PGF Quick Fund Application Guide

Updated July 2017

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About the PGF

The Patriot Green Fund (PGF) strives to foster an environment where Mason can flourish academically in part through the practice of environmental, social, and economic stewardship. This fund seeks to finance projects that have a high value in all three of these areas of sustainability. The fund will also work to raise awareness of and support for building a culture of sustainability on campus and in our communities. The PGF will empower students by providing them with an unprecedented opportunity to lead and direct projects that will create positive change.

The Patriot Green Fund operates with three distinct goals:
1. Enable students to conduct research and implement scholarship-related projects that demonstrate environmental leadership and benefit the Mason community and surrounding region.
2. Reduce Mason's environmental impact by making tangible improvements to habits, facilities and operations.
3. Improve understanding and awareness of, and support for, sustainability issues for the entire Mason community, leading to a strong community network and stewardship.

To strengthen the Mason community, all Mason students, faculty, and staff may propose and/or participate in a PGF-supported project. **Infrastructure projects may only occur on Mason's campuses, but research projects may focus on any of Mason's surrounding regions.**

Purpose of the Quick Fund Process

The PGF Committee meets three times per semester, which often precludes faculty and students from being able to use the PGF grants to support their goals for classes. In order to enable professors to leverage PGF funding to support sustainability projects during the course of the semester, the Committee devised a "quick fund" process through which a decision on semester-specific projects could be made more expeditiously.

Our "quick fund" process allows Mason community members to apply for grants for small-scale projects. Because it is an expedited process, the limit of the size of the grant request is $1000 or less. However, other requests will be considered on an ad hoc basis. In other words, the project should be "a small order of magnitude" as compared to a multi-thousand-dollar project request.

Eligibility

The following are the requirements for eligibility:
- All students, faculty and staff at all Mason campuses are eligible to apply for funds, regardless of major or department.
- Project managers must be Mason student, faculty, or staff members (People outside Mason cannot apply for funds unless there is a Mason community member willing to act as the project manager for the project).
- Research projects must have an undergraduate or graduate student leading the project. Research projects led by faculty alone are not eligible.
- Students applying for infrastructure improvement projects must locate a faculty or staff mentor outside the PGF Committee to ensure the project is feasible (if this project is for a class, we suggest you use your professor).
- Projects must either improve infrastructure on campus by making it more sustainable, or will contribute to the body of research around sustainability. Educational campaigns will not be funded unless attached to a research or infrastructure project. If you wish to focus only on an educational campaign, with no research or project implementation component, please seek funding from the Office of Sustainability (gogreen@gmu.edu).
- Projects that request funding that would normally be supported by operating budgets will be considered, but will not be seen as competitive as projects that are more visible to the Mason community or that include the community in their implementation.
- Students planning on using a Quick Fund project for a class must have applications in by the end of the first month of classes (early September or early February).

Unfortunately, summer classes cannot use PGF funding, because Committee members are not readily available to make decisions about projects. Additionally, summer classes are on such a short schedule that it is unrealistic that funds can be distributed in a timely manner. However, the PGF Committee will always be flexible when a project is worthy of support.

Selection Process and Criteria

The Committee will take into careful consideration the logistical and economic concerns of each project. We will choose projects that are likely to create a significantly positive environmental, social, and economic impact and are likely to have the ability to be self-sustaining or institutionalized after initial funding. Additionally, the potential for successful implementation and adoption by the campus community will be considered before funding is granted.

