programs has two options for applications based on your primary audience and the focus of your project. All projects must engage at least 150 adults or youth who live, work, go to school, or recreate in Hennepin County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Project focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth application</td>
<td>Youth of all ages</td>
<td>Developing awareness of environmental issues and interest in environmental stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior change application</td>
<td>Adults (18+)</td>
<td>Motivating individuals to make behavior changes at home, at work or on-the-go.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

• If you plan to engage mostly adults, complete the behavior change application and develop a project focused on motivating your audience to take one or two actions.
• If you plan to engage mostly parents of preschool age youth, complete the behavior change application and develop a project focused on motivating your audience to take one or two actions.
• If you plan to engage high school age youth, complete the youth environmental stewardship application and develop a project focused on developing an environmental ethic and interest in environmental stewardship.
• If you plan to engage mostly middle, elementary or preschool age youth, complete the youth environmental stewardship application and develop a project focused on developing an environmental ethic and interest in environmental stewardship.

Then determine the amount of funding you are eligible to apply for:

• If you have never received a Hennepin County Green Partners environmental education grant before, you can apply for up to $10,000 for a one-year project.
• If you have received a Hennepin County Green Partners environmental education grant before, you can apply for up to $20,000 for a one-year project.
• If you have received a Hennepin County Green Partners environmental education grant before for a successful, well-established program that engages new participants, you may be eligible for up to $40,000 for a two-year project. We strongly recommend that you talk with the Green Partners program manager before applying for a two-year grant.

Contact the program manager if you have any questions about which application to use or what level you are eligible to apply for.
Projects of interest

Hennepin County is seeking youth projects like those described below. Other projects that fit the criteria described in this document will also be accepted. For additional project ideas, refer to Hennepin County’s environmental education activity guides and additional education resources at hennepin.us/environmentaleducation.

- **Cross-curricular projects**: Pair environmental science with other subjects like reuse art, music, or creative writing.
- **Environment-based education**: Use environmental issues as a context for learning in various subject matters.
- **Outdoor education**: Engage youth through service learning projects or outdoor field experiences to study waste issues, learn about water resources, or protect pollinators.
- **Field trips**: Take a trip to any of Hennepin County’s recommended sites supported by classroom curriculum, workshops, or take-home lessons to reinforce what youth learned during the trip.
- **Environmental action planning**: Identify and pursue solutions to environmental problems. Examine the issues, understand differing viewpoints and points of conflict, consider benefits and consequences of various actions, and create a youth-led action plan to address the issue. Learn about the root causes of an environmental issue, and engage youth in civic issues.
- **Place-based learning**: Immerse students in their local environment, history, and culture, and encourage action in community processes. Explore biodiversity and environmental quality of natural areas near where youth live, explore local green infrastructure, conduct citizen science or field studies, or develop community-based projects.
- **Citizen science and service learning**: Involve youth in collecting scientific data and carrying out hands-on restoration or stewardship projects that benefit the environment.

Youth environmental stewardship grants project selection criteria

The application review committee will evaluate projects based on the following criteria:

**Topic focus areas**

Focus one or more of the following areas:

**Protecting air, land, water, and habitat**

- Understanding ecosystems
- Protecting water
- Protecting pollinators
- Improving air quality
- Caring for trees

**Using resources wisely**

- Reducing household hazardous waste
- Backyard or garden composting
- Organics recycling
- Conserving energy
- Preventing waste
- Recycling

**Project goals and activities**

- Engage elementary, middle, and/or high school youth to become environmental stewards.
- Integrate environmental education best practices:
  - Encourage youth leadership
  - Promote community partnerships
- Develop awareness and increase knowledge of environmental issues
- Engage critical thinking skills by being inquiry-driven and interdisciplinary
- Incorporate outdoor, experiential, service learning, or place-based education
- Promote environmental stewardship through hands-on, skill-building activities
- Provide a physically and emotionally safe and inclusive environment for learning

- Use hands-on activities and/or existing resources such as Hennepin County environmental education activity guides, factsheets, and education kits, when appropriate (find these at hennepin.us/environmentaleducation).
- Projects that qualify for two-year grants must be a successful, well-established program that engages new participants. We strongly recommend that you talk with the Green Partners program manager before applying for a two-year grant. Only organizations that have received a Green Partners environmental education grant in the past qualify for a two-year grant.

