

# School & Community Habitat Grant

## Application Related Frequently Asked Questions

Revised April, 2024

- **How do I learn more?**

Please visit [washtenawcd.org/schg](https://washtenawcd.org/schg) to learn more about this grant and how to apply. It is recommended that you explore that site BEFORE reading this FAQ document as many of your questions will be answered in the webinar recording, the application document, and the “SCHG Overview” PDF available on the website.

- **I've visited the website, read the application, read the “SCHG Overview” PDF, read the FAQ PDF, and I STILL have questions. Who do I contact?**

You can find the current grant administrator listed on the website at [washtenawcd.org/schg](https://washtenawcd.org/schg). Please send all questions, comments, and suggestions for improvement to them. Please kindly reference “SCHG” in the subject line of your email.

## ELIGIBILITY

- **What types of projects are eligible for the grant?**

Pollinator Garden, Rain Garden, Wildlife Habitat Installation, Food Forest, Pocket Forest, Bird-centric Planting, Playground/Shade Trees, Native Plant Seedlings, etc.! This is not a comprehensive list - are welcome to propose other ideas!

- **Does a site that isn't open to the public (only to the school's community or a communal area in a neighborhood) qualify for the grant?**

Yes, these would be considered semi-public spaces (i.e. open to all within a community) and are eligible. However, to increase how high your project ranks in the evaluation, consider if it would be appropriate/feasible to locate it in a more public or highly visible area (e.g. at the entrance to a school rather than in a courtyard; along the sidewalk at the front of a housing development rather than behind a gated community).

- **Can you request grant funding for a maintenance plan for an existing project?**

Yes, you may request grant assistance to revitalize an existing project. However, the grant does focus on establishing wildlife habitat, so your application may not be as competitive as others that are received.

- **Can you be a grant recipient 2 years in a row?**

Yes! It has not happened yet, but it is possible.

- **Who is eligible for this grant?**

Schools (public, private), places of worship, Township Halls, Community Centers, Libraries, Police Depts, Fire Stations, Scout Troops, Garden Clubs, HOAs, non-profits, etc. are all eligible!

- **Do we have to have full permission for a certain site, or is “we’ll definitely find a spot somewhere” enough at this point?**

A defined location and full permission at the time of application is required. If you are not the landowner/manager, a letter of support and/or contract from the owner is required.

## EVALUATION

- **Are Title 1 schools given priority with this funding?**

We don’t currently have “Title 1 Schools” as a ranking in our evaluation criteria, but we give more weight to “locations without existing natural areas or habitat projects” including areas in Washtenaw County that have been “underserved/under-resourced” and have not received SCHG funding. This grant is still relatively young, so we are working to better improve our process and will examine additional ways to build equity into how the funding is dispersed. Unfortunately, where the funding goes also depends on from where applications are received in any given year, so we have been increasing SCHG outreach efforts to make sure community members across the County are aware of this opportunity.

- **What is the evaluation process?**

Each grant round, the WCCD invites natural resource professionals, past awardees, and community volunteers to join the SCHG selection committee. We typically have 5-8 members who review an average of about 10 applications, donating about 5 - 6 hours of their time. The Selection Committee convenes virtually as a group in late July to discuss how the applications ranked and make final selections. The “SCHG Overview” PDF (located on the website at [washtenawcd.org/schg](http://washtenawcd.org/schg)) has the criteria used by the Committee to rank projects. We are open to improvements in this process! You can find the current grant administrator listed on the website at [washtenawcd.org/schg](http://washtenawcd.org/schg). Please send all comments/suggestions to them.

## FUNDING

- **What can funds be spent on?**

Grant awards may be used to obtain plant materials, expert design plans, and contractor site-prep and/or installation assistance. The project may request funds for additional items (e.g. bird boxes, educational signage, etc.), but these are often not able to be accommodated. (Please note, grant awardees do NOT receive money to spend. If the awardee selects design or install assistance, they will be paired with a consultant and the WCCD will pay the consultant directly. If the awardee selects only plant materials, the WCCD will pay the nursery directly.)

- **How much money is the grant?**

Historically, the School & Community Habitat Grant has typically awarded between 4 - 7 projects each round of funding. There is technically no cap per project, but awards have generally ranged from a few hundred dollars to almost \$3,000 per project.

To give you greater context, the grant is funded through a combination of millage and donation dollars, so the amount varies each year (and will hopefully grow!) but has historically been between \$5,000 - \$8,000 in total for each grant cycle. Awardees often stretch funds with volunteer work (e.g. mechanical removal of invasive species and/or installation of plant material) allowing their funds to be spent on design consultation and plant materials.

## REQUIREMENTS

- **Will we need to remove any non-native plants that are in the proposed area and replace it with native ones?**

This question requires a multi-part answer depending on the situation...

Yes, invasive species should be removed since they outcompete native species and would likely undo the work you are proposing. However, invasive species removal can be very costly so typical projects: a) are proposed in areas with existing mulch and or turf grass (which would also be removed, but is easier) or b) have a dedicated volunteer group committed to removing invasive species BEFORE and SEPARATE from the grant funds. Professional invasive species treatment can be requested as part of the grant but is not always able to be funded.

No, non-native species do not necessarily have to be removed from a project area. For example, if a playground has a nice, non-native shade tree, the WCCD will not require that it be removed so that additional native trees can be planted.

- **Can students be involved in the installation of the project?**

Yes, student and volunteer involvement is highly desirable and encouraged! The project coordinator (i.e. YOU, the applicant) will coordinate volunteer support. If

you so choose, the WCCD is happy to help promote any activities you plan by broadcasting them to a wider audience, but the WCCD will not be facilitating or planning any installation or maintenance events for your project.

- **Can you elaborate on using outside consultants and nurseries?**

Depending on what the applicant selects, the SCHG pays for one, multiple, or all of these options: site assessment and design consultation, plant materials, and/or installation assistance. The WCCD supports local businesses that specialize in this native habitat creation and installation by contracting them for these projects. If the applicant does not indicate a contractor preference, the WCCD matches the applicant to a consultant and/or nursery based on which businesses have indicated an interest, what they specialize in, cost, and location of the project.

## **TIMELINE**

- **What is the turnaround time?**

We typically accept applications in June and it's not until the FOLLOWING year (spring or fall) that projects are installed. An example of a general grant timeline is as follows:

Oct – Sept 2023: Donations accepted online and at WCCD resource distributions.

January 2024: Grant application period opens.

June 10, 2024: Grant application period closes.

July/August 2024: Grant recipients selected & notified.

Sept-Oct 2024: Recipients schedule site assessments/design visits as necessary and/or submit plant requests.

Nov-Dec 2024: Contractors provide quotes to WCCD and projects are adjusted to fit within the budget.

January 2025: Recipients are notified of final award amount and any project adjustments.

Spring or Fall 2025: Recipients receive requested awards, such as site prep, plant material, and installation support.

- **When do awardees receive the money?**

Grant awardees do NOT receive money to spend. If the awardee selects design or install assistance, they will be paired with a consultant and the WCCD will pay the consultant directly. If the awardee selects only plant materials, the WCCD will pay the nursery directly.