

Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council
Community Grants Program
Approved 11/19/20

The Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) is implementing a Community Grants Program to support projects that protect and/or enhance the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers and their Outstandingly Remarkable Resource Values (ORRVs). The grants program aims to engage municipalities and local organizations in protecting the rivers' resources and building strong local stewardship of the rivers in accordance with the *Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers (Stewardship Plan)*.

Each year the Stewardship Council develops a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Community Grants Program. The RFP will be widely distributed and available on the Stewardship Council website (<https://www.wildandscenicnashuarivers.org/>). The following policy provides a broad overview of the Community Grants Program. Detailed information regarding funding amounts, grant timelines, and specific grant priorities can be found in the yearly RFP.

Who may apply:

Eligible entities include municipalities, municipality-affiliated groups, and nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations from the communities along the Wild and Scenic designated rivers (Ayer, Bolton, Brookline, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Hollis, Lancaster, Pepperell, Shirley, and Townsend). Eligible entities may include but are not limited to conservation commissions, planning boards, water/wastewater departments, libraries, historical commissions, recreation departments, schools (including environmental clubs, art programs, science classes, etc.), historical societies, garden clubs, art associations, houses of worship, regional organizations, local land trusts, and neighborhood groups. Groups without 501(c)(3) status and individuals interested in applying for funding must partner with an eligible entity. The Stewardship Council may consider applications from nonprofit groups based outside the Wild and Scenic communities when the project will directly benefit the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers' resources and communities. These organizations are encouraged to consult with the Stewardship Council before applying to discuss their eligibility.

Previously funded entities may apply in subsequent years with a different project, or one that takes previously funded work to the next level. Performance on a previous grant will be weighed in decision making, as will the applicant's ability to learn from evaluation efforts.

Eligible projects:

Projects must address one or more of the goals of the Stewardship Plan and protect and/or enhance the ORRVs of biological diversity, historical & cultural, or recreational & scenic resources and/or increase awareness, appropriate use, and appreciation of these resource values.

Possible projects include but are not limited to the following:

- Conservation, restoration, or enhancement of aquatic organisms, wildlife, riverine ecology, water quality and flow, historic, or recreational resources;
- Protection and stewardship of land along the rivers and their tributaries;
- Public education about the river and its resources and values;
- Research studies contributing to increased understanding, and improved management, of the rivers' outstanding resources;
- Access to, or increased, recreation to encourage people to use and protect the rivers;
- Public art projects that engage the public and promote the river;
- Invasive species management;
- Water conservation education and implementation;
- Protection of natural river flow regimes;
- Projects engaging youth in the arts and sciences of river resources and encouraging an awareness and appreciation of river resources; and
- Efforts to plan and manage for climate resiliency.

Entities may apply for multiple grants, but the applications must be for discrete projects.

Projects mandated as part of a regulatory requirement are not eligible; for example, mitigation for enforcement actions and/or permit requirements.

Funding:

The Stewardship Council will dedicate a portion of its annual budget to provide funds for the Community Grants Program. The amount of funding will be determined and approved by the Stewardship Council during the annual budget process and set forth in the RFP.

One half of the total grant will be paid to the grantee upon notification of grant approval by the Stewardship Council. The remaining half will be paid to the grantee upon completion of the project and receipt of the final report, receipts, and any associated products. Any distributed funding not used will be returned to the Stewardship Council.

As a sub-recipient of Stewardship Council federal funds, the grantee or contractor is responsible for meeting the audit requirements of OMB Circular A-133 regarding the expenditure of

\$750,000 or more in federal awards during the contractor's fiscal year, and for compliance with other laws, regulations, and the provisions of the parent grant agreement.

The Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) is the fiduciary agent for the Stewardship Council.

Grant Application Process and Timeline:

The Stewardship Council will develop an RFP each year for the Community Grants Program. The RFP may be general or request proposals for projects in a certain topic area (e.g. recreational access, outreach and education, historic resources). Decisions on annual grant program focus areas will be made by the Stewardship Council prior to the development of the annual RFP. The RFP will be made public and circulated throughout the Wild and Scenic communities and adjacent municipalities.

Review Criteria:

The merits of an individual project will be evaluated according to the following criteria (in no particular order). Projects do not need to meet all these criteria to be eligible; however, stronger proposals will be those that address many, if not all, of the following:

- Wild and Scenic ORRVs/Goals of the *Stewardship Plan*: Does the proposal address the protection, enhancement, or promotion of one or more of the rivers' outstanding resource values or advance the goals laid out in the *Stewardship Plan*?
- Stewardship: Does the project strengthen relationships among municipalities, non-profit organizations, community groups, and/or the public to enhance local stewardship?
- Thoroughness of Planning: Does the project plan contain enough detail to show all resources required to meet the project timeline? Is the budget reasonable?
- Leveraging of Additional Resources: Are there matching funds or in-kind contributions to the project? These are strongly encouraged but not required.
- Project Outcomes: Has the applicant thoroughly described the anticipated outcomes of the project?
- Project Evaluation: Does the applicant have a plan to evaluate the project's effectiveness and impact (relative to the project goals)?
- Community Support: Is there demonstrated support for this project from all involved parties?
- Engagement of Underrepresented Communities: Does the project engage or benefit Black, indigenous, people of color, people of different abilities, and/or environmental justice populations?

- Partnerships and Awareness: Does the project engage partners and/or raise public awareness about the rivers?
- Experience and Capability: Does the proposal demonstrate sufficient experience or available expertise needed to complete the project (either from the applicant or through partners or contractors)?
- Longevity/Sustainability: Are results of the project sustainable after completion of the grant? Is there a plan for ongoing maintenance or work, if relevant? Will future activities/decisions at the community, municipal, regional, or state level build on the results of the proposed project? How will sufficient funds be raised to continue or maintain the outcome of this project?

The Stewardship Council may consider applications from applicants based outside the Wild and Scenic communities, but projects from applicants within the 11 Wild and Scenic communities will be given higher priority.

Reports and Products:

Open communication between the grantee and the Stewardship Council is encouraged throughout the grant timeline. Grantees may be required to submit an interim report. Grantees will be required to submit a final written report on their projects no later than 30 days after completion.

Final reports must contain the following:

- Brief description of the project, including title, purpose, audience, procedures, & evaluation procedures;
- List of valuable accomplishments & who benefited;
- Funds budgeted and how they were spent; receipts must be submitted;
- Associated products including reports, press releases, photos, etc.

The Stewardship Council retains copyright rights and may use any or all materials generated as it sees fit without any additional compensation. Grantees may be requested to speak or present to the full Stewardship Council when their project is completed.

Recipients of Stewardship Council funding are asked to include recognition of the Stewardship Council contribution in all promotional materials and other appropriate public documents related to the funded project and its results. The following line is an example of acknowledgement:

“Funding is provided by the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council through the National Park Service under CFDA: 15.921 – Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Wild and Scenic River Assistance.”