

Pollinator Habitat Grant Program
2023-2024 academic year



Eligible applicants: High school educators
Eligible states: Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin
Deadline to apply 1st round: August 10th, 2023
Awards announced 1st round: August 18th, 2023
Deadline to apply 2nd round: November 17th, 2023
Awards announced 2nd round: December 4th, 2023
Seeds shipped to schools: December 2023
Progress report due: March 2024
Plants shipped to schools: April 2024
Final report due: June 2024

OVERVIEW

This goal of this competitive grant program is to provide high school students with experiential learning opportunities through creating habitat for insect pollinators. Projects will increase the diversity of native forbs within an agricultural or other working landscape for the benefit of native bees, honeybees, and monarch butterflies. We encourage applicants to team up with a farmer or other land manager in their community. School properties can be offered if the site is dedicated to agricultural or ecological restoration purposes. In all cases, proper site preparation prior to seeding and transplanting will be key to a successful outcome.

Successful applicants will receive native forb seeds to stratify and germinate in late winter, and supplemental live forb seedlings in early spring. Students will grow these plants in a school greenhouse or other suitable indoor space, transplant them onto an appropriately prepared site, and maintain and monitor the site. Projects also have the option to receive a seed mix to hand-sow in the fall or spring. Teachers may request individual consultation. A \$1,000 cash award will be paid to the school district.

This grant program is provided by Sand County Foundation, a non-profit conservation organization supporting private landowners across North America to advance ethical and scientifically sound land management practices that benefit people and the environment. Financial sponsorship of the program is provided by Enel Green Power North America, Syngenta, Monarch Joint Venture, and U.S. Forest Service International Programs.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY and SELECTION

Educators from high schools (public, private, or charter) in Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin are eligible to apply. Schools/teachers who received a grant for the 2022-2023 school year are *not* eligible this year. Those who received a grant before the 2022-2023 school year *are* eligible, though schools who have not previously benefited from the program will be prioritized for funding. All schools who previously applied but were not selected *are* eligible and are encouraged to contact the School Grant Program Coordinator for feedback on their prior application.

GRANT ACTIVITIES

Successful applicants will complete the following activities for the 2023-2024 academic year:

1. Return a grant award acceptance form and school's W-9 form (August for Round 1 awards; December for Round 2 awards)
2. Begin site preparations with school or landowner: mowing, spraying, tilling, burning, or other methods (pages 67 and 70*) (timing varies by project and method used)
3. Optional: conduct direct seeding of a native grass/forb seed mix (page 82*) (late fall for Round 1 awards)
4. View instructional seed stratification video and/or join an online orientation with other grant recipients (December)
5. Receive seed by mail from a native plant nursery, and conduct moist-cold stratification of seeds for four to six weeks (page 77*) (December/January)
6. Germinate seeds indoors, for about three weeks (page 77*) (February/March)
7. Complete interim report and germination results form (March)
8. Receive live seedlings by mail from a native plant nursery (up to 640 seedlings total in trays of 1" cells) if needed to supplement seedlings germinated in step 5 (April)
9. Upshift Seedlings from 1" cells to 2½" pots, and grow these "plugs" indoors for several weeks (page 79*) (April/May)
10. Complete site preparations as needed (timing varies by methods used)
11. Optional: conduct direct seeding of a native grass/forb seed mix (page 82*) (May/June for Round 2 awards, and Round 1 awards if not completed as Step 2)
12. Harden-off seedlings, complete transplanting of plugs outdoors, and mark/document locations for future monitoring (page 84*) (May/June)
13. Complete student surveys and final report (June)**
14. Monitor site, water and weed as needed (pages 86, 90, 92*) (Summer)

*Page numbers above refer to activities in the [Pollinator Habitat Curriculum Guide](#)

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Sand County Foundation will provide to each grant recipient:

- A flat-rate payment of \$1,000 paid to school district or FFA chapter in two installments: \$750 upon receipt of grant acceptance form in August (Round 1 awards) or December (Round 2 awards) 2023, and \$250 upon receipt of final report in June 2024
- Video training and individual consulting (by phone/email)
- Native forb seeds shipped to schools in December, for stratification and propagation.
- Optional: A seed mix of native grasses and additional forb species to sow on the project site.
- Up to 640 live seedlings shipped in April, if needed to supplement plants propagated from seed. These will arrive in trays with 1" cells.
- 20 trays each with 32 empty 2½" pots for "upshifting" (transferring to larger pots) 640 seedlings to continue growing as "plugs" until ready for transplanting.

Grant recipients agree to provide:

- Ongoing project supervision by the lead and/or secondary teacher.
- A team of students committed to completing all activities. The highest time demand will likely be during March/April in greenhouses, and May/June in the field.
- Approximately 40 square feet of greenhouse space at 60°- 85° daytime / 40°+ nighttime temperatures from March through May. Schools without a greenhouse may provide other means (grow lights, heat mats) to meet these criteria.
- Permission and support from the landowner (individual, entity, or school) to prepare the project site, allow student access, and maintain the site in the future.
- Necessary watering of plants in the first summer, if rainfall is not sufficient
- Permission to share photos, video, and data collected from the project
- An interim report (March) and a final report (June), including administering a post-project student survey developed by Sand County Foundation.

HOW TO APPLY

Complete this [online form](#) by Thursday, August 10th 2023 for the first round, or by November 17th, 2023 for the second round.

Questions? Please read the attached Q&A sheet, or contact Haley Diem at 651-303-8288 or hdiem@sandcountyfoundation.org

Pollinator Habitat Grant Program

Frequently asked Questions - Eligibility and Selection

My teaching is not focused on agriculture. Can I still apply?

