

UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON**

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Green Initiative Fund

Program Proposal:

The goal of the Green Initiative Fund is to provide funding, through grants, for projects that improve and support UH campus sustainability efforts. Funds are allocated to projects focused on promoting water conservation, energy efficiency, restoring the habitat, sustainable modes of transportation, environmental efforts, and food justice. Funding by the GIF will be allocated to student driven projects that aim to combat climate change and make the University of Houston a more sustainable campus. Students may submit applications, which are selected to be reviewed for funding by the appointed GIF Committee, consisting of students, faculty, and staff with voting power.

Structure of the Committee:

The Green Initiative Fund Committee will choose which projects receive money, approve changes to awards, and guide the general direction of GIF. The Green Initiative Fund will be administered by the GIF Committee and an appointed GIF Coordinator.

The Coordinator will be responsible for presenting and reporting to the Committee all information regarding GIF funded projects. The Coordinator must be a student enrolled in at least 9 credit hours for undergraduate students and 6 credit hours for graduate students and will be compensated through a portion of the funding for the GIF. The Coordinator must speak at meetings, focus on community outreach, meet with project applicants and grantees, and run trainings for committee members and new grantees. The Coordinator will also track the progress of grantees, manage records and other administrative tasks, and formulate strategic initiatives for GIF outreach.

Voting members of the committee will be responsible for attending monthly committee meetings, selecting which projects receive funding during grant review, vote on issues which require committee approval, and provide feedback to and help support all grantees. Voting members of the committee will consist of:

- 2 representatives from UHSGA appointed by UHSGA

- 1 representative from Graduate and Professional Student Association appointed by GPSA and UHSGA
- 2 application-based at-large representatives selected by the GIF's Committee after the other 3 voting members have been selected

Nonvoting members of the committee will be responsible for providing advice and background information to the committee during grant review, providing feedback to the Committee on issues which requires Committee approval, and providing feedback to help support all grantees. Nonvoting members will consist of:

- 1 representative from Student Fees Advisory Committee
- 2 representatives from the Office of Sustainability

Proposed Funding Structure:

There will be two levels of projects funded through the grant. First, minor grants will be awarded on the basis of a proposed project costing \$3,500 or less and will be completed within 6 months. Second will be large project major grants that will be awarded to projects that exceed the minimum amount of \$3,500 in funds and will not be completed within 6 months of fund disbursement. Since projects span multiple years, the fund will be allowed rolling fund equity annually at the close of each fiscal year. If savings total 300% of annual funding allocation, the GIF funding must be reviewed by the University and potentially donated.

Funding Structure and Application Process at Public Texas Universities:

University of North Texas: A committee at UNT comprised of 10 students and 3 faculty members review cases for the *We Mean Green Fund Committee* that seeks to review proposals for grant funding for specific environmental sustainability efforts. At UNT there is an environmental service fee of \$5 per academic year that is separate from student fees.

- **UNT Funding Structure:** UNT's grants are determined based on what the student led committee deems fit and what the overall budget inclines to. All proposals must present "quantity, cost of each, total cost" backed up by research as to why funding is needed for the project and the overall benefits to the University. After deliberation, the We Mean Green Fund Committee convenes to decide a proper amount to be awarded. Preference is given to some projects that can acquire outside funding beyond UNT's green fund.

Goods/Services	Total Cost	Explanation of Costs/ Research
Project Signage	\$	Information found on Project Signage page.
	\$	
Example: Shovels (ERASE EXAMPLE ROW)	\$ 50.00 (ERASE EXAMPLE ROW)	Quantity (5)/ Cost Each (\$10). Shovels are needed so volunteers can dig holes for planting flowers in the garden beds. Home Depot, Lowes, and Amazon have shovels for this price. (ERASE EXAMPLE ROW)
	\$	
	\$	

University of Texas El Paso: UTEP’s green fund is a student approved fee that incentivizes campus sustainability projects from faculty, staff, and students. UTEP requires a fee of \$3 per student per semester that is exclusively gathered from student fees. To ensure that money for the green fund is efficiently recorded and spent, all funding allocations are provided to the Student Government Association and the University’s President.

- UTEP Funding Structure: UTEP’s funds are awarded on a budget and review basis that is approved by a committee run by students. Grant sizes are determined through an extensive application and presentation of project budget allocation. Application requires specifics on how the project will serve the university community, list of anyone associated in putting the project together, timespan of project, and that a list of 6 requirements are fulfilled. Regardless of the project and presentation, if a project meets the 6 requirements UTEP must award at least \$1000 from the fund.

