



Youth Investment Program 2008 Grantmaking Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

The Stewardship Council is dedicated to investing in efforts to improve the lives of young people through connections with the outdoors. Implementation of the Youth Investment Program's 2007 Grantmaking Plan was a major step forward in working toward this goal. The Plan was well received by stakeholders as it supported the efforts of community parks and youth development programs, and nurtured efforts in communities most in need.

The 2007 Grantmaking Plan was reviewed by [Blueprint Research & Design, Inc.](#) (BRD) under contract with the Stewardship Council. The BRD findings (see Memo from BRD) and analysis revealed that the Youth Investment Committee (YIC), the External Advisory Panel (EAP) and 2007 grant recipients were impressed with the direction, the process and results of the second year of giving. The Stewardship Council is still relatively young and in its early stages of grantmaking, it is recommended that it continue with the same overall grantmaking strategy in 2008.

2007 Accomplishments and Refinements for 2008

It is important to note that the 2008 Grantmaking Plan preserves the areas identified as most effective in 2007, while also offering significant enhancements for 2008.

Significant improvements that were implemented in 2007 include:

- Targeting a small round of grants for small, grassroots organizations, with a simplified formula for applying for these funds;
- Separating all park and playground infrastructure funds into one round of giving, apart from program proposals;
- Creating two External Advisory Panels (EAP), one for programs and one for infrastructure, to review and recommend proposals related to their fields of expertise'
- Adding clarity to the purpose of the larger, Collaboration Fund
- Enhancing financial matching fund requirements and allowing for multi-year funding requests; and
- Encouraging cross-sector approaches to connecting youth to the outdoors.

The 2008 Grantmaking Plan is outlined in this document.

II. 2008 GRANTMAKING PLAN

Goal

To improve the lives of underserved youth by providing greater access to outdoor experiences – from urban parks in the city to watersheds in the wilderness.

Objectives

- Increase the participation of underserved youth in successful outdoor urban and wilderness programs.
- Improve the cultural relevance of outdoor and park programs to better serve and reflect the diverse youth of California.
- Make the outdoors a more integral part of youth's lives to improve their general health and well-being.
- Improve the infrastructure of community parks and urban open spaces to make them more accessible and welcoming.
- Support coordinated approaches to helping youth get outdoors and to increase their well-being through partnerships among diverse sectors involved in youth development (e.g., health, environmental justice, mental health, education, and juvenile justice).

Program Strategy

In 2008, the Stewardship Council will continue to implement a highly-respected and targeted grantmaking program to reduce physical, financial, and social barriers to enable youth participation in outdoor experiences. To achieve its stated goal and objectives, the Stewardship Council will direct grants to support:

- Emerging, grassroots efforts aimed at reducing barriers for youth engagement in outdoor activities in communities with significant needs (Catalyst Fund)
- Day-to-day operations of promising programs and high-impact organizations (Impact Fund);
- Collaborative ventures that advance the field of outdoor education, health and well being, and cultural relevance through thought leadership and innovative partnerships (Collaboration Fund); and
- Substantial improvements in the infrastructure of community parks and urban open spaces that are planned and executed by established organizations that have demonstrated capacity (Infrastructure Fund);

Priorities

Across these various funds, the Youth Investment Program is particularly interested in supporting outdoor programs that demonstrate the following elements:

- Demonstrate well-rounded approaches to youth development (e.g., combining outdoor education with academics, health, food, environment, environmental justice, leadership, media, or other youth development models).
- Employ best practices for outdoor and/or environmental education that actively engage learners, promote discovery, and address the interconnectedness of relationships in the

natural and social environments.

- Provide ongoing opportunities for connecting youth to the outdoors that go beyond the one-time outdoor experience.
- Integrate outdoor education into the lives of young people and transfer the lessons learned from outdoor experiences to school, home, and community.
- Recognize and address the need for adult relationships in youth's lives and seek to incorporate adult relationships as a component in its approach. This relationship may be in the form of mentors, extended kin care, foster care, families or extended family members.
- Demonstrate a commitment and capacity to collaborate with others in the field to make the outdoors a more integral part of youth's lives.
- Share and reflect the core values of the Stewardship Council including collaboration, stewardship, discovery, sustainability, and leadership.
- Bring resources and funds beyond those of the Stewardship Council to ensure continuance of efforts over time.

