



Community-Based Habitat Funding Guidance

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Securing resources and funding is a critical step to fulfilling your community's wildlife conservation goals. This guide is tailored for municipalities, community-wide organizations, and other community leaders looking to procure funding to create and maintain wildlife habitat and develop educational programming. Within this guide you will find examples of different

funding types, case studies demonstrating how communities have leveraged funding, and actionable next steps for how you can work towards securing funding for your own program efforts. Please always consult your organization's or municipality's funding guidelines before pursuing any funding options.

1. Fundraising, Sponsors and Donations

Fundraising simply refers to the act of acquiring funds for a project. A **donation** is a sum of money that is gifted to an organization without restrictions or expectation of repayment and a **sponsor** is an individual or organization that invests in a particular project. Individual donors and sponsors can contribute a wide range of benefits to a project including funds, raw materials, equipment and more.

Connect with Local Businesses

Downingtown, PA

This community is currently working towards certification in the Community Wildlife Habitat™ program and they took advantage of a program hosted by Kimberton Whole Foods, which aims to serve its community by featuring a different community initiative or organization every year. Customers are then encouraged to round-up at the register to donate to this initiative. The store also matches the customer donation amount to provide additional funds to the chosen organization. Funding obtained through these donations paid in part for Downingtown's project materials (e.g., plants, tree shelters, stakes, bird nets), printed materials, signage, and incentives for volunteers like snacks.



LEFT: Participants in the Wild on the Water fundraiser paddling on a local lake
PHOTO CREDIT: ERNIE MCLANEY

Networking and Community Building Can Lead to Donations and New Sponsorships

Charlotte, NC

This community has been certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat since 2015 and has used several fundraising strategies. Their signature fundraiser, called Wild on the Water, invites participants to make a minimum donation and enjoy a morning of paddling with a naturalist followed by lunch and a raffle. They also identified corporate sponsorships by leveraging a team member's existing work connection and creating new connections by taking part in community events. Finally, this team gathers individual donations by including an option to donate on their website, in their monthly newsletter and on event registration pages. These funds supported several projects including installing bat boxes, donating bird houses to elementary schools, installing pollinator gardens, planting trees and organizing Kids in Nature Day, which typically hosts at least 230 kids and their families.



ABOVE: Proud habitat stewards with their new bluebird nesting boxes at Kids in Nature Day
PHOTO CREDIT: DONNA BOLLS



Share Costs with Other Organizations

Columbia Heights, MN

This community was a Mayors' Monarch Pledge signatory from 2021 to 2023. Members of their City Council are part of a community organization, [HeightsNEXT](#), which is a volunteer organization that sponsors community events and projects that help to make Columbia Heights more resilient and sustainable. To help fulfill their mission, this organization started the community's monarch festival. The City and HeightsNEXT worked together to use portions of the municipal budget and the organization's budget to cover the cost of translators, dancers, a live band and audio production for the festival. Collaborating with other organizations and sharing costs for projects can be a great way to further your program efforts.



Bilingual storytelling event at the Columbia Heights Monarch Festival
PHOTO CREDIT: MAYOR AMÁDA MÁRQUEZ SIMULA

Create a Membership Program

Wells Branch, TX

This community is currently working towards certification in the Community Wildlife Habitat program and started a membership program called Founder's Circle. This program provides individuals and organizations with benefits for donating a minimum of \$250 per year over the course of three years. Members get access to exclusive events and are formally recognized on the community's website and in their annual report. Signing up for this membership program is made easy through a form on their website: <https://wellsbranchwild.org/get-involved/>.



Invasive species removal specialist Cliff Tyllick is addressing a group of volunteers at a removal event
PHOTO CREDIT: JILL DOUGLAS

Seek Material Donations Rather Than Monetary Donations

Old North State at Uwharrie Point, New London, NC

This community earned certification in the Community Wildlife Habitat program in 2024. While they were working towards this certification, Uwharrie Lumber and Franklin Sports of Salisbury provided Old North State with scrap lumber and plywood to create bluebird, duck and bat houses. The community's HOA also donated poles for these houses and posts for signs to educate community members. Residents have also been encouraged to sponsor the bird houses. Over the past eight years 50 bird houses have been sponsored.



Community members participating in a 2023 sponsorship drawing using a refurbished blue bird box to raise money for the purchase of beehives for the community
PHOTO CREDIT: OLD NORTH STATE AT UWHARRIE POINT

2. Grants & Cooperative Agreements

A **grant** is a sum of money allocated to organizations to complete specific projects. Grants can be offered by different entities such as the federal government, foundations or nonprofit organizations. Prospective grantees are expected to submit an application that will be evaluated by the grantor. Any funds that are allocated to a grantee are not expected to be repaid, but the organization that provides the funds is able determine funding parameters.

Grantees are also expected to report on how they fulfilled these parameters.

A **cooperative agreement** is similar to a grant because a sum of money is also allocated to an organization to complete a project. However, in a cooperative agreement the entity awarding the money is involved in the process of carrying out the project. In other words, rather than just monitoring how the funds are used, the entity will collaborate with the awardee to complete the project.