**Audience/participants**

- Project activities must engage at least 150 participants during the project period, including follow up with participants after initial contact.
- Organizations must show that they have effectively engaged the audience in past activities or will be able to engage the audience in activities throughout the project, including being able to follow up with participants after initial contact to troubleshoot barriers and challenges in making behavior changes.
- Youth must live, work, go to school, or recreate in Hennepin County.
- Participants are empowered to influence project plans and activities once the project begins (optional, but applications that incorporate participant decision-making will score higher).
- The Green Partners program is interested in engaging residents who aren’t taking environmentally friendly actions or don’t have environmental knowledge or experience, especially youth, new immigrants and historically underserved communities.
- Geographic location of projects and current contracts with Hennepin County will be considered to maximize the reach of the Green Partners program.

**Organizational experience and capacity**

- Foster a partnership with Hennepin County.
- Have past experience in conducting youth education.
- Use varied and effective channels to communicate with their audience.
- Conduct background checks on staff and volunteers working with youth.
- Show that the organization has the capacity to implement the project and meet grant obligations.
- Returning grantees must have an excellent track record of completing goals, activities, and reports.
- Experience leading environmental projects is not required.

**Budget**

- Budgets that include only general expenses such as staff time, food, meeting space, and mileage will not fare as well as budgets that include educational supplies, incentives and tools for participants to take action, and communications expenses to help inform and communicate with community members.
- Provide as much detail as possible regarding number of items to be purchased and cost per item (if known).
- Budget items must include a description of what the item is and how the item will be used.
- Staff time listed in the budget must include estimated hours and hourly rates.
## Program guidelines and requirements

| Eligibility | • Eligible organizations include:  
| | o State registered nonprofits, such as community, youth, and faith groups  
| | o Private and public schools, including community education and early childhood family education programs  
| | o Park districts  |
| Audience requirements | • Projects must engage 150 participants in youth environmental education  
| | • Projects must serve those who live, work, go to school, or recreate in Hennepin County  |
| Award amount | • Returning grantees: Up to $20,000 per year (Up to $40,000 for two-year projects)  
| | • New grantees: Up to $10,000 for a one-year project  |
| Timeline | • Proposals due: Monday, May 6, 2019, by 3 p.m.  
| | • Proposal review: May-June 2019  
| | • Project debrief (for current grantees only): June 4-7, 2019  
| | • Hennepin County Board approval: August 2019 (anticipated)  
| | • Projects begin: September 2019 (anticipated)  |
| Meetings | • Orientation meeting: September 10, 2019  
| | • Meeting with Green Partners project mentor: September-December 2019  
| | • Project debrief meeting with county staff: June-August 2020  
| | • End of project celebration and presentations: September 2020  |
| Reporting requirements | • Project debrief meeting with county staff: June-August  
| | • Annual written project report due in August  |
| Project evaluation | Using county-provided outcomes evaluation questions, project managers must survey youth regarding their interest in the environment and in environmental stewardship. See the survey and a list of evaluation tips and recommendations at hennepin.us/greenpartners.  |
| Acceptable expenses | Funds may be used for materials, project supplies, printing, communications, staff time, and outreach.  
| | • **Project supplies:** We encourage groups to seek grant funds for project supplies that will enable participants to have experiences and make behavior changes in their daily lives, including educator supplies and take home resources that are not disposable.  
| | • **Staff time:** Unless staff time is funded through other means, applications should including funding for staff to complete project management activities and reporting. Suggestions for staff reporting and evaluation time is included in the budget form. Projects that seek funding primarily for staff time will not score as well as projects with budgets that support both staff time and tools for participants to take action to make environmentally friendly changes.  
| | • **Green events:** Grantees must take steps to make events low-waste. Use Hennepin County’s [green events checklist](#), [recycling at events resources](#), and [lead by example resources](#).  
| | • **Food and beverage:** Grantees must follow the county’s healthy eating guidelines and minimize waste when purchasing food and beverage items. See Hennepin County’s [event recycling and waste reduction tips](#) and [guidelines for offering healthy foods at meetings](#) or [Eat Well Work Well](#). |
Receipts must be submitted with final report. Organizations will not be paid for expenses without receipts or proof of purchase. This applies to all items except staff time, mileage, and in-house printing expenses.

Ineligible expenses

- **Disposable items**: Styrofoam, bottled water and other disposable, single food service items, and disposable event decorations are not eligible expenses.
- **Equipment valued more than $500**: Funds may not be used for computers, dishwashers, or other durable equipment valued over $500.
- **General operating expenses** such as attorney fees, rent, and electricity are not eligible expenses.
- **Recycling and organics bins** and funding for additional recycling and organics infrastructure are available through the business recycling and school recycling grant programs.
- **Rain garden and native garden funding for design and installation** is available through the natural resources grant program or your watershed.

Each project recipient must formally enter into a contract agreement with the county. The agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation of the project and required reports. The agreement is a legal, binding document. Project recipients are expected to keep accurate financial records of the project including proof and documentation of all expenses.

