P&TC Friends Group Grants – 2022 Overview

A. Grant Program Overview

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is proud to offer a grant program for our friends group partners. We will award up to $12,500 in small grants ($500-$2,500 each) to support habitat restoration projects.

Our public lands are enhanced when volunteers engage in hands-on habitat restoration projects that contribute to a land ethic. A goal of this program is to boost friends group efforts to engage with their members and new volunteers. Additionally, when friends groups, land management agencies, P&TC, and community organizations work together we can accomplish even more.

B. Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be a friends group partner of Parks & Trails Council. See the P&TC definition of friends groups and program details at https://www.parksandtrails.org/friends-groups/.

C. Timeline

November 2021	Grant announcement
November 8, 2021	Attend grant Q&A online session. *(Highly Recommended)*
November 2021 – January 2022	Engage in conversations with land management agency staff (for DNR: site manager and resource specialist) to determine possible projects. *(Required)*
November 2021 – January 2022	Arrange a phone call with P&TC's Friends Group Program Manager, Ashley Petel, to discuss application and project plans. *(Required)*
January 24, 2022	Submit draft application to P&TC for feedback. *(Recommended)*
February 7, 2022	Submit final application, agency letter, and budget to P&TC by 5pm.
February 23, 2022	P&TC issues award decisions and awardee agreements.
March 11, 2022	Submit signed awardee agreement to P&TC in order to release funds for the project.
March 11, 2022 – November 30, 2022	Project implementation period
July 29, 2022	Interim report due
December 16, 2022	Final report and volunteer hours log due

D. Eligible Projects

This grant program will fund habitat restoration projects. See charts below for activity types and eligible expenses.

Activity	Example of eligible expenses
Tree protection (bud-capping, cages, tubes)	• Tools/equipment
Exclosures (fencing to prevent deer browse)	• Materials/supplies
Planting (restoration at scale; usually seedlings, shrubs, and herbaceous plants)*	• Publications to get the word out
Planting (enhance use area, replace vulnerable ash; usually larger trees)	• Event related food/beverages
Seed collection	
Invasive species management	

Planting projects at scale with smaller plants is preferred to planting fewer, larger trees.

Awarded funds must be used for project activities that are explicitly stated in the application. Land management agency or P&TC time is not eligible to be considered for expenses or match.

P&TC recognizes that friends groups accomplish a wide variety of activities. If your project falls outside the scope of what is listed, it is possible that the project may still be eligible for funding under this program. Reach out to P&TC's Friends Group Program Manager to discuss.

E. Partners

Land Management Agency: Collaboration is key to the success of projects. Throughout the application process (and implementation, if awarded), the friends group should work closely with their land management agency representative to identify and develop a project scope. This is to ensure the project complements existing initiatives and that any needed resource reviews can be conducted accordingly. After mutually agreeing upon a desired project, the land management agency representative must provide a letter (or email) supporting the friends group's project plan, to be submitted with the application.

Community Groups: Depending on the project, friends groups will need to cultivate relationships with community groups, businesses, schools, or youth-serving organizations.

P&TC: P&TC will remain available and engaged as needed through the grant planning, implementation, and reporting process.

F. Budget and Financial Accounting Procedures

Friends groups can apply for $500-$2,500 to complete their specified project. The supporting budget (template provided) will include a line-item breakdown for the project. Applicants should work with agency staff to develop the budget.

Financial Match

While a financial match is not required, careful consideration will be given to projects that include a financial match. Volunteer hours are an important element to the project that will be considered separately, so do not include these hours as a match in the budget.

Distribution

The distribution method depends whether the group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, fiscal client of P&TC, or other type of volunteer group. Grant money will be distributed either by check or on a reimbursement basis, issued as payments for invoices or receipts.

Grant recipients are required to track their expenses to ensure the project stays within budget, which includes saving receipts and invoices to document expenditures. Information about how the funds were used will need to be shared in the final report.

More details about the financial process will be shared with the grant recipients at the time of award notification.

G. Reporting

Grant recipients must submit an interim and final report to describe the process, challenges and successes, and impact of the project. A template—in a question and answer format—for each report will be issued to the selected grant recipients at the time of award notification.

Report content will include:
- *Measurable data:* number and types of trees planted, volunteer hours, etc.
- *Narrative:* descriptions of the activities, quotes from volunteers or speakers, lessons learned, etc.
- *Photo/video documentation:* candid pictures or video, pictures of the restoration accomplished, etc.
- *Financial information:* a financial comparison of the budget vs. actual expenses.

H. Application Process

Application Documents
- *Discussion Guide:* This document is a tool to aid in project planning and site selection. *Application*: This Word document includes prompts for applicants to answer.
- *Agency Letter (or email):* This letter draft is within the application. It should be edited by the land management agency representative and submitted with the application.
- *Budget:* This Excel document includes a line item budget.

Evaluation Criteria
Careful consideration will be given to projects that:
- Demonstrate a high level of volunteer engagement (in types of volunteer opportunities and number of hours).

- Engage with volunteers or youth from underrepresented backgrounds in regards to race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, or other areas of diversity.
- Include a financial match from the friends group and/or a partner.

In addition, projects will be evaluated on a number of criteria, including but not limited to, how well the application documents the following:
- Project contributes value to habitat restoration goals of the park or trail.
- Project plan is thorough, clearly indicating scope, location, and materials needed.
- Budget includes items and costs that directly support the project described.
- Project timeline lays out clear and reasonable steps to carry out the project.
- Friends group will be an integral partner in planning and carrying out the project.
- Project strengthens the partnership with the land management agency.
- Friends group acknowledges that they will follow public health guidelines with respect to COVID safety.

P&TC aims to partner with friends groups across Minnesota and will consider the geographic distribution of projects in its evaluation.

Submission
Friends groups are strongly encouraged to connect with the Friends Group Program Manager to discuss their project idea, financial plan, and other questions.

Ashley Petel, Friends Group Program Manager
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Please submit the Application, Budget, and Agency Letter to Parks & Trails Council by 5pm on February 7, 2021. These documents can be submitted via email to friends@parksandtrails.org. Accommodations can be made for different methods of submission, if needed. Please reach out if your group is experiencing any difficulties with the file formats or with submitting the documents.