Stay Connected with State Affiliates

St. James, NC

In 2024, St. James, NC (Brunswick County) became a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat. This certification was achieved in part through a partnership between the St. James Conservancy and North Carolina Wildlife Federation (NCWF). With grant funding awarded to NCWF by the Duke Energy Foundation for statewide habitat restoration, St. James Conservancy implemented three educational projects to enhance coastal restoration and raise awareness about local wildlife habitat. These projects included installing turtle basking platforms in local ponds, establishing a pollinator garden, and installing bat roosting boxes near water sources in the community. St James, applied for a portion of the grant funding received by NCWF and was awarded \$5,000 to complete these projects. A variety of species will benefit from these projects including yellow-bellied sliders, big brown bats, and monarch butterflies.



A representative from St. James Ponds Committee, along with two members of the St. James Conservancy with an artificial turtle basking platform that will be installed in the pond behind them
PHOTO CREDIT: ERNIE MCLANEY

Diversify Your Grant Search

Niles Township, IL

This community was a participant in the Mayors' Monarch Pledge program in 2023 and received the ComEd Green Region Grant from Openlands. This grant aims to help communities create open spaces by providing funding for conservation, pollinator, and climate resiliency efforts based in Northern Illinois. They also received a grant from the Illinois Farm Bureau, which for the third year in a row

offered funding for materials to support pollinators and monarch butterflies. Niles Township was able to use these grants to pay for signs and project materials to support their efforts in the Mayors' Monarch Pledge program. This demonstrates how grants can come from multiple sources such as local and national non-profits, government agencies, foundations, corporations and more.



3. Property Tax Levy

A **property tax levy** refers to the sum of money collected through property taxes to help fund public services that benefit the community.

Utilize Local Government Funding if Possible

Bellingham, WA

This community was certified in the Community Wildlife Habitat program in 2010. They were able to leverage the Greenways Levy, which is a local municipal property tax that was first passed in 1990 and has been approved by voters 5 additional times. Funds generated by this tax can be used in park and open space land acquisition and trail projects. In 2023, \$22.7 million of these funds were allocated to Parks & Recreation budget and a small portion of this was used for the Parks Volunteer Program, which included Community Wildlife Habitat efforts. Having access to this money allowed the City to facilitate 112 volunteer community work parties with 5,516 volunteers, remove 605 cubic yards of invasive species, plant 8,054 native plants, spread 461 cubic yards of mulch, and engage 955 students through their environmental education programming.

4. Rebates

Funding for the Individual that Supports Community Goals

A **rebate** is a sum of money that is returned to an individual after they make a purchase. For example, a renewable energy rebate program may give homeowners a sum of money back if they install solar panels on their property, which acts as an incentive to make these environmentally friendly changes.

Rebate programs are geared toward individuals and may not be optimal for funding community projects. However, they can serve as incentives for individuals to make their properties more wildlife-friendly and support the missions of the Community Wildlife Habitat and Mayors' Monarch Pledge programs and your community's wildlife conservation goals. To learn more about rebates please watch our [Municipal Rebates for Climate Resilient Landscaping](#) webinar.



Incentivize Community Members to Make their Properties Wildlife Friendly

Montgomery County, MD

The [RainScapes Rewards Rebate program](#) led by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection supports residents in making changes to their properties to benefit clean water. They help to carry out a wide variety of projects such as conservation landscape creation, rain garden installation, water harvesting, pavement removal and more. [Conservation landscape projects](#) focus on replacing lawn with native plants to slow down stormwater runoff and provide better quality habitat for wildlife. For every square foot of the property with three inch ponding that is updated, the property owner receives \$6 back.

Incentivize Community Members to Replace Lawns

Fort Collins, CO

The City of Fort Collins offers a [Xerciscape Program for Residential and Commercial Customers](#) that aims to encourage individuals to replace grass lawns with low-water landscapes. Homes and rental properties receive \$0.75 per square foot for up to 1,000 square feet, which can be up to \$750 for an approved project. Homeowners that install native plants receive an additional \$0.25 per square foot up to 1,000 square feet, which can add up to \$1,000 total for a project that includes a minimum of 80% plants.

Tips:

- Consult your organization's or municipality's funding guidelines to ensure that the funding source you pursue does not violate any policies or procedures.
- Conduct research on all potential types of funding, keeping in mind that funding opportunities can be available at the federal, state and local level and can come from a variety of sources, such as corporations, government agencies, local businesses, nonprofits and more.
 - Utilize databases such as the [National Wildlife Federation Nature-based Solutions Funding Database](#) and the [Community Habitat Team Grant Funding Database](#) to help you identify funding sources that will best meet your needs.
 - Identify and sign up for local listservs that uplift funding opportunities in your area.
 - If applicable, stay connected with a National Wildlife Federation state affiliate or local government officials who may share funding resources.
 - Assess the connections that habitat team members may have with other organizations that can support your program work.
- Stay organized by using Google Sheets, an excel spreadsheet or other method to keep track of all possible funding opportunities, important deadlines and deliverables.
- Provide opportunities for individuals to donate to your team through sponsorship, membership, a donation link on a website or at in-person events.
- Identify other ways that organizations or businesses can support you such as directly providing project materials or services for events.

Securing funding can be difficult, but by learning from the experiences of others and using our tips you can identify and pursue funding options that are right for your community.