**Your Green Teen**

Your guide to using the documents, templates, and advice provided by the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program to create your own youth environmental grant program.

**Making your community greener, one youth project at a time.**



Master Handbook

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# Introductory Letter

Dear reader,

From all of us at the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program, thank you for your support of youth and the environment and your interest in creating a by-youth, for-youth environmental granting program. This handbook, used in conjunction with the files provided in the [“Your Green Teen” grant program package](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/igshbutr4tvobrb/AAAdAL7pLkH9n590M4gJoAwta?n=229149579), provides the instructions, documents, and time-tested expertise that you need to build your own granting program modeled after the internationally-recognized Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program. We are so excited to help you on your way to making your community greener, one youth project at a time.

Before you get started, please note that this handbook and the documents that accompany it are in no way the only way to create a granting program. If you feel constrained or overwhelmed by our instructions, feel free to step back and do what you see fit instead. We wrote this to share with others what worked for our community’s program in hopes of saving others the time and energy required to create what we have already created and to learn what we have already learned. Since every community is different, some of these instructions may not apply to your budding program. Adjust as necessary.

Also, if at any time you have questions or feel stuck in your process of creating or running a program, feel free to contact the current Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program administrator at admin@carmelgreenteen.org or myself directly at 1laurengibson@gmail.com. We would love to talk with you and advise you through whatever obstacles you may encounter.

Thank you again for your dedication to youth empowerment through environmental action. Welcome to the Green Teen family.

Sincerely,



Lauren Gibson

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*Note: When reading through the handbook, we recommend having the “Your Green Teen” grant program package handy. Files titles will be referenced throughout the handbook in* **“Bold Quotes”** *so that you can easily identify them as package documents.*

# General Program Structure

## The Mission

The goal of a Green Teen Micro-Grant Program is to challenge area youth to use their skills, creativity and energy to help make their community a greener, more sustainable community. Administered by teens, this nonprofit program empowers young people to take action by funding youth-driven projects that reduce pollution, conserve natural resources, and/or save energy.

## Elements for Success

Twelve items were identified as the key elements of our Green Teen program; without these elements, the program would not achieve the same high level of success. We see these items as necessary for our program and for other programs that might seek to replicate it, so we urge you to think long and hard before deciding not to implement any one of these elements:

1. **A youth/adult partnership**

The [board](#_The_Board) is composed of both youth and adults who work together to ensure the success of the program. In order to keep the program truly youth-directed, there must always be a greater or equal number of youth board members in comparison to adult board members. Youth and adults bring different talents and skills to the mix, as well as diversity of perspective and experiences.

Adults:

* Provide initial and ongoing organizational support
* Offer expertise regarding marketing, schools, accounting, community leaders, business, and fundraising
* Keep youth members on task
* Ask questions and offer choices, but make decisions *with* – not for – the youth. They don’t take over.

Youth:

* Provide vision and advise how the program can best appeal to other youth
* Reach out to their peer groups and peer organizations (such as Scouts). Youth are more effective at presenting to other youth.
* Provide support on committees, including planning, policy, marketing and events. They bring energy, vitality, and humor.
* Provide technical expertise related to social media and web development
* Are effective when asking for donations. It’s hard to refuse them.
* Provide an example of community ownership of the program.
* Inspire adults with the purity of the mission

The program succeeds because it engages both adults and youth. The partnership makes it work.

1. **Funding**

Without funding, there is no way to fund projects. Adequate funding must be acquired before beginning to advertise the availability of youth environmental grants.

1. **Enabling environmental action by empowering youth**

This element is the core of the Green Teen mission. We see the program as both an environmental impact program and a youth development program, with personal growth occurring in the young project leaders as they make a real impact on the world around them. We feel that, in giving young people the tools and mentorship necessary to help them empower themselves, we are creating a generation of confident, service-minded, compassionate leaders.

1. **Buy-in from the community, especially schools and youth organizations**

Engaging and connecting with the community in which the grant program works is absolutely vital to the program’s success. The program relies on community support in the form of [nonprofit fiscal sponsorship](#_Option_1_(recommended)), donors, board members, grant applicants, nonprofit project sponsors, locations that consent to projects taking place on their grounds, schools that consent to presentations about the program, and more.

1. **Focus on environment**

Although we also recognize that this type of granting program could function with a different service focus (ie, focusing on addressing humanitarian issues or animal issues), such a program would be fundamentally different from a Green Teen program.

1. **Motivated youth, both board members and applicants**

As the program is run by youth and for youth, young people must have a high level of dedication to the program, their projects, and the environment to help the program achieve its goal and be successful.