When reviewing projects, the committee will use the following criteria:

- Project visibility: Does the applicant have a public outreach plan? How will they inform the Mason community about their work? Is the project itself very visible?
- Student involvement: Will students be involved in implementing the project? How will students benefit from the project?
- Campus Community Involvement: Has the applicant considered and identified departments, programs, faculty, staff, etc. that might be involved, or interact, with their project?
- Economic Feasibility: How will the cost justify the effects of the project?
- Program Longevity: Is this program/project repeatable? What will happen to the project after the applicant leaves the Mason community?
- Reasonability of Timeline: How long will it take to implement the applicant's project? Is there a timeline for when the project will start and when Mason can expect to begin seeing results?
- Environmental Impact: What are the environmental costs and benefits associated with this project?
- Innovation: Has this project ever been attempted before? Is it pushing the boundaries of its field?
- Chance of Success: Are the obstacles in the project's path insurmountable? Has the applicant gathered a support team to ensure the success of the project?

Funding Guidelines and Budgeting Tips

Please note the following:
- Students may apply for a maximum of $500 in wages or travel expenses. There must be a clear justification for this expense in your application.
- If a student is receiving any sort of academic credit for the project, wages will not be provided, but travel expenses may.
- **Project funds must be expended by May 31st unless special permission is requested.**

When creating your budget, please consider the following tips:
- Be as accurate as possible, but round up, so that you do not unexpectedly go over budget.
- You may want to include a small line item of under $100 for "miscellaneous supplies" to include things like office supplies or other unexpected expenses.
- Things you may request money for include the following: tools and supplies; parking fees; printing or mailing fees; software costs if necessary; student wages OR travel under $500; consulting fees where necessary; Facilities labor costs; etc.
- **Things that will not and cannot be covered by state funds include:** parking tickets or towing expenses; food expenses unless for students; decorative flowers or decorations; fuel costs; gifts; student wages or travel OVER $500.
- You may make special requests for the following, but these expenses may or may not be approved: food for volunteer events; student wages for more than one student working on the project; speaker fees; equipment or tools that will be retained by a department other than the Office of Sustainability after the completion of the project; extensive educational events around the proposed project; and items that may already be available to borrow at Mason but are not practical to borrow due to the length of the project or other reasons.

Stakeholder Checklist for PGF Projects

It is essential that PGF applicants involve the right staff and faculty in their projects early on in the process, to ensure the greatest level of success and the most effective use of everyone's time. It is for this reason that the Committee recommends communicating your ideas with the following departments depending on what scope and impact it may have. PGF staff should be able to assist you with setting up meetings with critical personnel to discuss your project idea prior to submitting a final application, in order to ensure the greatest level of success.

In order to help support your project, and to help you ensure that all stakeholders are apprised of your project, it will be helpful to ask yourself the following questions. These questions will help guide us in connecting you with the appropriate campus resources to help your project be successful.

- Education Programs: Does your project contribute to academics on campus in any way? Will students be able to use your project for future classes as part of their sustainability education?
- Green Building: Does your project impact the interior or exterior of a building in terms of its sustainability? Does it improve the energy efficiency of a building? Does it help the building gain LEED certification in some way?
- Green Dining: Does your project impact Mason Dining options or its footprint in some manner? Does it study Mason Dining operations in some manner?
- Green Living: Does your project impact student life in any way? Will it involve residence life space at all?
- Green Transportation: Does your project study or encourage the use of alternative transportation in any way?
- Recycling and Waste Minimization: Does your project study or implement waste reduction methods, technologies, or infrastructure?
- Sustainable Food Systems: Does your project or research increase the production of local foods at Mason's campuses?
- Sustainable Landscaping: Does your project or research address or impact landscapes or landscaping methods on our campuses?
- Storm Water Management: Does your project or research address or impact issues of low impact development or storm water management on any of Mason's campuses?
- Energy Issues: Does your project or research address or impact issues of renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, or climate mitigation on any of Mason's campuses?

Other critical questions to be answered may include:
- What potential risks are inherent in your project, OR what are the potential perceived risks? How do you plan to deal with these possible risks? Meaning: could there possibly be a perception that something about your project might be dangerous?

Examples include: volunteers trekking through woods on Mason's campuses, bee hives and possible stings, thorny shrubs or plantings, fire, potential trip hazard, etc.

