

**SFI Inc. Community Grants Request for Proposals**

**Directions for Grant Project Applications -- 2020**

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) Community Grants support collaborative projects that involve non-profit organizations, SFI® Program Participants, SFI Implementation Committees and other stakeholders. The SFI Community Grants are intended to support the SFI Community in helping SFI achieve its SFI 2020-2024 Strategic Direction (see Appendix I for full document). Since 2010, SFI has awarded 91 Community Grants, totaling more than $500,000, to foster community partnerships and outreach increasing the understanding of the value and benefits of sustainably managed forests.

Please note: SFI Grant Proposals must be submitted via [SFI Grant’s Online Application Form](https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_5710?SA=SNA&FID=35024). To help you prepare for submission, you can view a sample of the Application and the Communication Agreement here.

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# Information on the Grant Application Process

## Community Grant Criteria

The purpose of SFI Community Grants is to promote collaboration with the SFI Network to support local communities' understanding of the value and benefits of sustainably managed forests. All projects must be submitted by an SFI Implementation Committee (SIC) or non-profit organization. If the proposal is submitted by a non-profit organization, the project must include an SFI Implementation Committee or SFI Program Participant as an active project partner.

Community grants are intended to directly support the SFI Network in helping SFI deliver on SFI’s 2020-2024 strategic priorities across all four of SFI’s pillars – not just the priorities in the Community pillar. For example, an SFI Implementation Committee may apply for a grant to work with an Indigenous community or University to get certified (Priority #2, Standards pillar) or to enhance an aspect of logger training (Priority #11, Education pillar).

Community Grants are awarded for collaborative community-based projects, activities or events which support SFI’s mission ***to advance sustainability through forest-focused collaborations.*** Applications which feature creative partnerships, and/or high degrees of leverage (e. g. matching funds, scale of impact, etc.) are preferred. Community Grants are awarded in the range of $5,000 to $10,000 (US) per year per project, with projects limited to one year in length.

**SFI seeks proposals that address the following priorities in the 2020-2024 SFI Strategic Direction (See Appendix I for full document):**

STANDARDS

* *Strategic Priority #2* - Grow certification across all three SFI Standards in existing and emerging markets through the standard revision process, technology and innovation, and strategic partnerships.

CONSERVATION:

* *Strategic Priority #5* - Generate, measure, and communicate conservation outcomes (water purified, biodiversity maintained/recovered, carbon stored) that demonstrate the contribution of SFI’s footprint to overall ecosystem health and sustainability.

COMMUNITY

* *Strategic Priority #7* - Communicate with and leverage the SFI network to build mutual understanding in the communities where they operate about the benefits of sustainably managed forests and products.
* *Strategic Priority #8* - Grow meaningful relationships with Indigenous, African American, and underserved communities to advance social, economic and environmental opportunities.
* *Strategic Priority #9* - Focus partnerships, grant giving, and communications to build greater understanding of the role of forests and trees in our everyday lives.

EDUCATION

* *Strategic Priority #10* - Develop a sustainable PLT program built on a learning framework that uses trees and forests as a window on the world, delivered through curriculum and an engaged network.
* *Strategic Priority #11* - Grow professional development for educators, loggers, architects, and other influencers to enable them to make informed decisions and take responsible actions.
* *Strategic Priority #12* - Strengthen outdoor opportunities as well as green career pathways for youth.

## Process

The proposal must be submitted via [SFI Grants’ Online Application Form](https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_5710?SA=SNA&FID=35024) by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on Friday, January 31st, 2020. Applicants will be notified via email that their application was received. Late proposals will not be considered.

To setup an online account, visit <https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_5710?SA=SNA&FID=35024>, and click the [New Applicant?](https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_5710/default.asp?SA=TEST_EMAIL&SESID=%34%38%33%34%30&RETURN=) link. If you’ve submitted a grant application before, your account information remains the same as previously set up. Save the above link and your username and password, as you will use this link to access saved and submitted requests.

SFI’s online application imposes text limits within requested fields. However, you are welcome to upload supporting documents as needed. To help you prepare for submission, you can view a sample of the application here. During the application process, be sure to save progress while working on the online application, and you do not need to complete the entire process in one sitting. Applications are preferred in English, but applications for projects in Canada may be submitted in French. If you have any difficulty with the online application process, SFI staff would be happy to assist you, or to provide alternative application options. Please contact us at grants@sfiprogram.org.