University of Texas at Austin: The Green Fund at UT Austin utilizes a competitive grant program to award money for university students, faculty, or staff for sustainable initiatives or research relating to sustainability. Each request is reviewed by a student majority committee that oversees a \$500,000 budget to be allocated through grants. UT Austin charges students \$5 per semester and \$2.50 during the summer session in order to fund the Green Fund. UT Austin has created a network of alumni focused on keeping UT green that offer donations to the Green Fund to support funding for sustainable initiatives.

- Funding Structure: The process for awarding grants requires an application that includes questionnaires and a budget presentation. In addition to the application, a budget of itemized expenses must be filled out in detail to be reviewed by the student led committee. UT separates its grants into three types depending on how much money a project is requesting.
 1. 1st type – Less than \$20,000

2. 2nd type – Between \$20,000 - \$50,000
3. 3rd type – Over \$50,000

In addition to awarding funds, there is also a cash match requirement:

- xii. **Cash Match Requirement:** There is a cash match requirement for grant requests over \$20,000 from non-academic, self-funded units (e.g., Athletics, Housing and Dining, University Unions, Parking and Transportation Services, etc.):

Green Fund Grant Requests	Required Cash Match from non-academic, self-funded units
Less than \$20,000	0
Between \$20,000-\$50,000	10%
Over \$50,000	25%

Grants for research follow the same guidelines as a project proposal but must additionally provide a hypothesis and thesis.

1. Undergraduate Grants - \$2,500 each
2. Graduate Grants - \$5,000 each

Texas A&M University: The Green Fund at Texas A&M is a student led committee that oversees a budget to award funding to sustainable initiatives on campus.

- **Funding Structure:** Texas A&M awards funds by requiring an application process and budget presentation by potential projects. Micro Grants and Major Grants are offered as forms of funding. To be approved for a grant a proposal must fit the evaluation criteria that asks for: concept, environmental impact, student involvement, campus impact, cost effectiveness, outreach plan, capability of project team, academic gains, evaluation/follow-up, well written application, and budget.
 - a. **Microgrants:** These grants are given out on the basis of a proposed project costing \$3,500 or less and will be completed within 6 months of fund disbursement. In order to be approved for a Microgrant all proposed projects must met the following criteria:

- Projects must directly address environmental improvements on the Texas A&M College Station campus. Furthermore, the Aggie Green Fund is intended for environmental projects that are not already funded by Texas A&M University.
- Projects may not primarily address research aims.
- All projects must meet AGFAC reporting requirements, including metrics for success, a final report, and progress updates every three months (if applicable).
- Where appropriate, projects must have received written confirmation of support by campus officials prior to consideration (see Project Approval form within the application).
- Projects that propose a change to the physical campus environment must align with the [2017 Campus Master Plan](#) and require approval from the [Council for the Built Environment](#) (CBE). Examples include permanently installing new equipment, constructing a garden, changing the appearance of a building, etc. Projects requiring CBE approval are not eligible for the micro-grant. However, these projects may apply through the regular application process.

Applications for Micro Grants must demonstrate project description, metrics and measurability, proposed budget sheet, and a project timeline.

b. Major Grants: These grants are awarded to projects that exceed the minimum amount of \$3500 in funds and will not be completed within 6 months of fund disbursement. Requirements to receive a major grant are identical to the requirements for a Micro Grant with the addition of a few more provisions:

- If a project requires CBE approval, the CBE package must be submitted by the applicant's respective Dean or Vice President.
- Projects must begin active project implementation by September 15 of the year they receive funding and reach project completion by August 31 of the following year. Projects requiring CBE approval must begin active project implementation within 3 months and reach project completion within 18 months of receiving CBE approval. Projects out of compliance with these requirements must return all funds to the Aggie Green Fund within 30 days unless they have applied for and received an AGFAC extension.
- All projects must have a mechanism for evaluation and follow-up after funds have been dispersed. At a minimum, a project plan must include a progress report and scorecard. If a project is expected to have on-going benefits such as annual cost savings, the project plan must include a mechanism for tracking, recording, and reporting these benefits back to the AGFAC.
- Projects should have publicity, education, and outreach considerations.

c. The Application process for a Major Grant is split into two parts:

- Abstract: consists of basic background information that the committee will review and provide feedback for.
- Full Application: Following the approval of the committee on the project's abstract an in-depth questionnaire to identify strengths/weaknesses of a proposed project must be filled.
 - Managing a Grant: Once a grant is awarded every individual or party must abide by a Standard Operating Procedure Acceptance Agreement, Promotion and Branding Guidelines, and Reporting.
 - Acceptance Agreements vary for Major Grant and Micro Grant funding.