- Does your project impact the exterior aesthetic of any of Mason's campuses?
- Does your project create or contain accessibility issues? i.e., is it needing to be ADA compliant? Do people with physical limitations need to access the project in any way?

You should submit the following form along with your final application. The form contains a sheet for budget development as well as a sheet to assist you with tracking the team members and stakeholders who will be affected by your project.
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1YC5QmLqC3QAojLF95wUVKdAj_vHs7f90 BWTcIIpXjxA/edit?usp=sharing

Note: This document may be more extensive than needed for your project, but please fill out as much as possible.

Important!
If you do not have access to Google's "My Drive," you can export the above document to Microsoft Excel in order to personalize the Budget and Stakeholder Proposal for your project. Once you have it saved, you can simply attach the PGF Budget and Stakeholder Proposal in the email with your application to pgf@gmu.edu. Please be sure to include your last name in the name of the document.

How to Apply and What Happens Next

Applicants must complete the Quick Fund application form:
http://green.gmu.edu/pgf/applyforfunds.cfm

For assistance completing the Quick Fund Application, please see *Appendix A: Quick Fund Application Helper.*

Please read the Guide carefully before attempting to complete this application. The Quick Fund Application, in total, should not be more than 5 pages.

Complete and submit the application and email to pgf@gmu.edu.

If you have not received an email confirming the receipt of your application within 10 business days, please email Samira Lloyd at slloyd10@gmu.edu.

Important note: It is recommended that Quick Fund project applications be submitted as early as possible in the year/semester to ensure funds are available.

Checklist for Submitting your QF Request

☐I have downloaded and read this entire packet to ensure my understanding of the process.

☐I have downloaded the Quick Fund Application, and it is 5 pages or less when complete.

☐I have completed the Patriot Green Fund Budget and Stakeholder Proposal and emailed it to pgf@gmu.edu.

Managing Your Project

Team and stakeholder management

PGF staff will assist you at the start of your project with connecting with the right decision makers within the Mason administration to ensure your ongoing success.

You are responsible for ensuring that you are keeping track of your budget and timelines, and for collecting information for your monthly reports to the PGF Committee.

Please feel free to contact pgf@gmu.edu with any questions.

How to spend your award

After you receive your award, you will need to start doing a more detailed inventory of the items that will be needed to execute your project.

There are several ways in which you can expend your award money:

- Regular purchases (under $2,000 per vendor per month) can be made by requesting the purchase from the PGF Staff Chair. You must allow at least one full calendar week to have a purchase made. If you need something more quickly, you will need to purchase it with your own money and get reimbursed. Please note: Virginia state tax is NOT a reimbursable expense, so you will not be able to get reimbursed for that. You can also not be reimbursed for fuel costs, parking costs, food, flowers/balloons, and several other excluded expenses, so unless you plan on using your own funds please get advance approval on any item you may have an issue with.
- Work orders, to be done by on-campus shops will be submitted by the PGF Staff Chair to ensure the process is tracked and managed adequately. Please provide the Staff Chair with as much information about the work needing to be done as possible.
- If you have small expenditures that you are willing to get reimbursed for and need quickly, submit your receipts and a completed Purchase Request Form (here: https://fiscal.gmu.edu/purchasing/use-payment-request/complete-payment-request-from/) to Samira Lloyd at Mail Stop 1E4 or in person at the Office of Sustainability.

Budget tracking

You must track each purchase in as timely a fashion as possible. While the PGF Staff Chair will retain your budget tracking sheet and track purchases made for you, you are also responsible for tracking any new items/expenditures that come up during your project. For example, if you find you must purchase supplies to create signs, or if you need something printed, we ask you to please keep a detailed record of all expenditures.

