Freshwater Wetlands Compensation Fund

Community Service Grants

Application Guide
Policy and Procedure Guide

May 2017

Updated November 2019
Purpose

The South Portland Conservation Commission in partnership with the South Portland Water Resources Protection Department created the **Community Service Grant** (CSG) program to encourage and support initiatives by local groups, individuals, associations, or businesses to undertake environmental improvements that contribute directly to the quality of South Portland’s freshwater resources.

Proposals are accepted from a broad range of South Portland interests with the capacity to undertake and complete projects of **direct public benefit** to a particular locale, neighborhood, stream, pond, and related watershed that will contribute to **maintaining, improving or creating freshwater wetlands**.

Grants awarded under the Community Service Grant Program are authorized in Chapter 27, sec. 1526, of the South Portland Code of Ordinances to

> maintain the functions and values of the community’s freshwater wetlands and to ensure the health and safety of the residents of the City while preserving economic vitality.

Grants

Individual grants of up to $2,500 are awarded on the basis of budgets presented by the applicants. When appropriate, multiple awards may be granted to particular applicants and all grantees are eligible to apply for grants that may be renewed on a continuing basis. The Commission may, on occasion, award an amount greater than $2,500 if an exceptionally meritorious proposal is submitted.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate that a project will be completed in compliance with all applicable environmental standards, municipal ordinances, and private property rights. Proposals are expected to include a comprehensive scope of work, a formal budget and an initial work plan and schedule.

Grant funds may be used for, but not limited to, purchase of materials, securing professional support if required, paying stipends to volunteers when critical to the mission, renting necessary equipment, providing food and other supports to volunteer groups and to secure any other essential goods or services required for project completion. Formal project budgets will be approved as conditions of individual grants.

Grant funds will generally be accessible through purchase orders, city established accounts through local merchants, or a city credit card to be managed by the Conservation Commission.
Eligible Applicants

Any group, individual, or business based in South Portland or otherwise demonstrating a specific commitment to the City may apply for a grant. Priority is given to proposals that are based primarily on volunteer leadership and effort. Additional value is also placed on projects that strengthen groups or associations that also carry out a community mission beyond the scope of the grant.

Eligible applicants may include:
- Individuals
- Schools or school sponsored groups
- Neighborhood or civic improvement associations
- Youth groups
- Service organizations
- Units of South Portland municipal government that do not otherwise have resources to complete specific projects that are consistent with the purposes of the Fund
- Business affiliated volunteers (business applicants will be expected to provide matching resources as a condition of any award)

Selection Criteria

The Commission considers all proposals consistent with maintaining or improving the quality of South Portland’s freshwater resources. Those selected are responsive to the priorities outlined in Article XV 21 of the City Code, as follows:

1. a) The restoration of previously degraded wetlands,
2. b) The enhancement of existing wetlands,
3. c) The preservation of existing freshwater wetlands or adjacent upland buffers where the site to be preserved provides significant wetland functions and might otherwise be degraded,
4. d) The creation of freshwater wetland from non-wetland upland area,
5. e) Stormwater improvements that relate directly to a freshwater wetland and that protect or improve the function and value of the wetland.

Successful applicants are selected on the basis of their ability to document their capacity to:

- Implement actions that are responsive to city priorities and will have an observable, positive outcome on freshwater resources
- Mobilize sufficient human resources to complete the proposed project as planned
- Engage, as needed, appropriate technical oversight and assistance
- Coordinate their activities with appropriate City departments
- Complete the project within the scope of the approved budget and in compliance with city finance standards
 Communicate and coordinate with the Commission and the Water Resources Department

Submit a final project report

Potential Projects

Projects that will be considered for Community Service Grants may include the following ideas, keeping in mind that they must help maintain, improve or create wetlands:

- Information and guidance related to specific neighborhood initiatives
- Education of students or the general public
- Management of common spaces
- Stormwater mitigation directly related to a wetland
  - Design and installation of rain gardens
  - Catch basin maintenance
- Formally structured water quality monitoring
- Invasive plant control
- Planting of native species for erosion control
- Other soil stabilization projects
- Solutions to harmful disposal of yard and household waste
- Other projects demonstrating direct benefit to freshwater resources
Application Guide

The Proposal Application Form, included in the Guide, calls for essential information about:

- Applicant identifying information
- Description of the proposed project
- Description of the major public benefits of the project
- Project budget
- A proposed work plan and schedule

Applicants are encouraged to seek additional information from the Conservation Commission or the Water Resources Protection Department as they prepare their proposal.

Principal contact points for public comment or inquiry are:

- Conservation Commission
  conservation@southportland.org
- Water Resources Protection Department
  Stormwater Coordinator
  767-7611

Final Review of Proposals

The full Conservation Commission will do a review of the application. If the application is legally allowed under our ordinance, the Commission will take a vote on the application. A simple majority vote in favor of the proposal by the full Conservation Commission is required approval. Then the application will be forwarded to the Water Resources Protection Department. The WRPD will review the application as they see fit. The approval of the Water Resources Protection Department is required for final approval and funding.

The Conservation Commission evaluates all proposals on the basis of a standard set of criteria. See the Project Proposal Evaluation Sheet for exactly what those are.

An applicant whose proposal has been denied due to an adverse decision made by the Conservation Commission may request an appeal review with the full Commission within 30 days of the decision. The request must be in writing, delivered to the Commission via their email (as listed above) or to the City Clerk. The Commission will schedule the review within 30 days of receipt of the appeal and give the applicant notice of the date and time of the review.