- Reporting holds project managers accountable to accomplishing their goal. Those who do not meet these requirements in a timely manner are ineligible to receive further funding.

REPORTING

As part of their acceptance of Aggie Green Fund monies, all grantees agree to meet Aggie Green Fund Advisory Committee (AGFAC) reporting requirements. Major Grants and Micro-Grants have separate reporting requirements that are detailed below. Grantees who do not meet reporting requirements in a timely manner are ineligible to receive further funding.

History of Active Green Funds at Public Texas Universities:

University of Texas Austin: In 2011, Jacob Bintliff pioneered the green fund at UT Austin and set up the green fund structure for other institutions such as University of Texas El Paso, A&M, and University of North Texas. The Fund was passed using the Environmental Service Fee that was amended by Texas law with a 2/3 approval from student votes at UT Austin and received approval from the Board of Regents. Bintliff pioneered the introduction of environmental service fees to public universities which required an amendment of the ESF law.

- Public universities have an option to use funding committees (like SFAC) or to gather funding for green initiatives by implementing the ESF which can be used to secure funding for students as long as it meets a time requirement.
- For the creation of an ESF, HB 3353 states: “Not to exceed \$5 for each regular semester or summer semester lasting more than 6 weeks. Not to exceed \$2.50 for any summer semester less than 6 weeks.”
- Added provision: An amendment to the bill included the option to raise the fee up to \$10 in regular sessions and \$5 in a summer session with an approved vote from the student body.
- To ensure the bill was amended and student support was present, each UT system school along with Texas A&M and UNT put up a referendum in their Spring 2010 elections and all 5 universities won the approval of the student body by at least 70%.
- After the bill was amended, any public Texas institutions was now allowed to implement an Environmental Service Fee. UT’s fee gathered around \$500,000 yearly in funds.
- The Bill amended in 2009 allowed UT Austin to implement an ESF only covered 5 years. In 2016, the bill reached its deadline and UT legislature failed to reinstate the fee. 2 bills were pushed through Texas legislature to increase the lifespan of the Green Fund through ESF but ultimately failed.
- At UT Austin, a masterplan for sustainability was created that highlighted future sustainability efforts which outlined UT Austin’s plans to continue the Green

Fund Program due to increased usage. With over 3 million dollars distributed in awards, the Green Fund continues to be vital for launching environmental sustainability projects and research.

Texas A&M University: Originally started out as an Environmental Service Fee and transformed into a student fee. After 5 years, Texas A&M undertook a new method in which student fees would be accumulated and a certain portion of them would be donated to the Green Fund. This new method was to provide a more holistic selection process in distributing fees but resulted in a significant decrease in the amount of money raised for the Green Fund.

- As a result of losing money, Texas A&M implemented the Minor Grant into their Green Fund process. The minor grant allowed for more small projects to get funding and a less lengthy process for applicants to fill out.

University of North Texas: The Green Fund was established in 2010 by the UNT Student Government Association via an Environmental Service Fee. The Green Fund is housed under the office of Student Affairs. The benefits in their Environmental Service Fee are that by law, the money in the fund must roll over every summer, letting the money accumulate, and explicitly be spent on Green Fund initiatives.

- An issue with UNT using an environmental Service Fee is that by law, ESF can only be used for environmental sustainability efforts instead of economic, social sustainability, etc.
- To efficiently run a Green Fund through an ESF, UNT recommends:
 - a. Branding: Clearly define the Green Fund and its brand so students fully understand it.
 - b. Advising: To minimize inefficiencies, advising on green fund proposals made through UNT is a requirement.
 - c. Website: Streamline the application process and make the Guided user interface more appealing to students.

University of Texas at El Paso: UTEP created their Green Fund in 2012 through the Student Government Association with a campus wide referendum. The Green Fund was successfully created with a \$3 increase in student fees for the Green Fund. The main issues UTEP has run into have centered around the following:

- Outreach: Taking measures to increase awareness about the Green Fund. To combat this, UTEP has focused on heavily increasing marketing efforts and

strictly outlining that the Green Fund is to be used to increase environmental sustainability.