## Timeline

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| **Key Steps** | **Date** |
| Request for Proposals issued | December 5th, 2019 |
| Proposals due to SFI, Inc. | January 31st, 2020 by 11:59 pm Eastern Time (no exceptions) |
| Lead Organizations advised of results | By March 31st, 2020 |

## Terminology

The following terminology applies to this Request for Proposal:

* “Must” or “Mandatory” means a requirement that must be met in order for a proposal to receive consideration.
* The “Grant Agreement” will be developed collaboratively by SFI Inc. and the Lead Organization once a proposal is accepted. The Grant Agreement will stipulate reporting deadlines, payment schedules and milestones consistent with the project proposal.
* “Lead Organization” is an SFI Implementation Committee (SIC), conservation group, college or university, community organization, aboriginal or tribal group, or other non-profit submitting this application; oversees the project funding; and is responsible for reporting to SFI Inc. on the project progress (see Section 2.1 for additional details regarding eligibility of Lead Organizations).
* “Program Participant” is an organization certified by an accredited certification body to be in conformance with the [SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, Fiber Sourcing Standard, or Chain-of-Custody Standard](http://www.sfiprogram.org/sfi-standard/guide-to-2015-2019-standards/).
* “SFI Implementation Committee” is a state, provincial, or regional committee organized by SFI Program Participants to facilitate or manage the programs and alliances supporting the growth of the SFI program, including sustainable forest management.
* “Project Partner” means an individual, partnership, government agency, corporation, non-profit, or other entity named in the Proposal as one of the entities in addition to the Lead Organization that has agreed to be involved in the implementation of the Project. Project Partners must include Program Participant(s) and/or SFI Implementation Committee(s).
* “Project” means the work described in the proposal.
* “Proposal” means a proposed project prepared and submitted in response to this Request for Proposal.
* “Should” or “Desirable” means an element having a significant degree of importance to the objectives of this Request for Proposal, and which will be taken into account in the evaluation of the Project.

## Mandatory Requirements for Community Proposals

All proposals must meet the core requirements listed here. Projects which do not meet these core requirements will not be considered:

* The Lead Organization in the Project must be an SFI Implementation Committee or a registered, tax-exempt (for example, a 501(c) (3) in the US or registered with the Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency in Canada), non-profit and/or charitable organization. Applicants must submit a tax identification number as proof of tax-exempt status within the Online Application Form.

Please note: The following entities are additionally eligible to submit applications as the lead organization:  SFI Implementation Committees; colleges and universities; and Indigenous groups.

* Projects must include an SFI Implementation Committee or Program Participant as a Project Partner, if an SFI Implementation Committee is not the lead organization. Letters of support from Program Participants or Implementation Committees should be included with the application.
	+ A map of SFI Implementation Committees - <https://www.sfiprogram.org/sicmap/>
	+ To search for SFI Program Participants, visit - <https://www.sfidatabase.org/search/search-certs>
* Proposed projects should be collaborative in nature and involve at least one Project Partner, in addition to the Lead Organization. Additional non-profit conservation or community partners may strengthen the Proposal.
* The applicant must agree to authorize SFI Inc. to publicize the Project and to use their name, images, logos and information about the Project in such publicity. The Lead Organization will provide electronic signature of the Communications Agreement within the Online Application Form. A copy of this agreement is provided here. To the extent possible, SFI Inc. will work cooperatively with Project Partners on any publicity associated with the project.
* The project proposal must contain a communications plan that clearly outlines opportunities for SFI to work with the Lead Organization on communicating key milestones and project results. Organizations are strongly encouraged to speak about the Project in public venues, including potentially SFI events and/or webinars, or other venues identified by SFI Inc. and the project partners. Proposals including plans for such project promotion or other communication tactics may be given stronger consideration.

## Additional Desirable Considerations for All Proposals

While not mandatory, SFI Inc. will give preference to Proposals in which the Project Lead Organization and Project Partners have secured matching or in-kind funds for the Project from other organizations and/or other outside funding sources. Applications without matching or in-kind funds may still be considered, however those demonstrating matching or in-kind funds of 1:1 or greater will be given stronger consideration.