Hennepin County requires insurance coverage for most Green Partners grantees in the following amounts: general liability insurance coverage of $1 million in general aggregate, $1 million in products – completed operations aggregate, $1 million in personal and advertising injury, $1 million in combined bodily injury and property damage – each occurrence, professional liability insurance coverage of $1 million, employer’s liability insurance coverage of at least $500,000 for disease – policy limit, $100,000 for disease – each employee, and $100,000 for accident – each accident. Workers’ compensation coverage is required by state law unless a certification of exclusion from workers’ compensation requirements can be provided. Auto liability of $1 million is required for projects that involve transporting project staff or participants. If applicants do not have the insurance coverage listed above, contact the program manager to discuss waiver options. You may submit your organization’s “Certificate of Insurance” with your proposal for review.

**Payments**

- **One year projects**: Once a contract is executed, 60% of the award amount will be provided to the applicant. The remaining 40% will be provided after approval of the final report.
- **Two year projects**: Once a contract is executed, 50% of the award amount will be provided to the applicant. A second payment of 20% of the grant will be released once the project is approved to continue for the second year. The remaining 30% will be provided after approval of the final report, which requires documentation of expenditures, project activities, and behavior change outcomes.

The Fine Print

Proposal evaluation and recommendation for selection

This RFP does not commit the county to award a grant. Submission of an application shall neither obligate nor entitle an applicant to enter into a contract with the county. The county reserves the following rights, to be exercised in the county’s sole and absolute discretion: 1) to determine whether any aspect of an application satisfactorily meets the criteria established in this RFP; 2) to seek clarification or additional information from any applicant; 3) to negotiate, sequentially or simultaneously, pricing and/or terms with any applicant; 4) to reject any or all proposals with or without cause; 5) to waive
any irregularities or informalities in an application; 6) to cancel or amend by addenda this RFP, in part or entirely; 6) to award multiple contracts to applicants; and/or 7) award a contract to a vendor that did not submit a proposal.

Evaluation of applications by a selection committee, evaluation panel, County staff, a technical advisory committee, or by another group, individual or entity is advisory only. The County Board or its designee may consider or reject such evaluation(s) for any or all proposals. Such evaluations are for the sole benefit of the County Board or its designee, and as such, they are not binding upon the County, nor may they be relied upon in any way by an Applicant.

**Evaluation of responsiveness**

The county will consider all the material submitted by the applicant to determine whether the applicant’s offer is in compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in this RFP. Applications that do not comply with the provisions in this RFP may be considered nonresponsive and may be rejected.

**Evaluation of responsibility**

To determine whether an applicant is responsible, the county will consider the applicant’s general qualifications to perform the requested services in a satisfactory manner, financial responsibility, integrity, skill, and ability.

Factors considered by the county may include, but are not limited to, applicant’s past performance on previous projects, the applicant’s technical capabilities, individual qualifications of applicant’s key personnel, and the applicant’s financial ability to perform on the contract. Applications from applicants considered non-responsible will be rejected.

**Requests for additional information**

The county reserves the right to request additional information from applicants during any phase of the evaluation process. During the evaluation process, the county may require the applicant to make a presentation, answer specific questions regarding their application, and/or to provide additional information, including but not limited to two years of audited financial statements. Applicants should reserve time to follow-up with the county within 1 to 2 business days.

**Execution of a contract**

Before a contract becomes effective between the county and any applicant, the contract award must be ratified and signed by the Hennepin County Board or its designee. If for any reason the county board or its designee does not ratify and sign the contract, then there are no binding obligations whatsoever between the county and the applicant relative to the proposed contract.

**Addenda**

The county reserves the right to modify the RFP at any time prior to the proposal due date. An addendum will be posted in the Supplier Portal if the RFP is modified. Addenda may be viewed by clicking on the 'View Event Package' on the Event Details page. It is the responsibility of each prospective applicant to assure receipt of all addenda.

The county will modify the RFP only by formal written addenda. Applications should be based on this RFP document and any formal written addenda. Applicants should not rely on oral statements, including those occurring at pre-proposal meetings or site visits.

**County’s right to withdraw, cancel, suspend, and/or modify RFP**

The county reserves the right to withdraw, cancel, suspend, and/or modify this RFP for any reason and at any time with no liability to any prospective applicant for any costs or expenses incurred in connection with the RFP or otherwise.
Applicant’s right to edit or cancel proposal

An application may be edited or cancelled in the Supplier Portal prior to the due date. For instructions, view the Edit or Cancel a Response section of the How to Respond to an Event Guide.