1. **Focus on education-- through the project application process, as well as requiring an internal educational component as part of each project**

Every step involved in this grant program – both for the board members and for the grant applicants – concerns education. Our board members are constantly learning about nonprofit administration, marketing, accounting, interviewing, public speaking, and more. Our grant applications learn about their environmental issue of choice, how to address it, how to apply for a grant, how to go through an interview process, and more. Furthermore, each funded project is required to include some sort of educational component. Examples include posters, video promotions, plaques, announcements, and flyers. These help expand the project beyond the individuals carrying it out and thereby create a wider impact.

1. **Diverse board (age, skills, race, income, etc.)**

Because the board must complete a broad range of tasks and reaching a diverse audience in order to successfully achieve the program’s goals, the board itself should be diverse, with a variety of areas of expertise, schools represented, interests, socioeconomic levels, ethnicities, and more.

1. **A task-oriented “manager”**

Although the board performs the majority of administrative tasks, with youth taking the lead, a program manager is essential to help keep track of the tasks being completed, to organize the board into committees, to be the point person of the program when necessary, etc. This manager – usually an adult – could be a dedicated unpaid volunteer or could be, if necessary and if funds allow, a part-time employee compensated with a stipend.

1. **An organizational home with tax-exempt status**

As outlined in [Financial Management](#_Financial_Management), unless your Green Teen program legally obtains 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, a tax-exempt fiscal sponsor must be obtained to avoid complications when accepting money from donors and when giving money to funded projects.

1. **Community outreach and marketing**

Without community outreach, young people will not be aware that grants are available for their environmental projects. Reaching out to schools, scouting groups, community partners, and media is necessary for the program’s success.

1. **Positive program results, including outputs (such as numbers of volunteers) and outcomes (measurable impact on community)**

Tracking the program’s success, both through measurable environmental impacts and through narratives of its impacts on young people, can give your program the legitimacy needed to earn attention and funding from donors and to encourage more young people to become involved in the program.

## The Board

The board of directors, composed of both youth and adults, aims to advertise, administer, and oversee the grants, working mainly in outreach, event planning, recruiting, website design, and program sustainability. To learn more about the board, please see the **“Board Charter”** document.

### Structure

*Summary*: The board is comprised of approximately 10-16 volunteer youth and adult board members, with youth always equaling or outnumbering the adults in order to keep the program youth-led and youth-focused. Each board member typically volunteers less than two hours monthly from May to December and three to eight hours monthly January through April during the time of grant promotion, selection, and awarding. These board members should display a diversity of age, experience, expertise, race, socioeconomic status, interest, schools represented, etc. to maximize potential program outreach and to have a diversity of perspectives when reviewing and mentoring grantees.

*Conflicts of Interest*: Because the board will hopefully contain a wide range of people who have worked to help young people and the environment, there is a high likelihood that these board members might be associated with other groups that might apply for grant funds. In order to remove potential biases towards or against applicant groups associated with board members, upon acceptance onto the board, all members must read and fill out the **“Board Conflict of Interest Policy,”** which asks each to name the groups of which they are a part and to pledge to abstain from voting for or against these projects if they apply for a grant.

*Terms*: Board terms last for two years and can be extended if desired. The two-year term allows second-year board members to mentor new board members as they transition into administering the program, keeping a steady level of knowledge and experience on the board.

*Committees:* The board is divided into six committees: school and youth group outreach, media outreach, sponsorship and funding, award ceremony and grant review session, website, and new board member recruitment. Each board member must sit on at least one and no more than two committees, focusing their efforts on committee tasks in their service on the board. However, all board members are expected to reach out to their connections (ie, their school, scouting group, clubs, etc.) to advertise the grants, offering presentations about the grants to interested groups or working with the School and Youth Group Outreach Committee to find a different committee member to present.

*Program Manager:* In addition to these responsibilities, one board member, usually the most committed adult, will act as the program manager as outlined in **“Job Description – Program Manager.”** They are mainly in charge of overall program organization, managing program emails, heading the board, delegation of committees, following up with committees, and ensuring that all tasks are completed in a timely manner in order that the grants can be reviewed and rewarded on time each year. They are also the point person for talking about ongoing program funding and the link between the program and the program’s [fiscal sponsor](#_Option_1_(recommended)).

*Meetings:* Board members organize and attend board meetings based on the outline of the **“Master Timeline”** and personal board needs. They also organize and attend committee meetings, as needed, to delegate and complete all necessary committee tasks.

*Communications:* In our program, the majority of board communication was done via email. This can change to phone communications or in-person communication if access to computers and/or Internet is a concern. However, regardless as to the form of communication, the board members must be willing and able to communicate frequently, responding to board concerns in a timely manner and keeping their committees up-to-date on the status of their tasks.