## Successful Applications

* Successful applicants will be required to sign an agreement (the “Grant Agreement”) with SFI Inc. specifying reporting timelines, project deliverables, payment schedules, significant milestones and other specifics surrounding the project. All agreements must be completed within 30 days of application acceptance.
* The Lead Organization of all accepted applications must attend a webinar to develop a clear understanding of reporting timelines, communications expectations, the Grant Agreement process, and other important facets of SFI Community Grants.
* The Lead Organization and SFI Inc. will schedule a one-on-one “kickoff” meeting/conference call to discuss details of the project, deliverables, plans for engagement of SFI Implementation Committee(s) or SFI Program Participant(s), if they are not the Lead Organization, plans for external communications, and other relevant aspects of the project as soon as practical after the introductory webinar noted above.
* Lead Organizations are required to submit progress reports, via the online grant system, to SFI Inc. at least once annually, or more frequently as stipulated in the Grant Agreement, and hold briefing calls with SFI staff grant manager(s) during reporting periods, as deemed necessary.
* Project payments are tied to attainment of project milestones and are generally made on a six-month payment schedule, subject to the specific circumstances of the project. SFI Inc. will receive and process invoices during a specified window each quarter. The Grant Agreement will include the timeline/schedule for progress reports and payment.
* Funding is disbursed based upon receipt of scheduled progress reports demonstrating fulfillment of deliverables and timelines. If the project meets any unexpected difficulty which could disrupt the scheduled deliverables, it is essential to communicate this swiftly to SFI Inc. SFI staff will work closely with project partners to get the project back on track or redefine project expectations.
* SFI appreciates the opportunity to collaborate in the planning, development and implementation of the proposed work, as appropriate based on the complexity of the project and staff availability. Potential applicants are encouraged to query staff contacts noted in Section 2 to help shape proposals that facilitate such engagement.
* SFI Inc. anticipates the results of grant projects will aid in the advancement of SFI strategic priorities, and thus be useful to SFI Implementation Committees, SFI Program Participants and to communities across the US and Canada. Some projects may additionally lend themselves to more public reporting and publicity. SFI staff will work closely with project partners to identify such opportunities and work cooperatively to craft messages and outreach strategies appropriate to each specific project.
* All Project Partners involved in the Project must agree to authorize SFI Inc. to publicize the Project and to use their names, images, logos and information about the Project in such publicity. The Lead Organization will provide electronic signature of the Communications Agreement within the Online Application Form. Additional Partners noted in the project proposal will be required to sign the agreement, once the application is accepted by SFI Inc. For your reference, a copy of this agreement is here. To the extent possible, SFI Inc. will work cooperatively with Project Partners on any publicity associated with the project.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** Where did the Community Partnership Grants and Community Engagement Grants go?

**Answer:** To be more aligned with SFI’s new strategic direction, the two granting programs supporting community projects merged into one **SFI Community Grants** funding program.

**Question:** Where can I find the SFI strategic priorities?

**Answer:** SFI strategic priorities have been included in Section I of this application.

**Question:** Does our project require the involvement of an SFI Implementation Committee to be funded?

**Answer:** Projects must involve either an SFI Implementation Committee or an SFI Program Participant. In addition, SFI Implementation Committees are highly encouraged to submit an application and serve as the lead organization.

**Question:** How much money is available for my project? How much can I apply for?

**Answer:** Community Grants are in the range of $5,000 to $10,000 (US) per year. It’s important to show how your project makes efficient use of the available funds.

**Question:** What is the maximum allowable time frame for a project?

**Answer:** All grants have a maximum allowable SFI funding period of one year, completed within a year of the initiation of the SFI funds.

**Question:** Am I allowed to charge “overhead” for a project?

**Answer:** SFI will not grant funds to cover overhead costs, but such funds could be used to describe “matching” dollars considered desirable to the project.

**Question:** Can I use state, provincial or federal agency dollars to show as matching funds?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Can grant funds be applied to projects outside of North America?

**Answer:** No, at this time funding is limited to projects in the United States and Canada.

**Question:** What if my project meets multiple Strategic Priorities?

**Answer:** List all applicable connections to SFI’s Strategic Priorities. All projects must meet at least one of our priorities, and projects linking to more than one may be considered highly.

**Question:** What if I am not ready to apply this year, but want to be considered for a future grant?

**Answer:** SFI only accepts applications during the open RFP period. However, SFI would be pleased to help you plan a submission at any time. SFI can help you align your project with program criteria, connect with SFI Program Participants and other experts, and provide guidance as requested. If you want to ensure your organization is on SFI’s distribution list, please email grants@sfiprogram.org.

# Inquiries

The RFP Application Instructions should provide most of the information potential applicants need. Any additional inquiries related to this Request for Proposals are to be directed to the appropriate person identified below. Information obtained from any other source is not official and should not be relied upon.

For Strategic Community Projects in Canada:

**Attention: Jessica Kaknevicius**

Vice President, Community Engagement

Phone: 647-797-1117

E-mail: Jess.k@sfiprogram.org

For Strategic Community Projects in the United States:

**Attention: Nadine Block**

Senior Vice President, Government and Network Relations

Phone: 202-596-3456

E-mail: Nadine.Block@sfiprogram.org

For General Inquiries and support in the application process:

**Attention: Amy Doty**

Senior Manager, Community Engagement

Phone: 202-596-3458

E-mail: Amy.Doty@sfiprogram.org