Catalyst Fund: Nurturing Grassroots Efforts to Improve Access to Outdoor Experiences

The Stewardship Council will target \$150,000 to support grassroots organizations. The Catalyst funds will be available for qualified applicants requesting less than \$15,000. A qualified grassroots organization is defined as one that is all or largely volunteer driven; has few full-time staff persons or equivalent; has an annual budget, including projects, of less than \$150,000; and has not received significant foundation support. Grassroots organizations must identify a significant need related to access to outdoor experiences, describe why that need is a priority for the community, develop a clear plan for translating that need into action, and demonstrate an ability to account for the expenditure of funds. Grants of up to \$15,000 will be awarded during two funding cycles in 2008. Applicants in this round will not be required to have been in operation for at least one year.

Impact Fund: Sparking Innovation and Lowering Barriers

The Impact Fund is designed to support more established organizations with the resources they need to get underserved youth connected to the outdoors. These grants have the potential to provide resources to overcome some of the obstacles and barriers identified in the Stewardship Council's background research. Organizations are encouraged to request funds that will address the barriers that are keeping youth from getting outdoors. In particular, these funds have the potential for lowering the threshold for accessing the outdoors; enhancing the cultural relevancy of the programming offered by the grant-seeking organization; or creating an innovative approach to reaching this population. These funds may be used for, but are not limited to, dedicated programming or operations, program staff, development, and capacity building.

Collaboration Fund: Developing Field-wide Initiatives through Partnerships

The Collaboration Fund is designed to support field-wide initiatives through partnerships among youth-serving organizations. These grants should result in new or expanded programs that could not be accomplished by a single organization; are innovative and creative in their approach; result in significant local or regional impact; bring together multiple sectors within the broader youth development field for a more cohesive and well-rounded approach to outdoor education; and advance the field of parks and outdoor education. These grants are not intended to be large program grants but rather they are designed to help create an opportunity for many organizations to work together on issues of common concern.

Both new and existing partnerships may apply for funding. Partner organizations with a history of collaborating must demonstrate how this project will expand their partnership to offer a new level or type of service for young people.

Infrastructure Fund: Building Parks and Playgrounds

The Infrastructure Fund is designed to support efforts to improve community parks and open space to make them more accessible, viable and safe for children and youth. Proposals will increase and/or greatly improve park infrastructure and will directly result in creating more welcoming environments. These grants are intended to support proposals that have identified park projects that address physical obstacles to getting children and/or youth outdoors and that will result in long-term infrastructure improvements that reduce barriers that keep children and youth from using the park or open space. The Stewardship Council will consider proposals in all phases of building, from planning to final construction.

Baseline Criteria for Funding

To be eligible for consideration, organizations that apply for funding must at minimum:

- Operate within the geographic scope of the Stewardship Council;
- Serve youth who are between the ages of 13 to 18 (non-school-based projects), or between 7th and 12th grades (school-based projects); and
- Have been in existence for at least one full calendar year (with the exception of the Catalyst Fund for grassroots organizations).

Geographic Focus

Prior to developing our grantmaking program, the Stewardship Council identified three geographic areas of focus for our funding efforts. They are: the metropolitan Bay Area, the urban areas of the Central Valley ("the Highway 99 corridor"), and rural areas with high rates of poverty. These areas will continue to be the target of our grantmaking for 2008.

While the Stewardship Council has made strong efforts to increase the pool of applicants from these geographic areas, it also recognizes that additional outreach and technical assistance is needed. These efforts will take place primarily through local third party experts in collaboration with Stewardship Council staff.

Multi-Year Funding

In 2007, the Youth Investment Program decided to defer initiation of multi-year grants because of a number of concerns including encumbering future year budgets. We will revisit multi-year grants in 2008, with the benefit of having repeat grantees from whom to learn.

We will continue to exercise the option of distributing Infrastructure funds over two years. We anticipate that three out of the five estimated Infrastructure grants will be paid out over a two-year period.

III. PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Budget

The Stewardship Council will commit between \$2.0 million and \$2.5 million in grant funding for 2008. We will continue to offer four grant funds (see Table A for a summary of key elements for each type of grant):

1. "Catalyst" – Program funding for under \$15,000
2. "Impact" - Program funding from \$15,000-\$50,000
3. "Collaboration" - Program funding from \$50,000-\$150,000
4. "Infrastructure" - Infrastructure funding up to \$200,000

Timeline

Table B proposes a general timeline for 2007. Because of the large volume of Impact grants and the desirability of a more manageable review load for EAP members, we are proposing two Impact grant rounds that would be simultaneous with the Catalyst Rounds. This has the added benefit of enabling staff to redirect applicants to the correct fund and/or to encourage declined applicants to return with stronger proposals in the second round. A more detailed timeline will be developed by staff by January 2008 so as to coordinate with board meetings and other pre-scheduled activities.

Application Process

The CyberGrants online grants management and application system will continue to be used in 2008. As indicated in Table A (attached), programs applying for the larger grants (Collaboration and Infrastructure) will be required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) as a first step to receiving funding. Select organizations will be invited to submit full proposals only after review and consideration by the Stewardship Council staff.

Organizations that received funding in 2007 are eligible to apply for funds in 2008. Additionally, grant-seekers that are denied funding in one round are not eligible to apply in another round in the same funding year.

External Advisory Panel

The Stewardship Council will continue to use two External Advisory Panels (EAP) to provide technical expertise and guidance for the review and ranking of competing applications. As in 2007, one panel will focus on program grants (Impact and Collaboration grants) and the other panel will focus on parks and infrastructure grants (Infrastructure). The program EAP will comprise approximately 20-25 volunteer members, each of whom will participate in two of the three proposed review sessions. The infrastructure EAP will comprise approximately 10 members. EAP members will serve staggered two-year terms though exceptions may be made this year to facilitate the increased size of the program EAP. We will continue efforts to increase ethnic and geographic diversity.

Review Process

In 2008, the review process will continue to be organized around the criteria framework and ratings scheme that was put in place in 2007. All applications will be first reviewed by staff for completeness and suitability for funding. Following an initial screening, the review and approval of grant awards will be commensurate with the level of funding being awarded (see attached Table A). Grants under \$15,000 will be reviewed and approved by staff¹.

All grants over \$15,000 will be reviewed by one of the External Advisory Panels. Impact grants (up to \$50,000) will be approved by the Youth Investment Committee. In addition, Collaboration grants (\$50,000 to \$150,000) and Infrastructure grants (up to \$200,000) will be recommended by the Youth Investment Committee to the full board for final approval.

Staff will continue to keep full written records on the results of each application and will provide input to unsuccessful grant seekers as requested.

Grant Review Process and Oversight

The Board delegates to staff the responsibility for the selection of the Catalyst Fund awards with the understanding that the grantmaking plan will require ongoing oversight by the Youth Investment Committee. On a quarterly basis, the Youth Investment Committee will receive an update from staff outlining the process and outcomes of the funding rounds and assessment of their effectiveness. The Youth Investment Committee will maintain the right to require greater oversight of any or all grant rounds, as well as final approval of the Catalyst Fund grant awards.

¹ Catalyst Fund proposals will not be subjected to full EAP review, although staff may consult EAP members with expertise and/or knowledge as appropriate.

Table A: 2008 Distribution Targets and Process

	CATALYST	IMPACT	COLLABORATION	INFRASTRUCTURE
Function	Nurturing small grassroots organizations	Sparking innovation and lowering barriers	Developing field-wide initiatives through Partnerships	Building parks and playgrounds
Budget	\$100,000 - \$150,000	\$400,000 - \$500,000	\$500,000 - \$600,000	\$1,000,000 - \$1,250,000
Funding Range	Up to \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$50,000	\$50,000 - \$150,000	Up to \$200,000
Estimated Number of Grants	10 to 15	10 to 20	6 to 8	5 to 10
Solicitation	Open	Open	Open LOI	Open LOI
Proposal	Full proposal online	Full proposal online	LOI → full proposal by invitation	LOI → full proposal by invitation
Review	Staff	Staff and EAP	Staff, EAP and YIC	Staff, EAP and YIC
Approval	Staff	YIC	YIC → Board	YIC → Board
Frequency	2x/year	2x/year	1x/yr	1x/yr

TABLE B: 2008 TIMELINE (SUBJECT TO REVISION)

CATALYST AND IMPACT FUNDS (GRANT ROUNDS RUN SIMULTANEOUSLY)	
January	Release RFPs for Round 1
February	Grant proposals are due
April	Announce grant awards Release RFPs for Round 2
June	Grant proposals are due for Round 2
October	Announce grant awards
COLLABORATION GRANTS	
January	Release Request for Letter of Intent
March	Letters of Intent due
April	Selected organizations invited to submit full proposal
May	Grant proposals due
September	Announce grant awards
INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS	
January	Release Request for Letter of Intent
March	Letters of Intent due
April	Selected organizations invited to submit full proposal
May	Grant proposals due
November	Announce grant awards