



Stewardship Challenge Grant Program

The objective of the Stewardship Challenge Grant Program is to support eligible organizations with their habitat restoration efforts and enhance community-building by expanding grantees' networks of funders and volunteers.

Applicant and Project Site Eligibility

Eligible applicants must be 501c3 organizations.

Eligible project sites are properties owned by a 501c3 organization, or a government agency, on which the applicant regularly performs, or is planning to regularly perform stewardship work, and is being managed as a natural habitat and wildlife area that is or will be open to the public.

All projects must be wholly in Illinois.

General Guidelines

The grant period will be 18 months for all projects.

Applicants may only submit one application per grant cycle.

Grantees are eligible to receive up to \$30,000.

Funding is split into three categories and actual funding is dependent on the grantee's ability to achieve the goals identified below:

- *Cash Donations*: PSCC will provide \$3 to every \$1 raised toward the project within the grant period, up to \$21,000.
- *Volunteer Hours*: PSCC will provide \$4,000 after the grantee logs 400 volunteer hours on natural area stewardship.
- *Equipment*: 100% of the cost of equipment up to \$5,000 over the life of the grant.

All funds provided by PSCC are to be dedicated to stewardship at the eligible project site identified in the grant application.

Grant dollars received under the Cash Donations and Volunteer Labor Categories must be used on activities directly related to improving the property's natural habitat. Eligible activities include but are not limited to:

- Hiring contractors to perform stewardship work designed to maintain, preserve, or improve the condition of native natural communities, diversity of species, and ecological processes. Including:
 - Control of exotic and invasive species
 - Prescribed burns
 - Restoration/enhancement of native plant communities
 - Engineering work and hydrological improvements

- Purchasing plant materials, including seed, trees, plants, etc.

Grantees may spend a total of \$2,000 of the dollars received from PSCC under the Cash Donations and/or Volunteer Labor Categories on the purchase of interpretive signage if the signage highlights the stewardship work and the grant.

Grant dollars received under the Equipment Category must be used to purchase equipment to be used on activities directly related to improving the property's natural habitat. Eligible equipment includes but is not limited to items such as:

- Large equipment (i.e. ATVs, UTVs, chainsaws, mounted sprayers, tractors, etc.)
- Hand tools (i.e. backpack sprayers, loppers, hand saws, rakes, Pulaski axes, etc.)

Grant funds may not be used to purchase highway vehicles (i.e. cars or trucks), or trailers.

Equipment must be purchased during the grant period and grant funds will be disbursed upon receipt and review of paid invoices.

Eligibility of Cash Donations and Volunteer Hours

Eligible Cash Donations include new funds raised from existing and/or new individual members and supporters of the organization, local community organizations, businesses, and/or foundations. Contributions must be made during the grant period and be used exclusively as a match to this grant program.

Grantees must set up bookkeeping and accounting practices that clearly identify the matching cash donations and PSCC's grant funds as they are received and expended for stewardship activities within the eligible project site.

Eligible Volunteer Hours include those that are logged while completing activities directly related to improving the project site's natural habitat as outlined in the grant agreement.

Reporting and Payment Requests

Payment requests under Cash Donations are reviewed and paid per the terms listed above every four months, or at the end of the grant period.

- Grantees will submit documentation that new dollars have been raised as match in the form of a list of donors and donations signed by an officer or director of the organization.

Payments under Volunteer Hours are submitted after 400 hours are logged on stewardship.

- Grantees will submit volunteer sign-in sheets documenting the hours logged on the eligible property during the grant period. A staff member or board member from the organization must either sign off on each sign-in sheet or sign off on a summary table that combines the information reported from all of the separate sign-in sheets submitted.

Payments under Equipment may be submitted one time during the grant period to cover 100%, or up to \$5,000, of the cost of a single, or multiple pieces of equipment.

- Grantees will submit receipts, paid invoices, and/or other proof of payment.

All funds received under this grant program must be categorized in the organization's operating budget and identified in its annual financial report as restricted funds dedicated to stewardship of the project site.

Application and Award Process

To begin the application process, applicants will need to complete a basic eligibility quiz to ensure applicants organization and project site are eligible under this program.

If passed, applicants will then have access to complete and submit the full grant proposal.

The following information will be required for the full proposal:

- A completed Project Work Plan. This includes:
 - Specific information about the natural areas and wildlife habitat on the project site.
 - Why the site needs stewardship, the objectives of the project, and the methods to be used to achieve those objectives.
 - Information about the applicants volunteer base and plans to attract more volunteers and funders.
- A Project Budget
- A letter of approval from the landowner of your project site approving the applicant to carry out the proposed grant work on the site.
- Maps showing the location of the work site
- Organizational or departmental operating budgets – one for the most recent fiscal year and one for the upcoming fiscal year, if available
- A financial report for the most recent fiscal year, including Balance Sheet, Income Statement, and any notes to financial statements
- IRS letter confirming EIN
- IRS Tax Status Determination Letter (for 501c3 applicants only)
- Your organization's most recent Illinois Charitable Organization Annual Report filed with the Illinois Attorney General's Office (for 501c3 applicants only)
- Additional information as may be deemed necessary or requested by PSCC

A confirmation email will be sent after a proposal is received.

PSCC may follow up with additional questions for applicants.

PSCC's full proposal review process can take up to 3 months or longer. The grant award process is competitive. Some projects may be declined.

For more information or to discuss further, please contact [Brad Hanzel, Senior Grant Program Officer](#)