Applications will not be returned

Upon submission, applications will not be returned.

Public disclosure of proposal documents

Under Minnesota law, proposals are private or nonpublic until the proposals are opened on the proposal due date. Once the proposals are opened, the name of the applicant becomes public. All other data in the proposal is private/nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process. The evaluation process is completed when the county enters into a contract with an applicant. At that time, all remaining data submitted by all applicants is public with the exception of data classified as private/non-public trade secret data under MN Stat. §13.37 of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

If the applicant believes private/non-public data is included in its proposal, applicant shall clearly identify the data and provide the specific rationale in support of the asserted classification. Applicant must type in bold red letters the term “CONFIDENTIAL” on that specific part or page of the proposal that the applicant believes to be confidential. Classification of data as trade secret data will be determined pursuant to applicable law, and, accordingly, merely labeling data as “trade secret” does not necessarily make the data protected as such under any applicable law.

The applicant agrees, as a condition of submitting its proposal, that the county will not, as between the parties, be liable or accountable for any loss or damage which may result from a breach of confidentiality related to the proposal. Typically, pricing, fees, and costs are public data. The applicant agrees to indemnify and hold the county, its officials, agents, and employees harmless from all claims arising out of, resulting from, or in any manner attributable to any violation of any provision of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, including legal fees and disbursements paid or incurred to enforce this provision.

Applicant’s costs

The county shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by applicant in connection with this RFP. Applicant shall bear all costs associated with application preparation, submission, and attendance at interviews, responses to requests for additional information, or any other activity associated with this RFP or otherwise.

Applicant’s ideas

The county reserves the right to use any or all ideas, concepts, or other information provided in any applications. Selection or rejection of the application does not affect this right.

Collusion

If the county determines that collusion has occurred among applicants, none of the proposals of the participants involved in the collusion shall be considered. The county’s determination shall be final.

Conflict of interest

The applicant affirms that to the best of its knowledge the submission of its application, or any resulting contract, does not present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. The applicant agrees that should any actual or perceived conflict of interest become known, it will immediately notify the county and will advise whether it will or will not avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the conflict of interest.

The county may make reasonable efforts to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize a conflict of interest by an applicant. To avoid a conflict of interest by an applicant, the county may utilize methods including disqualifying an applicant from eligibility for
a contract award or cancelling the contract if the conflict is discovered after a contract has been issued. The county may, at its sole and absolute discretion, waive any conflict of interest.
Youth environmental stewardship application instructions

The youth environmental stewardship application is for projects that focus on developing an environmental ethic and interest in environmental stewardship with youth.

Application due date

Proposals are due by 3 p.m. on Monday, May 6, 2019. Submit your application through the Hennepin County supplier portal. You must register with the supplier portal before you can submit an application. View instructions at hennepin.us/greenpartners. Late submittals will not be accepted.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the county for feedback on project ideas before applying. For more information visit hennepin.us/greenpartners or contact the Green Partners program manager, Patience Caso at patience.caso@hennepin.us or 612-348-9352.

Format requirements

- You must follow this format. Proposals in other formats will not be accepted.
- Do not exceed 6 pages. Keep the font size readable. Do not include a cover sheet. You may delete questions and instructions to fit the page limit.
- Points are indicated for each section and will be used during the review process. A qualitative assessment is also used in the evaluation of the project proposals.
- Supplemental materials may be included as attachments and will not be counted toward the page limit; however, project recommendations will be based on information provided in the application. Materials may include brochures, endorsement letters, staff and volunteer bios, pilot project results, newsletters, event fliers, and other documents relevant to the project. Please reference any supplemental materials in the proposal narrative. Documents will be briefly reviewed by the grant program manager and shared with the review committee.
- Find the program guidelines, application, and budget form at hennepin.us/greenpartners.

Application submission checklist

Review and submit the following items with your Green Partners project application by 3 p.m. on Monday, May 6, 2019. Find more information at hennepin.us/greenpartners.

Steps to submit an application:

- Review the Green Partners program guidelines.
- Determine if you should submit a youth environmental stewardship application or a motivating behavior change application. (See page 2 of this document.)
- Determine if your project qualifies for a one-year or two-year grant. (See page 2 of this document.)
- Register an individual account with Hennepin County’s on-line services, if you are not already registered.
- Go to the supplier portal, log-in, and register your organization’s information or register as a new user with your organization. Learn more and get instructions.
- Fill out and submit your project application and budget to the supplier portal. You must follow the format provided; other formats will not be accepted.
- Submit links to or copies of curriculum that will be used (if applicable).
- Submit letters of support from significant project partners listed in your application (if applicable).