



Green Infrastructure Community Planning Grants

The Green Infrastructure Center Inc. (GIC) and Virginia Department of Forestry are offering technical assistance grants to help communities map, evaluate and plan for conserving their best natural resources. The GIC produced the Green Infrastructure Planning Guide for Virginia and currently runs training workshops, technical assistance and green infrastructure (GI) planning projects statewide. The GIC created a six-step process for creating GI plans. These grants will provide technical assistance for localities in Virginia to help them create green infrastructure maps and plans that meet local needs and conserve the highest valued natural assets.

Overview

The Green Infrastructure Community Planning Grant (GICPG) is administered by the GIC with support from the Virginia Department of Forestry and funding from the Southern Region of the USDA Forest Service. Technical assistance up to \$10,000 in value will be provided to up to 10 localities to plan for evaluating their top natural resource assets – known as “green infrastructure.”

The top applicants will be selected after review by staff at the GIC and in consultation with the Virginia Department of Forestry. The goal is to select up to 10 qualified localities by fall 2015. The key objective is to select localities that are prepared to begin the work. This is a technical assistance grant only. No funds will be exchanged between the GIC and its applicants.

Each locality will match the technical assistance provided with a cash match or in-kind support, such as staff hours, printing and use of facilities and supplies. A written application form and narrative must be submitted by August 21, 2015. This is a competitive process. Applicants will be judged on demonstrated commitment to be active participants, the intended use of the information, the needs for the project, and whether or not the applicant has been recently assisted by GIC or its agents.

Why Apply

- ✓ Do you want to make smarter investments in community water, trees, trails, food and parks?
- ✓ Do you know that the greener your community, the healthier the people are?
- ✓ Do you want to prevent excessive stormwater runoff and flooding by increasing infiltration?
- ✓ Do you know a top desired feature for companies looking to relocate is abundant natural areas?
- ✓ Do you know that a strategic plan is a top reason funders choose to invest in your community?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you are ready to apply to help your community plan for protecting your best green assets – better utilizing what you have and restoring or reconnecting what may be lost without action!

*The Green Infrastructure Center Inc., P.O. Box 317, Charlottesville, Virginia, 22902
(T:) 434-244-0322 www.gicinc.org*

Who May Apply

Local or regional governments in Virginia may apply. Projects may consist of partnerships, such as between a land trust and a local government agency, but the government agency must be the responsible party and an active participant. Applications are sent only to the GIC.

Amount of Award

This is a technical assistance grant. Localities may request the *maximal level of assistance up to \$10,000* which includes approximately 275 hours of technical support from the GIC. Localities must match at least 80 percent of this amount. Matches may be in the form of staff time, facilities (meeting space and overhead), volunteer hours and use of technology. \$10,000 is a maximum. Localities may also apply for less funds and are encouraged to speak with GIC staff to explore needs and options. Other grants or local funds may also be used as match as long as two conditions are met: 1) the project must be related to the work, such as time spent updating a natural resources chapter of the comprehensive plan and 2) the source of the match (cash or in-kind) must not involve federal funds.

Green Infrastructure Planning Overview

Green infrastructure includes intact forests, tree canopy, wetlands, dune systems, parks and rivers, or agricultural soils that provide clean water, air quality, wildlife habitat and food. These natural assets create healthy communities and sustain the local economy. However, if we don't know where our green infrastructure is located, we can lose it over time. Communities can reap many benefits from their natural systems if they identify, rank and map them as part of the communities' "infrastructure." Communities create maps and strategies to form a green infrastructure plan. These plans can help facilitate development in ways that reduce its impact on the landscape, or to restore environmental functionality where it has been lost.

Communities can use their green infrastructure plans for many purposes such as, revitalizing a downtown business district, protecting current and future water supplies, protecting or expanding their economy, creating healthful cities, protecting wildlife and biodiversity, providing or identifying new outdoor recreation options, informing transportation, comprehensive plans or zoning decisions. Example plans are available on GIC's website at <http://www.gicinc.org/projects.htm>

This is not a planning process for site design or master plans – this planning work is intended for the city, county or regional scale. This is green infrastructure planning at the landscape scale. It is not stormwater best management practices such as raingardens, green rooftops or constructed wetlands. For example plans and definitions see www.gicinc.org and select projects to see planning examples at large scales. These plans can help guide selections for where more stormwater management is needed.

Process

Each recipient of a technical assistance grant will be required to participate actively in the mapping effort including conducting data analysis, planning assessment and helping to identify priorities and implementation opportunities. They must commit to using the six-step process identified in the GI guide – see below. This includes how the community will be engaged in reviewing the work and contributing to the plan (e.g. a stakeholder committee, the planning commission etc.).