Other Logistical issues

Parking:
- We are unable to pay for Mason community members' parking passes, generally speaking, but can pay for passes for off-campus volunteers.
- We are unable to reimburse people for parking tickets, whether on campus or off campus. If you park without a pass on campus, and get a ticket, please do not expect us to get it taken care of for you.
- If you are visiting the Office of Sustainability, you may receive a visitor parking pass for the duration of your meeting with the Office. You may not reuse these passes, or you risk getting a ticket from the Parking Services office.

- If you need on-site parking because your project requires delivery of supplies to the work site, please work with the Office of Sustainability for assistance and special parking request.

Final Reporting and Project Close Out

After working hard to complete a project, it is tempting to want to set it aside and take a break. *We not only support taking a break, but having a celebration as well for a job well done!*

However, to ensure that your project endures on Mason's campus and becomes a permanent part of our culture and environment, it is important to do two things: **complete your final report-out, and transition ownership of your project to its final home and owner.**

Completing your final project report-out is easy. The online form can be found on the PGF website on the [Managing Your Project](#) page.

Transitioning your project might be a little more challenging, especially if you have not identified its final home from the start. For this reason, we recommend that you begin seeking out an appropriate final owner of your project right at the start of your project. When your project is complete, you must set up a time to give the final owner a tour of the facility, as well as to properly educate them about its operation, to ensure its longevity. So, before you have this meeting, please develop some hand off materials for the adopting organization.

Here is a final checklist for you and your team that should help the transition process:

☐We have developed an operator's manual for our final project, to ensure its adopting organization or person fully understands how to maintain it.

☐Our team has given a walk-through tour of the facility to the adopting organization, and has gained their acceptance and approval to proceed with the transfer of ownership.

☐ We have submitted the final budget to PGF staff at pgf@gmu.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If I'm a faculty member and want to get funding for my students to implement a class project, can I apply even though I am not sure which students will be working on it?

A: Sure! Be sure to update the Committee on what students will be working on the project once that decision is finalized.

Appendix A: Quick Fund Application Helper

Important: Please read the Guide carefully before attempting to complete the application. The Quick Fund Application, in total, should not be more than 5 pages. Any applications that are too lengthy are at risk of being rejected. Please be respectful of your Committee's time and be as brief as possible.

Research Grant or Infrastructure Improvement: Although this appears to be an "either-or" field, your project may, in fact, span both. If you feel that your project could potentially be an infrastructure improvement, but you are also conducting research on the results, please check both fields.

Project Title: This should be a short, specific description of your project. For ideas check the project titles of previous award winners (http://green.gmu.edu/pgf/).

Primary Contact: The primary contact is expected to be the point of contact for the PGF committee. If your project is a team effort, assign a primary contact person who is responsible for relaying information from the Committee to your group. The Primary Contact should also be the project manager of the project.

1. Please describe the project and its purpose.
This should be a detailed project description that demonstrates the uniqueness and specifics of your project.

2. Provide a detailed description of the project's goals and objectives.
Describe the outcome of your proposed project; objectives should be specific and measurable, and have estimated timelines.

3. Describe what research you have performed on this project to determine its relevancy to Mason.
For example, have you researched peer universities who've done something similar, have you spoken with installation companies, have you ensured that this project hasn't been attempted before, etc.

4. How will this project qualitatively reduce Mason's environmental impact?
Use the categories provided to choose which area(s) of sustainability will be impacted, and then provide a short write-up of your own to describe how the project affects the categories you chose.

> **Education programs:** Select this category if your project contributes to academics on campus in any way. This includes projects that can or will be used by students for future classes as a part of their sustainability education.
>
> **Green Building:** Select this category if your project impacts the interior or exterior of a building in terms of its sustainability. This includes projects that change, measure, or in any way affect the energy efficiency of buildings.

Green Dining: Select this category if your project addresses Mason's dining options or Mason Dining's operations.

Green Living: Select this category if your project impacts student life in any way. This includes projects involving residential spaces.

Green Transportation: Select this category if your project your project studies or encourages the use of alternative transportation.

