

Frequently Asked Questions – Environmental Conservation Program

Which program should I apply to?

It's possible that your organization's project might seem relevant to both program areas (Awareness and Public Benefit). We encourage you to choose the program that seems *most* relevant to your program's goals. If your organization has two distinct projects that are relevant to each program, your organization may submit two proposals, one to Awareness and one to Public Benefit. You may not submit that same project to both programs, however.

Does my project have to address climate or resilience?

No. The current program reflects an "and/or" approach. Your project may increase awareness of conservation (Awareness) or increase public land use for recreation, local agriculture, community conservation, education or similar activities that are consistent with land conservation and sustainability values (Public Benefit) without addressing climate or resilience and still be competitive.

What are some examples of Public Benefit and Awareness Projects with the new climate/resilience goals?

We acknowledge that by integrating climate and resilience issues into this program, we are broadening the universe of potential applicant projects. However, this program is looking for projects that sit at the intersection of environmental conservation and climate change and that impact people and communities in the Triangle. A few examples of projects are outlined below. This is not an exhaustive list. Projects outside these examples that are responsive to the program goals may be considered. Please feel free to call Sarah Guidi, Program Officer, to discuss your project if you need additional guidance.

- Awareness
 - Education or communications campaigns that focus on the benefits of conservation
 - Education or communications campaigns that address climate threats and/or solutions that involve a nature-based approach
 - Advocacy to promote policies that further conservation goals or nature-based solutions to climate threats
- Public Benefit
 - Planning/implementation of green infrastructure (e.g. green roofs, rain gardens, urban tree canopies, etc.) or natural infrastructure (e.g. restore/protect riparian buffers or wetlands) projects
 - Ecological restoration
 - Sustainable agriculture projects

What do you mean by "nature-based solutions"?

Great question! Nature-based solutions rely on natural systems, or mimic them, to address climate threats. Here are some resources to

- Naturally Resilient Communities – Provides an overview of nature-based solutions and a database of more than 50 solutions and case studies that are helping communities across the US become more resilient: <http://nrcsolutions.org/>
- Nature as Resilient Infrastructure: Fact Sheet – Provides examples of nature-based solutions by type of climate-related threat: <https://www.eesi.org/papers/view/fact-sheet-nature-as-resilient-infrastructure-an-overview-of-nature-based-solutions>

How can we demonstrate that our project impacts “populations of concern”?

We know that certain communities that have endured chronic stressors such as poverty and racial segregation are more vulnerable to impacts of climate change. So, preference will be given to projects that benefit communities who reflect “populations of concern” including communities of color, low-income groups, people with limited English proficiency (LEP), and immigrant group.

Advisory Committee members would like to understand the make up of the broad community in which you work (e.g. Durham County, or the Triangle region) as well as specific communities / people you hope to work with and benefit from the proposed project. Please include geographic, socio-economic, status, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and physical or mental abilities. Be specific, using numbers whenever possible. We encourage you to cite data in your application using resources such as:

- County Health Rankings and Roadmap - <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/north-carolina/2019/overview>
- CDC’s Social Vulnerability Index - <https://svi.cdc.gov/map.html>

How will proposals be scored?

Below is an outline of the evaluation rubric the volunteer advisory committee will use to score applications. Please know that funding decisions are not made solely based on score. We seek to have a grantee portfolio that reflects diversity across geography, types of projects, and other criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Relevant application question	Score
Alignment with Program Goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase conservation and/or climate awareness (A) • Increase use of land for community benefit and/or climate resilience 	<p><i>How will your project increase awareness of conservation or climate issues in the Triangle? (A)</i></p> <p><i>How will your project increase use of land for community benefit and/or climate resilience (PB)</i></p>	<p>1 – Does not meet goals 2 – Unclear 3 – Meets goals, but questions 4 – Clearly meets goals 5 – Strong alignment w/ goals</p>
Organization’s Ability to Carry Out Proposal		
Organization has previously demonstrated impact through its programs and services	<i>Recent key outcomes / impacts / accomplishments</i>	<p>1 – Very poor 2 – Poor 3 – Fair 4 – Good 5 – Excellent</p>
Organization clearly communicates objectives and intended outcomes and how funding will be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How will your project increase awareness... (A) or use of land... (PB)?</i> • <i>Project Narrative: What will the organization actually do?</i> 	
Equity and Community Engagement		
Organization is committed to staff and board reflecting communities they serve	<i>Board and Staff Composition</i>	<p>1 – Very poor 2 – Poor 3 – Fair 4 – Good 5 – Excellent</p>
Organization involves populations served in planning and decision-making	<i>How are the people you serve involved in planning and decision-making?</i>	
Project impacts priority populations	<i>Who will benefit from this project?</i>	
Organization Financial Health		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization has ability to pay off liabilities w/ cash-on-hand or cash equivalents (Current ratio) • Organization has at least 30 days of cash to maintain operations w/o additional revenue (Days cash on hand) • Organization spends at least 70% of revenue on program-related expenses (Program ratio) • No unexplained surpluses or deficits >10% of revenues in the last two years • Budget reflects appropriate and efficient allocation of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Financial ratios worksheet</i> • <i>Current and previous FY revenue/expenses/surplus(deficit)</i> • <i>Project budget</i> 	<p>Green Light = No concerns Yellow Light = Mild concerns Red Light = Serious concerns</p>