Each locality, with assistance from GIC, will create a prioritized base map of the green infrastructure and themed overlay maps to highlight important related features such as water resources, outdoor recreation, forestry, local agri-business etc. using the six steps for community green infrastructure planning. They are summarized below.

Step 1: Set Goals – What does the community value?

Step 2: Data Review – What do we know and what do we need to know?

Step 3: Asset Mapping – Map the community’s ecological, cultural and economic assets.

Step 4: Risk Assessment – Find out what’s at risk and what could be lost.

Step 5: Opportunities – Based on assets and risks, assess what can or should be saved? What could be restored? Engage the community in ranking key areas of importance. Map these opportunities and draft strategies to conserve them.

Step 6:* Implementation – Based on identified opportunities, integrate green infrastructure priorities into local plans such as the comprehensive plan, or implement new projects to meet your goals such as replanting riparian buffers or restoring urban tree canopy.

* While Step 6 Implementation, will not necessarily occur during the grant cycle of one year, it will be important to have identified all the opportunities in Step 5 so that implementation occurs.

Timeframe

This project could be accomplished in nine months; however, it is allowed to take up to 12 months, due to anticipated delays in obtaining data or working within locality schedules, such as county board meetings. This project can begin as soon as the technical assistant agreement (TAA) is signed between the city/county/region and GIC. The schedule in Appendix A indicates the general recommended work flow. Once a project begins, each locality will work with GIC to establish a schedule with review dates, and key milestones contained within the TAA signed by the GIC and the locality (see chart of responsibilities following the work flow chart). *An urban area may take more time if some data needs, such as a tree canopy map, are non-existent or not up to date.* See the example work flow chart Appendix A for ideas.

The GIC will follow up with localities to track their progress in using the information. To ensure that the information is utilized for planning, the GIC will work with each locality to consider how to integrate the green infrastructure maps into county planning activities such as master planning, park planning or comprehensive plan updates. These opportunities will be identified at each project’s inception and also throughout the duration of the mapping and planning process.

APPLICATION CONTENT

The **Project Narrative** section is limited to a **maximum** of three pages. It should be concise, and address the project’s objectives. Please address the following sections in your project narrative and budget.

A. Background - Briefly describe your community and agency. Include items such as population and percent growth rate in development if applicable. Has staff ever attended a GIC presentation or workshop and are you familiar with the concept of green infrastructure planning at a city, county or regional scale? Convey how your proposed project could help your community better evaluate and map your natural resources and plan for appropriate growth and development.

B. Project Objectives – Briefly describe the intent and purpose of the project. What do you hope to accomplish? Include specific project objectives and measures of success. For example, will you include your maps in your comprehensive plan or use it to evaluate where to add more trees to your downtown area or to better protect water quality. Are the objectives realistic?

C. Strategy – How will the project objective(s) be accomplished? Describe in detail the project steps, major activities, the project time frame and completion dates for various activities of the project. See sample work flow chart on attachment A. Note that while your GI plan should have a strategy, its “implementation” includes steps such as integrating your GI maps into the comprehensive or master plan, using the maps to guide water resources protection etc. A successful GI plan includes integration of green infrastructure thinking into everything you already do.

D. Cooperation & Partnerships - Will you be cooperating with other groups or organizations to accomplish your project? If so, how and with whom? Identify the role or responsibilities of each. List or describe the level of local support and volunteer involvement. Include letters of community support as attachments. Please note that it is worthwhile to have an advisory committee to review the project – a successful green infrastructure plan will have broad community support. How will you engage the community? Note that projects conducted entirely as in-house planning activities without adequate partnerships and public input are less likely to be highly ranked by the grant reviewers. In addition, non-government groups who are applying for these funds must provide written documentation that they are working in partnership with a local or regional government agency – this ensures that final products are more likely to be adopted. *Letters of support from government and nongovernment entities are strongly encouraged and should be attached to the proposal.*

E. Visibility and Impact – Describe the impact that the project will have on your community, region or state. What are the merits of the project or general environmental improvements that will be created by the project? Also, describe the educational value of the project.

F. Final Products – Every project must have a base map showing their highest value natural assets; for rural areas large intact forest blocks and connecting corridors, wetlands, waterways etc. For urban areas, natural assets such as tree canopy, trails, significant habitat areas etc. should be included. The base map should be the end result of a prioritization mapping process. It needs to show the most strategic resources based on analysis conducted through your mapping and planning. You must also have a strategy that identifies the targeted areas and specific actions you will undertake. In short, products include your prioritized map(s) and a written action plan. Themed overlay maps may also be created such as for recreation, water assets, cultural resources, recreation or working lands such as agricultural and forestal uses.

