



Preliminary Application Guide

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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.**

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 and provide guidance during the project.
- Projects of significant scope need to show the engagement of multiple team members to ensure success.
- 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) or the [University Life Programming Grant](#).
- Projects must be able to be executed within a year's time or have specific timelines and details prepared to show the feasibility and practicality of managing a longer-term project.
- 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.

Deadlines

Quick fund submissions, which are less than \$1000, will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. All other proposals will be due three times a semester (for Fall in September, October and November, and for Spring in February, March and April). For exact deadline dates please refer to the [Patriot Green Fund Website](#).

Full scale projects can take months to complete, so please plan your timeline accordingly. Quick Fund applications are reviewed on a rolling basis and take about 2-3 weeks to review and approve/deny.

Infrastructure improvement projects that will impact buildings or land use must also be approved by other university committees or approval groups; therefore, these applications may take a little longer to complete. Please be prepared and be patient. The PGF Committee will help you through the process as best as possible.

Selection Process and Criteria

Eligible applicants first submit a preliminary application to the committee; if it's approved applicants are invited to submit a final application. **An invitation to submit a final application does not guarantee your project will be approved for funding.**

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:

- **Necessity:** What need is the project responding to? Will the campus or surrounding community benefit from its implementation?
- **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?
- **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?
- **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?
- **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?
- **Program Longevity:** Is this program/project repeatable? What will happen to the project after the applicant leaves the Mason community?
- **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?

Funding Considerations

The PGF will award funding to projects in two distinct categories:

- 1. Infrastructure improvements:** \$80,000 of the fund is earmarked for facilities upgrades and other tangible environmental projects on campus. Some possible examples include solar and other on-campus renewable electricity generation, energy efficiency measures, alternative transportation infrastructure, increased composting and/or recycling, etc.
- 2. Student research:** The scholarship portion of the fund, up to \$20,000 per year, will fund research-oriented projects proposed by Mason students under the supervision of a Mason faculty member. These funds may cover the cost of supplies and lab equipment. If material for the project is significantly expensive (i.e. if an item was valued over \$100.00), *applicants may be required to return the equipment at the end of their project's completion date to the PGF Committee*. Applicants will be notified by the PGF Committee during the application process if material must be returned.

When planning your project, consider the following suggestions:

- Infrastructure improvement projects requesting over \$20,000 and research projects requesting over \$5,000 are strongly encouraged to apply for other grants and/or obtain funding from other Mason departments or from outside Mason.
- Requests for purchases must be submitted by mid-April at the latest; if you miss this deadline, your funding may be withdrawn.

Note: To receive credit for your project, contact your advisor to find out whether you can use your project as an independent study.

Alternative Funding Sources

Office of Student Scholarship Creative Activities and Research

Specifically geared toward celebrating and encouraging *undergraduate* research and creative activities. OSCAR also supports undergraduate students seeking outside funding sources for their research.

<http://oscar.gmu.edu/>

OSCAR Mini Grants: Students who are working on a project can apply for up to \$500 of funding to enhance their success.

University Life Programming Grant

Every academic year, University Life awards grants for programs that impact the quality of campus life at George Mason University. Awards are typically under \$5,000.

How to Apply

Download the Preliminary Application here:

<http://go.gmu.edu/PGF-Preliminary-App>

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

To assist you with filling in the form, please see *Appendix A: Preliminary Application Helper*.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can PGF funds be used for feasibility studies?

A: Yes, but they should ideally include an experiential learning component. In other words, if an outside company is hired to do the feasibility study (if not Mason students or faculty), they must be willing and able to include students in their efforts. If the study is done by Mason faculty and students, the answer is a more firm “absolutely.”

Q: What are some examples of previous approved proposals?

A: You can see the variety of projects that have been funded on the project summary pages of the [Patriot Green Fund Website](#).

Q: Can I use the funds for an educational or awareness event?

A: No, the Office of Sustainability may be able to sponsor or co-sponsor your awareness event, but the PGF is strictly for implementing student research or infrastructure improvement projects. However, research or infrastructure proposals may include educational/awareness components in their budget and the PGF will fund them.

Q: Can I apply for PGF funds for a pilot project?

A: We actually recommend it for any project whose full implementation would cost a large amount of money. If you have any clarifying questions about when a pilot should be considered, you may contact pgf@gmu.edu for more information. However, we generally expect a pilot project to be executed before we will fund a full roll out of a project.

Q: What if I want to do a technical project but don't have any technical expertise?

A: The PGF provides an unparalleled opportunity to learn how sustainability really works in an organization, which is a great skill to have if you plan on entering the field of sustainability, or managing any large project with multiple players. So be very careful about the scope of your project - if you can't manage it, you need to either find someone else who can partner with you, or you need to understand that it cannot be funded.

Q: Who selects the award winners?

A: The PGF committee is made up of two staff members, two faculty members, and five students who review and vote on the applications.

Q: Who can I contact with additional questions?

A: If you have any questions that aren't answered in this packet, don't hesitate to email pgf@gmu.edu and your question will be rerouted to someone who can best help you.

Appendix A: Preliminary Application Helper

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/2012projects.html>).

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.

Title or Major, and Department: If you’re a student, include your field of study and department. For faculty and staff, please include your title and department.

Phone: To provide a direct means of contact in case email communication is not sufficient.

Email: Please use the email that you check the most often. All formal PGF communication will use this email after the project is approved and begins implementation phase.

1. Please describe the project and its purpose.

This should be a brief 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.

3. Please tell us which departments, offices, student organizations, and/or external organizations you believe should be involved in this project, and whether or not they have already been contacted.

The Committee would like to know which groups you have already contacted about this project and which of them seem supportive or that have reservations (and why, if they were stated).

4. 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.



5. 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.

6. 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.

7. Please provide an order of magnitude estimate of how much this project may cost, and other potential sources of funding if applicable.

Infrastructure improvement projects requesting over \$20,000 and research projects requesting over \$5,000 are strongly encouraged to apply for other grants and/or obtain funding from other Mason departments. Pilots are strongly encouraged for projects that can be scaled up after determining the success of the project.

Other sources of funding (please elaborate):

Include any other sources of funding you have acquired AND/OR are currently pursuing.

8. Nearly every project requires interaction with Mason faculty and/or staff. How comfortable would you say you are with interacting with university decision makers to make your project a success?

This will not affect the Committee's decision to approve or deny your application. We will only use this to better inform the Committee about what level of support to provide.

9. 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.