The appealing applicant will be asked to attend a Conservation Commission meeting in person to explain why they believe their project meets the criteria and answer
questions the Commission may have about the project. The appealing applicant may present new evidence or alternative plans. The Commission will consider any new information gained from the appeal and review the application anew with this information, as if a new application was filed. If the applicant fails to appear at the date and time requested by the Commission for the appeal review, the applicant’s appeal will be denied.

Formal Agreement to Implement a Proposed Project

All approved projects will be confirmed in writing, with copies to the Water Resources Protection Department.

The written communication will serve as a formal agreement between the SPCC, the WRPD, and the project leader. It will specify the scope of work, budget parameters, and key dates such as targeted beginning and ending targets.

SPCC Project Oversight

A designated representative of the Conservation Commission will monitor all approved projects. This project liaison, with technical advice from the WRPD, will provide consultation and support to the project team while maintaining critical oversight of the project’s work and its external coordination with other interested parties. On behalf of the SPCC, the liaison will ensure that city officials and departments are well informed about the status of the project.

The liaison will work with the project leader to manage the budget and to secure appropriate materials or technical support from vendors. The liaison will also document the project’s progress and achievement of outcomes for purposes of preparing periodic reports for city records.

Financial Management

All grant awards, at the discretion of the Finance Department are to be managed through a combination of purchase orders, existing city procurement arrangements, authorized city credit cards, and pre-paid credit cards to be managed by the designated SPCC project liaison. Whenever possible, pre-paid credit cards will be used to maintain a maximum level of responsiveness and flexibility. The liaison is responsible for assisting the project leader in ensuring that all vendors are aware of the unique nature of the CSG awards and the inherent limits of any purchasing arrangements.

The SPCC, in cooperation with the project leader, bears responsibility for managing expenditures in accordance with the approved budget. If any budget modifications become necessary, the SPCC will provide advance notice to the Finance Department and secure explicit understanding about such changes.
The SPCC liaison and the project leader bear shared responsibility for maintaining appropriate documentation, through receipts and logs, for all project expenditures.

**Project Reports**

All CSG projects are responsible for maintaining open communication with the SPCC and the WRPD. The SPCC liaison will provide substantial assistance with this process. Nevertheless, the project leader is expected, as circumstances dictate, to provide periodic oral or written reports on the status of the proposed work.

Each project is expected to submit a final report as it brings it work to completion. A simple format for this reporting is found below as the Freshwater Resources Community Services Project Report. This report is to be submitted within 14 days of the completion of a particular project.

**Project Evaluation**

All projects are subject to a formal evaluation by the Conservation Commission. As time allows, SPCC members may evaluate projects to ensure compliance with the applicants stated proposals and SPCC expectations that grant money be used appropriately. The following are criteria the SPCC expects of grant recipients and will be looking at if a project is evaluated during implementation or after completion:

1. **Process**
   - Is the project well organized?
   - Did the project maintain original schedules?
   - Have financial management practices been sound?

2. **Outcomes**
   - Has the project had observable effects on environmental conditions?
   - Did project participants gain new knowledge or skills?
   - Were any new community relationships or partnerships formed as a result of the project?

If the SPCC reviews a project for compliance and finds it unsatisfactory, it may withhold any funds that have yet to be disbursed. A project may be deemed out of compliance based on the above factors by a majority vote of all SPCC Members. If so, the SPCC may elect to withhold any funds not yet disbursed; demand the applicant remedy any unsatisfactory issues; or any other remedy allowed by law.
Project Name

Organization Name (if any)

Principal Contact

Name ________________________________

Address ________________________________

                                 ________________________________

Telephone ________________________________

Email ________________________________

Describe the Project

Describe the Major Public Benefit of the Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Budget</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplies &amp; Materials</td>
<td>(specify separate items)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance/ Contractors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rentals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Support</td>
<td>(food, transportation, etc)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Proposed Project Schedule**

Submitted by ________________________________  
Print Name

Date ________________________________

Submit Proposal or Questions to:  
conservation@southportland.org  
South Portland Conservation Commission  
c/o City Clerk  
25 Cottage Road  
South Portland, ME 04106
Section 1

Threshold Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Is the proposal application complete?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Does the applicant represent appropriate South Portland interests?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Does the proposal address priority needs as defined by the CSG Application Guide?</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Does the proposal make a sound case for outcomes that will be of general public benefit?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Is the proposed budget clearly explained, within allowable limits, and include allowable expenses?</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Section 2

Does the proposal address a specific need referenced in the FWCF ordinance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Ordinance Provision</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Restoration of previously degraded wetlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Enhancement of existing wetlands</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Preservation of wetlands or adjacent upland buffers</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Creation of freshwater wetland from non-wetland area</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Stormwater improvements that protect or improve function and value of wetlands</td>
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</table>
Section 3

Does the proposal document a capacity to . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes or No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Provide effective project leadership?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Provide sufficient human resources to complete the project as planned?</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Secure appropriate technical support and oversight?</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Coordinate with appropriate city, regional and state authorities?</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Complete the budget within the scope of the approved budget?</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Comply with City finance procedures and standards?</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Enhance public education and awareness?</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Communicate and coordinate with the SPCC and WRPD?</td>
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Comments:

SPCC  Approve/Deny ____________________________  Date:  

Water Resources Approve/Deny ______________________   Date: