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Sarasota Bay Partners Grant Program | 2024 Information Packet

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Questions? Have an idea for a project, but not sure where to begin?

Please contact:

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GRANTS PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program's (SBEP) Sarasota Bay Partners Grants program is to improve the overall quality of Sarasota-Manatee area bays, their tributaries, and their watersheds and to promote environmental education and community involvement in SBEP's mission. To further these goals, funding is available for projects that focus on *Habitat Restoration and Water Quality* and *Bay-Related Environmental Education and Community Stewardship*. Eligible projects may focus on either or both themes.

2024 Grants Priority Issues: Five priority points will be given to projects that mitigate nutrient runoff and/or prioritize project accessibility. See page 3 of this document for more details.

ORGANIZATION ELIGIBILITY

Non-profit, for-profit, schools, and government organizations located within the greater Sarasota Bay watershed (dark green area in Figure 1) are eligible to receive funding. Please contact SBEP or [view an interactive map of the Sarasota Bay watershed](#) if you are not sure that your project area falls within the watershed. A federal employer identification number (FEID) or state tax exemption is required for issuance of a purchase order for disbursement of grant funds. Funds will not be awarded to individuals.

2024 PROJECTS TIMEFRAME

- Applications open on January 1, 2024.
- Applications are due on March 1, 2024.
- Applicants will be notified of their application status by May 31, 2024.
- Projects must begin no earlier than June 1, 2024.
- Projects must be complete, with final report and invoice submitted by August 31, 2025.



AVAILABLE FUNDING

\$100,000 is available for 2024 Bay Partners Grants awards. A maximum amount of \$10,000 may be awarded to each applicant.

Please note: Bay Partners Grants are reimbursement grants. Reimbursements will be processed beginning no earlier than October 1, 2024. Awardees may request reimbursement for eligible budgeted costs as often as monthly with proper documentation of expenditures and project progress.

PROJECT CATEGORIES

Grant funding is available for projects to enhance wildlife habitats, water quality, environmental education, or community engagement in Sarasota-Manatee area bays, creeks, and watersheds. To get inspired, view example projects below, check out SBEP's [Bay Friendly Living Guides](#), or [view past Bay Partners Grant projects](#).

2024 Priority Issues: Nutrient Runoff and Accessibility

Projects do not have to meet a priority theme to be considered for funding. Projects that do meet either or both themes will receive an additional 5 points. The grant application will ask applicants to provide a brief description of how their project meets the theme(s), if applicable.

- **Nutrient Runoff:** Whether miles inland or on the coast, properties are connected to Sarasota Bay and the Gulf of Mexico through a series of ponds, canals, creeks, and storm drains. Rainwater that enters these systems can become contaminated with nutrients like fertilizer and dog waste, or pollutants like motor oil and trash. Capturing or filtering rainwater before it enters these waterways helps keep our bay clean. Bioswales, rain gardens, and native plant buffers are examples of projects that can prevent runoff. [Click here to learn more about projects that limit nutrient runoff.](#)
- **Accessibility:** Projects that create diverse opportunities to become involved have a higher level of accessibility. When involving the community, consider if there are barriers like language, location, time, resources, and transportation that may prohibit engagement from certain groups. [Click here to view a guide to accessible community engagement](#) from Groundwork USA.

Project Ideas: Habitat Restoration and Water Quality

- Installing rain gardens and bioswales to filter runoff from impervious surfaces
- Diverting gutter downspouts from impervious surfaces to planter boxes, garden beds, or other permeable areas, or to rainwater harvesting systems like rain barrels and cisterns
- Installing native plants or trees near waterbodies

Project Ideas: Bay-Related Environmental Education and Community Stewardship.

- Environmental education programs that incorporate principles of best practices in environmental education, such as those developed by the [North American Association for Environmental Education](#)
- Producing educational programs, videos, or signage
- Community science monitoring and restoration programs
- School or college environmental club service or outreach projects
- Neighborhood engagement campaigns to encourage Bay-friendly behaviors

Examples of projects NOT eligible for funding:

- Projects on private property owned by individuals
- Projects that do not include a community outreach or involvement component
- Adding or repairing walls, fish ponds, swimming pools, patios, decks, benches, light fixtures, road signs, artificial turf, or any other non-natural feature
- Ongoing administrative support of established programs
- Lobbying activities
- Projects related to compliance, regulation, code enforcement, mitigation, or penalties
- Projects that use invasive plant species identified on the Florida Exotic Pest Plant (FLEPPC) list: <https://floridainvasivespecies.org/plantlist2019.cfm>

GRANT SELECTION PROCESS

A subcommittee composed of members of the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Citizen Advisory Committee as well as local experts will review the applications using the criteria below and make recommendations to SBEP staff and boards for funding in March 2024. Applicants will be notified about review committee decisions by May 31, 2024.

Applicants may earn a maximum of 100 points. Scores will be determined by totaling the points earned. Funds will be allocated based on scores. Applicants may receive partial funding. Please indicate on your application if your organization does not wish to be considered for partial funding. Scores, comments, and recommendations from the Grant Review Committee will be available for review upon request. **Applications must receive a minimum of 70 points to be considered for funding.** View scoring rubrics in Appendix A.

ALLOWED AND UNALLOWED PROJECT COSTS

Allowed Reimbursable Costs:

1. Materials and supplies – e.g. plants, mulch, signage, etc.
2. Professional services – those directly involved in the project, such as landscaping and graphic design services.
3. Salary of Lead Organization employees – limited to 25% of total grant award.
4. Indirect costs – limited to 10% of direct costs in grant award. (e.g. maintenance on equipment, bookkeeping, and miscellaneous supplies)
5. Equipment – Rental for sole use of grant work; maintenance and repair only to keep in operating order for life of grant. Purchasing of equipment only in certain circumstances detailed in application and decided upon by Grant Review Committee. Applicants that propose equipment purchases greater than \$1,000 must include at least three quotes.
6. Meetings and Conferences – Hosting, if clearly defined in grant application budget. See below for food cost allowances. Attendance costs are not allowed.
7. Food – allowed for scheduled meetings and volunteer and education events. Per person costs must include items such as drinks, utensils, etc., and use of reusable or compostable materials is highly encouraged. Food/meals not associated with a scheduled event will not be reimbursed. Food cost shall not exceed (based on Florida State Statute, Section 112.061):
 - a. \$6 per person for breakfast,
 - b. \$11 per person for lunch,
 - c. 10% of total grant budget.
8. All costs must result from work performed solely for the grant.

The following costs are NOT allowed:

Entertainment, memberships, computer software, hardware, and supplies, contingency funds, contributions and donations, depreciation, gifts, regulations, code enforcements, fines and penalties, bad debts, interest and financial costs of borrowing, pre-payments, legislative expenses, payment to association members, unexpended funds, and attendance at conferences and meetings.

PROJECT PERMITS AND PERMISSIONS

Permitting compliance. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure all required permits are obtained. The project must comply with all applicable federal, state and local codes. If you don't know if the project will require a permit, contact the relevant city or county public works, environmental services or building departments. The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program will not be held responsible for work done with Sarasota Bay Partners Grant funding that does not have proper permits. Please contact us if you need guidance on how to obtain proper permits.

Permissions. If the project involves use of any property (including public parks, preserves, and right-of-ways) not owned by the applicant, the applicant must obtain prior permission from the property owner and submit the permission in writing as part of the grant application to SBEP. **Applications without such written permissions will be denied funding.**

COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive reimbursement for project costs, awardees must consistently communicate with SBEP about their project. At a minimum, the following communications and reports are required. Failure to submit any of the following will result in cancellation of the award.

Awardees must:

- Acknowledge receipt of the award letter and grant agreement upon receipt in May 2024 and notify SBEP immediately if there have been any changes to the project scope or budget.
- Sign and return the grant agreement by June 1, 2024.
- Submit a final report and final invoice by August 31, 2025
 - Awardees may submit progress reports and partial invoices throughout the project
 - Awardees are welcome to submit a final report before the final deadline.
- Communicate with SBEP if unforeseeable circumstances (including but not limited to natural disasters) change the nature or scope of the work described in the grant and agreed upon when awarded. It is the responsibility of the grant awardee to contact SBEP to determine if the grant monies can still be used in the project. Extensive changes in the scope of work may require additional documentation and review by the Grant Review Committee and may result in denial of the revised proposal.

MAINTENANCE EXPECTATIONS

Projects that make physical changes to the environment, such as shoreline plantings and invasive vegetation removals, should be maintained for a minimum of five years from the date of the executed grant agreement. SBEP retains the right to conduct site visits within the five-year time frame to ensure adequate maintenance and make suggestions to improve project longevity. In the event that a project is not sufficiently maintained or is completely removed, the Lead Organization will be disqualified from future Bay Partners Grant funding for five years from the discovery of the maintenance failure.

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Any publications, media coverage, signage, or advertisements associated with the grant project must give funding credit to the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program Bay Partners Grants Program. A digital file of the SBEP logo and example language will be provided in the award letter email.

Projects that make physical alterations, including but not limited to habitat restoration must include signage acknowledging SBEP funding. Awardees may choose to request a sign from SBEP at no additional cost to the

awardee or they may include the SBEP logo on signage of their choice. Signage costs submitted for reimbursement without evidence of the SBEP logo will be denied. Further details about signage will be provided to awardees in the grant agreement.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Applications are due by 5:00 PM on Friday, March 1, 2024. Please email your application to Megan Barry, Public Outreach Manager at megan@sarasotabay.org.

For more information, questions, or guidance, email megan@sarasotabay.org or call (941) 955-8085 ext. 2

APPENDIX A: SCORING RUBRICS

Funding is available for projects that focus on *Habitat Restoration and Water Quality* and *Bay-Related Environmental Education and Community Stewardship*. Eligible projects may focus on either or both themes and are scored using separate rubrics, as shown below.

<u>Habitat Restoration and Water Quality Rubric</u>		
Category	Points	Tips & Considerations
Priority Points		
Lead Organization has not received Bay Partners Grant funding within the past three years	5	
Project addresses one or both of the priority issues for 2024 Bay Partners Grants	5	
Project Description		
The applicant describes the project and its goals clearly and completely	10	Provide photos, maps, a plant list (required), and project plans
The applicant provides evidence that they have the expertise to carry out the project, or that they will seek out expertise	5	
The applicant describes realistic and meaningful project outputs and outcomes	5	Incorporate measurable goals (view Appendix B)
Environmental Benefits		
The applicant describes how the project will make a lasting positive impact on natural habitats, water quality, and/or wildlife	10	
The project plans follow current guidelines for best practices in habitat restoration or bay-friendly landscaping	10	Guidance for Living Shorelines in the Sarasota Bay Watershed Stormwater Systems in Your Neighborhood Florida-Friendly Landscaping Rain Gardens and Bioswales Living on the Water's Edge: Homeowner's Guide to Low-Maintenance Landscaping Around Stormwater Ponds Living on the Water's Edge: Homeowner's Guide to Low-Maintenance Landscaping Along Seawalls, Bayfronts, and Canals
The applicant provides evidence that they possess or can acquire the knowledge necessary to make habitat alterations	5	

Community Involvement		
Letters of support from participating organizations or expected project participants are included in the application	5	
The project is led by, and/or empowers, benefits, and/or engages one or more of the following communities: environmental justice; immigrant; elderly; disabled; LGBTQ+; income constrained, or asset limited; veteran; Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color	5	Does the project engage members of the immediate community? The public? Are volunteers involved? Is a public community event to showcase the project planned?
The project will engage members of the immediate community (HOA, school, neighborhood, etc.)	10	
The project will include outreach to the broader public (newspaper, public event, etc.)	5	
Project Evaluation		
The applicant describes an adequate and realistic plan for assessing project success	5	Projects must be maintained for a minimum of five years
The applicant describes a maintenance plan for the project	5	Does the applicant detail how they will determine the success of plantings, exotic vegetation removals, etc.?
Budget Proposal		
The application includes a detailed line-item budget describing all estimated expenditures; all expenditures are allowed costs	5	View list of allowed and unallowed costs (view Appendix C)
All proposed equipment purchases are justified	5	Provide three quotes for equipment purchases exceeding \$1,000 (required) See Appendix B for guidance on creating a good budget proposal.

<u>Bay-Related Environmental Education and Community Stewardship Rubric</u>		
Category	Points	Tips & Considerations
Priority Points		
Lead Organization has not received Bay Partners Grant funding within the past three years	5	
Project addresses one or both of the priority issues for 2024 Bay Partners Grants	5	
Project Description		
The applicant describes the project and its goals clearly and completely	10	Does the project incorporate principles of best practices in environmental education, such as those developed by the North American Association for Environmental Education ?

The applicant provides evidence that they have the expertise to carry out the project, or that they will seek out expertise	5	
The applicant describes realistic and meaningful project outputs and outcomes	5	Incorporate measurable goals (view Appendix B)
Environmental Benefits		
The applicant describes how the project will encourage positive behavior change leading to a healthier bay	15	
The applicant describes how the project will increase participants' knowledge about Sarasota Bay, creeks, and watersheds	10	
Community Involvement		
Letters of support from participating organizations or expected project participants are included in the application	5	
The project is led by, and/or empowers, benefits, and/or engages one or more of the following communities: environmental justice; immigrant; elderly; disabled; LGBTQ+; income constrained, or asset limited; veteran; Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color	5	Does the project engage members of the immediate community? The public? Are volunteers involved? Is a public community event to showcase the project planned?
The project will engage members of the immediate community (HOA, school, neighborhood, etc.)	10	Does the applicant describe the community that will be served by the education or outreach project? Is the community need for the project defined in the application?
The project will include outreach to the broader public (newspaper, public event, etc.)	5	
Project Evaluation		
The applicant describes an adequate and realistic plan for assessing project success	5	Projects must be maintained for a minimum of five years
The applicant describes a plan for assessing student learning or community participation and behavior change	5	
Budget Proposal		
The application includes a detailed line-item budget describing all estimated expenditures; all expenditures are allowed costs	5	View list of allowed and unallowed costs (view Appendix C)
All proposed equipment purchases are justified	5	Provide three quotes for equipment purchases exceeding \$1,000 (required) See Appendix B for guidance on creating a good budget proposal.

APPENDIX B: MEASURABLE RESULTS

These examples are provided to help guide applicants when identifying measurable results of their project. Note that you do not need to include measurable results for every aspect of your project, but identifying them when possible may help strengthen your application.

Example 1: Education and Community Stewardship Project

This example describes a project that will engage middle school students in service learning via participation in a local habitat restoration project focused on building a living shoreline with native plants on Sarasota Bay.

Examples of measurable outcomes:

- 1000 native plants installed in the preserve
- 300 linear feet of bay shoreline planted with native plants

Examples of measurable behavior:

- Students will be able to identify 3 native bay shoreline plants
- Students will be able to describe three reasons why living shorelines are important for Sarasota Bay

Examples of measurable goals:

- Increased understanding of the importance of habitat restoration and issues impacting Sarasota Bay
- Increased Bay wildlife habitat

Example 2: Habitat Restoration and Water Quality Project

This example describes a neighborhood-led project to plant a rain garden in a community park.

Examples of measurable outcomes:

- 25 ft x 25 ft area converted from asphalt to rain garden and planted with native vegetation
- 5 Interpretive signs explaining the benefits of the rain garden and what neighborhood residents can do on their own properties to improve water quality

Examples of measurable behavior:

- Neighborhood residents who will attend the block party will learn about the garden and the watershed
- All 500 households in the community that receive the newsletter will read about the project

Examples of measurable goals:

- Improve the quality of stormwater flowing into Bowlees Creek and Sarasota Bay
- Engage neighborhood residents in learning about issues facing Bowlees Creek and about what we can do to help

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE GRANT BUDGET

In this example, the applicant is proposing a budget for a Habitat Restoration project that will include paying a landscaping contractor to site and dig a rain garden and then planting the rain garden with volunteers from the neighborhood. The applicant also plans to conduct outreach to neighborhood residents to encourage Bay-friendly landscaping and reduce fertilizer use.

Example of a Good Project Budget

This budget contains details that allow grant reviewers to ensure that the budget contains realistic and allowed costs.

Budget Item	Request to SBEP (\$)	Match (\$)	Total (\$)
100 1-gallon swamp milkweed plants @ \$5/each	\$500	-	\$500
150 1-gallon blue flag iris plants @ \$5/each	\$750	-	\$750
50 3-gallon muhly grass plants @ \$12/each	\$600	-	\$600
10 3-gallon Virginia willow plants @ \$15/each	\$150	-	\$150
50 bags FloriMulch @ \$2.50/each	\$125	-	\$125
500 Educational brochures – printing	\$1,000	-	\$1,000
Educational sign for project site – printing	\$500	-	\$500
Graphic design for educational brochures and sign – quote attached to application	\$250	\$250	\$500
Volunteer labor for planting and maintaining the rain garden and distributing educational brochures – 25 volunteers x 10 hours/each x \$28.54/hour*	-	\$6,920	\$6,920
Landscape contractor labor to scope and dig area for rain garden – quote attached to application	\$750	\$1,500	\$2,250
TOTAL COSTS	\$4,625	\$8,670	\$13,295

* Current hourly Florida volunteer time valuation rate according to the [Independent Sector](#)

Example of a Poor Project Budget

This budget is not sufficiently detailed. Descriptions of each line item are important for reviewers to ensure that the budget contains realistic and allowed costs.

Budget Item	Request to SBEP (\$)	Match (\$)	Total (\$)
Plants	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000
Mulch	\$125	\$0	\$125
Outreach materials	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,500
Labor	\$1,000	\$8,330	\$9,550
TOTAL COSTS	\$4,625	\$8,330	\$12,955