Yes. While we are promoting this grant opportunity to agriculture and environmental science educators, we warmly welcome teachers of any discipline to participate.

Our school does not have a greenhouse. Can we still apply?

Yes, in lieu of growing out plants in a greenhouse you can propose an alternative indoor growing space as long as it meets criteria as stated in the grant recipient roles and responsibilities above.

Can elementary or middle school teachers apply?

Unfortunately, no. The scope of this program is limited to the high school level (grades 9-12). We welcome students from younger grades to participate in a project but the proposal and leadership of the project must come from a high school educator and their students.

Can I use this grant to plant habitat on our school grounds?

Yes, but only if it is part of land used for agricultural or ecological restoration education objectives. Please note this program intends to expose students to the process of integrating native habitat within an agricultural or other “working” landscape. Proposals with planting sites along a school entrance or courtyard or other intensively landscaped area are unlikely to be selected for funding.

My school is in the city. Can urban agriculture or habitat sites qualify?

Yes! Our goal is to integrate pollinator habitat with agriculture and working landscapes, no matter the scale or style. We welcome your creativity in finding an open area in your community. This can include urban farms as well as electric transmission rights-of-way, industrial sites, etc.

Is there a difference between the two rounds of deadlines?

The activities and timelines are identical regardless of whether you are offered an award in August or in December, with one exception: Those who apply by the Round 1 deadline will learn their award status while there is still time to plan and conduct late summer/fall site preparation (solarization, herbicide treatment, etc), and possibly fall broadcast seeding. All awardees, whether through Round 1 or Round 2, will conduct indoor/greenhouse propagation and live plant transplanting on the same timeline in early 2024. Teachers not selected in Round 1 may request feedback and will be allowed to re-submit their application by the Round 2 deadline.

How competitive is this program?

Likelihood of selection for a grant varies year to year according to the number of applications, and the amount of funding we can secure from sponsorships. Typically, more than 50% of applications are successful in receiving an award. Applications that clearly describe site preparation methods, include partners beyond the school, and connect the project to food and agriculture are more likely to be selected.

Can I speak with someone before I submit an application?

Yes. Educators are welcome to contact Haley Diem, School Grant Program Coordinator at 651-303-8288 or hdiem@sandcountyfoundation.org to discuss their project ideas prior to submitting an application.

Pollinator Habitat Grant Program

Frequently asked Questions - Activities

What species of seeds/plants will we receive if we are awarded a grant?

This program uses native perennial forbs (wildflower plants) that are common to prairie and savanna ecosystems that once dominated the Midwestern landscape. Examples of species you may receive include blazing star, blue aster, prairie coreopsis, purple coneflower, whorled milkweed, and culver's root.

What materials will I receive and what do I need to provide?

To start plants from seed you will need to provide up to five germination flats and germination media beginning in late December or early January. We will ship the seeds to you in mid December. Your first step will be to "moist-cold stratify" the seeds by placing the germination flats in a cold dark location (a walk-in cooler, a refrigerator, a dark outdoor shed, etc) for several weeks. We recommend that you initiate stratification before or immediately after the winter holiday break, and begin germination in a greenhouse or under grow lights by early March.

In late March or early April you will need to "upshift" the small seedlings to larger pots. We will ship to you 20 trays, each with 32 empty square pots of 2½" size (enough for 640 plants). Each tray is 12" x 22" in size (about 40 square feet of growing area total). You must provide approximately ½ cubic foot of growing medium per tray (10 ft³ total for 20 trays).

In March after sending in your interim report and germination results, we will ship to you as many as 640 live seedlings in trays of 1" cells in early/mid April, as needed to supplement your supply of plants.

You will need to provide all necessary supplies and equipment for site preparation and transplanting. You can use the \$1,000 cash award for any project-related expenses. We don't ask for receipts but we will ask you to report how the funds were used to help us learn more about what resources teachers need to complete these projects.

What determines whether I can receive live plants in addition to seeds?

If your seed stratifying and germination efforts fail (as sometimes happens with native forbs), we'll ship enough live seedlings so that you have at least 640 plants to upshift to the larger pots. If your seed starting is successful, we may be able to ship you some supplement seedlings depending on supply.

Do I need to do the direct seeding of a grass along with transplanting the plugs at my project site?

This depends on your site. If you are enhancing an existing habitat area by mowing and planting among other desired plants, seeding the grasses is probably not necessary. However if you are starting with bare soil or a freshly tilled field, we strongly encourage that your students hand-spread the seed mix that we ship to you. The native grasses (such as wild rye and little bluestem) will complement the forbs you transplant to create a more prairie-like plant community. The mix also has annual oats to compete against the weeds that will inevitably infest your site in the first year, and additional forb seeds (such as black-eyed susans and partridge pea) to add diversity to your site.

What kind of technical assistance can we get along the way?

All grantees will receive a printed copy of our [Pollinator Habitat Curriculum Guide](#) with 29 activities including and beyond the required Grant Activities described above. We will also provide an introductory webinar and individual remote consulting (phone or email) to the extent we are able. That said, habitat projects are very site-specific and will require your discretion and some independent investigation to fit your project needs.

What are the reporting requirements?

We require a mid-term update via an online form (in March) and a final report (in June). Please note 25% of the cash award will be withheld until you deliver a complete final report, including photos, plant survival rates, and results of a student survey (we provide the survey form for you to administer). We will also expect occasional email/phone responses for scheduling of the webinar, delivery of plant materials, etc.