G. Budget

The budget must clearly show how the locality will match the technical assistance provided. An 80 percent match is required and may be in direct cash or in-kind donations of labor, supplies, facilities, equipment or other reasonable categories directly related to this project. If the locality requests \$10,000 in technical assistance, then it must show at least \$8,000 in match funds in the form of staff time (use actual staff salary rates), volunteer hours (use the federal volunteer rate or if the volunteer is a professional who is paid at a higher rate, use their actual rate and provide documentation). Use the budget format in Attachment B to clearly show what is requested as well as how the locality will match the contribution of GIC’s technical

Assistance. If uncertain about how much to request, whether the scope of the project is practical (too large or too small?) and whether certain items may be used as a match, contact the GIC.

Criteria for Reviewing Applications for Technical Assistance

Staff time: Staff commitment to participate from both planning and GIS departments (as well as other key departments such as parks and trails, public works etc.)

Timeliness: The outcomes of the planning process will fit well within upcoming plans or projects, such as comprehensive plan updates, open space master plans, zoning updates, watershed plans etc.

Need: Communities facing development pressures that will cause them to lose natural resources without adequate protection will be given priority. Communities who have not had past assistance, or who have not been assisted recently, will be prioritized.

Diversity: A diversity of applicants will be sought to represent different development patterns and land cover (rural, suburban, and urban) as well as different size localities (e.g. large county, small town).

This is a technical assistance grant which requires the locality to perform the mapping work and analysis with advice and assistance from GIC. For those counties or municipalities who need more assistance due to low GIS knowledge or less staff capacity, the GIC can provide more assistance with mapping and assessment. Regardless of whether the GIC does more or less of this work, the locality will be trained in using the information in their planning activities. A small planning or GIS department should not be a barrier to participation, however all localities will need to work on the plans. The GIC will not do the plans for the locality; they must be active partners. Below is a sample responsibilities chart. This will be refined with the locality and included in the TAA.

GIC	Locality	Notes
Prepare applications and review	Submit applications and in-kind commitments	Competitive selection – ranked applications. Consult with DOF.
Provide training in GI planning	Attend planning workshop	If already attended prior training then exempted
Prepare list of data needed	Provide local data to GIC and obtain new data for county	
Review data and finalize method	Consult on method and data used	
Advise on how to use data	Use the model and create base map	
Consult on advisory committee structure	Convene advisory committee and create goals, use for information and maps needed	GIC can assist with facilitation if needed
Advice on crafting goals	Create goals for project	
Assist in creating base map and theme map content/layout suggestions	Create theme maps with GIC's help	These will vary by county depending on the issues ranked as important
Provide template for final report and some standard text (e.g. what is GI planning)	Write final report	GIC can provide limited assistance with layout as needed
Training in using updating data	Update data, integrate into local activities, plans, strategies	GIC to track how plans are used

Training: Selected applicants will be required to attend a six-hour workshop to learn how to create and implement a GI plan. The GIC will run the training workshop in three locations most convenient for ensuring short travel times by selected applicants. There will also be a 2 hours GIS training for technical staff.

To apply:

Send a cover letter on local or regional government letterhead which includes the agency's name, participating departments and lead contact. Attach the project narrative including all required sections and the budget. Also attach any letters of support. Only qualified applicants will be selected. The Green Infrastructure Center and the Virginia Department of Forestry are equal opportunity providers and do not discriminate for any reason or any basis.

Send the entire packet by mail to:

GIC, P.O. Box 317, Charlottesville VA 22902 postmarked by August 21, 2015.

Digital submissions are acceptable as long as all attachments are included (MS Word or PDF format). They must be sent with an email stamp of no later than 5:00 p.m. August 21, 2015 to lara.johnson@gicinc.org An email receipt will be sent on the following Monday. It is recommended that those using email send their applications before the last possible minute in order to ensure timely receipt confirmation.

*Founded in 2006, the Green Infrastructure Center is a nonprofit organization that assists communities in developing strategies for protecting and conserving their ecological and cultural assets. The **GIC** conducts research, land-use planning and land assessment and mapping to provide the suite of tools needed by communities to protect and restore green assets. For more information visit www.gicinc.org*

Attachment A

TIMELINE	TASKING DETAIL	2016									
		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
MAJOR TASKS	Subtasks										
<i>Awards</i>	Technical Assistance Projects Awarded										
<i>Obtaining Data</i>	Send master list of Required data										
	Obtain data (share on server)										
	Review data available (locality/state/nat'l)										
<i>Setting Goals</i>	Review past studies, goals, master plans										
	Obtain input through in person meeting. Work with Stakeholder Committee on goals										
	Finalize list of local data and local priorities										
<i>Mapping</i>	Create base map of connected landscape										
	Develop theme maps										
	Obtain review of base map/themed maps										
	Revisions to maps and finalize strategy										
<i>Data Management</i>	Training in using and updating the data										
Plan Write Up	Create final opportunities and present to boards/commissions for adoption. Write up.										