- Efficient Use: Students have proposed projects that reign outside of the university, which the jurisdiction of UTEP's Green Fund does not cover. UTEP has pushed to increase efficiency by streamlining the Green Fund and pushing for accountability with project managers.

Examples of Student Projects:

All research is presented in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 order. Each tier represents an amount of money used for each project, with Tier 1 being under \$20,000, Tier 2 being between \$20,000 - \$40,000, and Tier 3 being for projects awarded funds exceeding \$40,000.

University of Texas at Austin:

1. Tier 1 (2015-2016)
 - a. Bokashi Composting Pilot (\$19,550) – This project piloted an innovative anaerobic composting method appropriate for urban spaces, increasing the reuse of campus organic waste on campus property. The project will be managed by UT- Austin's Zero Waste Initiative.
2. Tier 2 (2017-2018)
 - a. BIM based Construction Waste Estimation & Disposal Planning Tool (\$24,590) – Graduate and undergraduate students in the department of Civil Architectural and Environmental Engineering developed a software tool that leveraged Building Information Modeling technology for the quantification of waste generated from the construction projects, as well as the disposal planning of the generated waste.
3. Tier 3 (2018-2019)
 - a. Cotton Recycling Systems for Solid Waste Reduction and Fashion Sustainability Enhancement (\$59,446) – A faculty research award project that will start a student-led recycling center and upgrade UT patent-pending technology for converting material into new rayon fabric.

University of North Texas:

1. Tier 1 (2015-2017)
 - a. Garden Block Pavilion (\$10,914) – A Garden block sculpture that provides a shelter and gathering place for students and serves as a catalyst for forming connections that are centered on a shared goal of sustainability.

2. Tier 2 (2018-2019)
 - a. Lot 27 Tree Initiative (\$28,500) – The UNT grounds Team received approval for their proposal to plant and provide irrigation for fourteen trees in the parking lot islands of Lot 27. These trees will provide shade, bird habitats, campus beautification, and a reduction of urban heat island effect within the lot.
3. Tier 3 (2018-2019)
 - a. Pollinative Prairie – Phase I (\$156,998) – The Pecan Creek Pollinative Prairie is a Native North Central Texas tallgrass prairie reconstruction project where UNT Ecology staff and students initiated the project to provide space for students, faculty, and staff on the UNT campus to promote conservation and sustainable urban landscaping of native habitats for declining pollinator populations.

Texas A&M University:

1. Tier 1 (2016)
 - a. Reusable Water Bottles: Education and Outreach Campaign (\$16,678) – Goal of this project is to reduce the amount of beverage container waste generated on campus. Sustainability student interns will develop an outreach campaign that discourages the use of disposable water bottles and encourages switching to reusable water bottles.
2. Tier 2 (2017)
 - a. Residence Life Water Bottle Filling Stations IV (\$40,000) – This project will provide on-campus residents with convenient access to water bottle filling stations. Water bottle filling stations promote sustainable practices, reduce plastic bottles in the landfill, and save money from the purchase of bottled water.
3. Tier 3 (2017)
 - a. Reusing the Roof Space: From Solar Panels to Reduced EUI (\$75,000) – By installing PV panels on the roof of the Langford Building, this project aims at reducing the amount of energy required from the central plant, particularly during the peak demand hours on campus. Today, many scholars are adopting solar panels as part of taking advantage of saving money on their electricity consumption.

University of Texas El Paso:

1. Tier 1 (2017)

- a. Bike UTEPIA (\$19,738) – UTEP students and Green Team members propose the installation of 5 new bike racks on campus and relocation of other existing bike racks for the purpose of reducing the UTP’s carbon footprint by promoting healthy habits such as biking to and from campus.
2. Tier 2 (2011)
 - a. Energy Dashboard (\$30,200) – This project was developed by students from the College of Engineering to health Facilities Services monitor energy efficiencies with on-campus buildings. The Energy Dashboard monitors electric energy use from campus buildings for the purposes of analyzing consumption and trends.
3. Tier 3 (2012)
 - a. Wise Family Theatre (\$32,040) – Funding was allocated to replace incandescent theatrical lighting with LED fixtures that will increase bulb life and reduce power consumption.

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