Recycling and Waste Minimization: Select this category if your project studies or implements waste reduction methods, technologies, or infrastructure.

Sustainable Food Systems: Select this category if your project involves creating a sustainable food system, such as a garden or other system that involves food being produced sustainably.

Stormwater Management: Select this category if your project addresses or impacts issues of low impact development or stormwater management on any of Mason's campuses.

Energy Issues: Select this category if your project addresses or impacts issues of renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation, or climate mitigation.

5. What social and/or economic aspects of sustainability might your project impact positively?
e.g. does the project create job opportunities or reduce the operating cost of something at Mason? Does the project encourage community building around sustainability? Does it encourage fair labor practices? Does it increase economic opportunity, equity, affordability of Mason services, etc.

6. Please describe any project management experience you or your team has.
It is our experience that there is a great range of comfort levels with interacting with Mason processes and staff to get projects completed, and also with managing projects. Please look at the scope of your project critically to ensure you will be able to handle the management of this project, or recruit team members to assist you. While this will not affect the Committee's decision to approve or deny your application in itself, we will critically examine whether we have the resources to support your project if you are unable to provide those resources yourselves.

7. How did you hear about the Patriot Green Fund?
Please select one of the options in the drop-down menu, and if possible or appropriate, please elaborate on your selection. This is not a required field.

Note: On questions 7 and 8 below, the supporting Google spreadsheet may be more extensive than needed for your project, but please fill out anything that is helpful or appropriate.

8. Please identify the project manager and persons who will be working on your project whether directly or as approvers, advisers, or stakeholders (people or departments that could be impacted by your project). Please include information about what department they are from and what role they will play.
Use the provided template. Note: Projects with student involvement or leaders will be given priority over others.

9. Please provide an estimated total budget for your project.
Use the provided template. Please go into as much detail as possible, making sure to include a budget for outreach and labor as well.

Research Project:

1. Provide an abstract (up to 300 words) that describes the scholarly, original, interdisciplinary, or unique nature of the project.
Include information about the research challenge or research question, methods, and anticipated results or outcomes from this project, and expected contribution to existing research literature.

2. What is the scope of your study? Please include information about when you expect to start and end this project.
e.g., target population characteristics, location, detailed timeframe, etc.

3. Briefly describe the expected significance of your research and how you (and your faculty advisor if you're a student) hope to advance the field of sustainability. Infrastructure Improvement Project:

1. Will the project save or earn money? If yes, estimate how much per year for how many years.
Please explain and/or cite your data.

2. How will you measure the impact of your project after its completion date?
Describe how you will be able to determine if you achieved your project's goals.

3. How does your project build community around sustainability on campus? How will your project engage students, faculty, or staff? Does it also build community with Mason's surrounding community? If so, how?

Sustainability encourages a holistic view of interrelatedness, and examines the way in which humans interact with our world. The PGF Committee wants projects to encourage people to work together to solve problems because those are more likely to succeed. It is also Mason's aspiration to be a regional leader in innovating, and this approach supports that mission. Projects that include the surrounding communities give Mason folks the chance to interact with non-Mason folks on issues that they all care about. This creates possible employment opportunities for students, and brings assistance into the community where it is needed. It can be hard to work with a large team, but the positive benefits far outweigh the challenges.

4. How will you publicize your project and integrate it into various aspects of campus life?

The Office of Sustainability will provide basic support for publicizing your project, including connecting the team with the news desk to get a story done on your project. We will also gladly publicize the story across all our social media channels and support you with creating appropriate signs to educate passers-by. We are seeking your creative ideas for promoting not only your project but some positive behavior changes in our campus community. For example, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, competitions, etc. Ideally, we would like to see how your project may be integrated into academics; how it may result in a community workshop through the Mason Sustainability Institute or other community education organizations; and how it may become part of a longer-term educational series or events. In sum, we want you to tell us how your project may be institutionalized as part of Mason's culture.