### Tasks

* Obtain funding for the program
* Create and continue to update the program website
* Decide upon the selection criteria, the online application form, and other supporting documents, periodically evaluating and improving the process
* Budget project administration costs to less than 10% of yearly expenses and learn how to solicit community donations and assistance
* Implement a promotional plan to advertise the availability of the grants and give press information and assistance to grant awardees seeking to promote their projects
* Review each cycle of grants, mentoring the awardees of all funded youth environmental projects
* Organize, present speeches at, and award big checks to grant winners at the grant award ceremony at the end of each grant cycle; encourage important community figures to attend and potentially speak at the ceremony
* Provide follow-up and analyze the detailed project evaluation forms for all completed projects, helping the funded project groups to calculate their environmental impact according to the **“Impact Assessment”**
* Continue to seek ongoing local funding for the program
* Encourage other communities to begin their own Green Teen Micro-Grant Programs, offering them the links to the process, website, and related materials cost-free

Recommended steps to completing these tasks will be gone over throughout the remainder of this handbook. You can visit the chapters about [committees](#_Committees) for most of this information.

### Selection Process

To increase the chances of having a dedicated, talented board that genuinely cares about the mission of the grant program more than simply padding a resume, we ask trusted school faculty, current board members, group leaders, nonprofits, and other reliable sources to recommend potential board members to us rather than making the board application publicly available. We suspect that this results in more board members who serve on the board for the full two-year term, communicate regularly with the board, and carry out their committee tasks on time.

To solicit potential new board members, the [Board Member Recruitment Committee](#_Board_Member_Recruitment) sends out the **“Email – New Board Member Solicitation”** to trusted groups and teachers. You have the option of requiring recipients of this email to fill out an official **“Board New Member Nomination Form”** if they wish to recommend a potential board member. Otherwise, they can simply recommend a person by name and, with the consent of the recommended person, put the board in contact with that person. The board can then send them an invitation email to apply to the board along with the **“Board New Member Application”** form, the **“Board Charter,”** and the board meeting schedule for the next year.

The full board and the Board Member Recruitment Committee are also encouraged to think back to especially impressive youth project leaders or adult advisors from funded projects, inviting those individuals to apply for the board as well. If individuals who have not been recommended and have not led a funded projects ask how they can apply for the board, they, too, can be sent the application since they have demonstrated a form of leadership by taking initiative to ask you how to become a part of the program.

Once individuals have applied to the board and the application due date has passed, all applications are sent out to all board members for review. If the current board members feel that more information is needed about one or more applicants before voting occurs, each applicant is invited via the **“To Board Applicants – Informal Meeting”** email to meet up individually with a few current board members in a public meeting place. At this informal question-and-answer session, board members may ask questions of the applicant and the applicant may ask questions about the board.

At the board meeting following the last informal meeting, the board has the opportunity to discuss the applicants, and a blind vote is taken for each applicant individually. If the majority of the current board is in favor of accepting the applicant onto the board, they are sent the **“To Board Applicants – Welcome to the Board”** email and are invited to the next board meeting.

If the majority of the board does not vote in favor of the applicant, they can be voted into a liaison position – a position of less responsibility but still allowing the applicant to become involved with spreading the word about the grant program. This position can be fit to the individual applicant and their abilities. For example, if an elementary school student applies for the board but the board is worried about their ability to succeed in carrying out necessary tasks, that student can be given a liaison position, which could involve hanging up posters at their school and reading a short summary of the grant program to their class. If an older applicant is invited to be a liaison, they can be given more responsibilities, as you see fit. The email template **“To Board Applicants – Liaison Position Offering”** is available for your use.

If the board does not vote in favor of the applicant being either a full board member or a liaison, the board may send them the **“To Board Applicants – Application Rejected”** email to kindly let them know that the board is unable to offer them a position this year.

Once all applicants have been voted on and sent information about their application decision, each new board member is matched with a more experienced board member of their same age group (youth paired with youth, adults paired with adults) who will serve as their mentor. The mentor will be a resource and general support system, answering any questions the new board member may have and checking in on them periodically to make sure that they feel included.

### Troubleshooting

Although the board is generally a group of wonderful and capable individuals, problems with commitments, communication, and meeting attendance can still arise. The main advice that we have for tackling these problems is to take steps to avoid the problems in the first place.

While you are looking into potential board members, talk to them about their other commitments and the time that they would be willing to spend on the grant program. If they definitely will not have time to commit to the program, no matter how qualified they are, it is unfair to your board and to the applicant to accept them. Being involved in clubs and groups outside of your grant program is great. Being involved in every club and group that the school or community has to offer indicates over-commitment.

Try your best to work for youth ownership of the grant program. If the youth board members feel like they own and are in charge of the success of the program, they will feel more of an inclination to carry out commitments, communications, and meetings. A sense of ownership can be fostered through always asking to hear youth voices first (for example, when making a vote on board applicants, when voting on projects to fund, and even when asking when board members would be free to meet next) and through inviting the youth board members to places or tasks of honor (like leading meetings, speaking with potential donors about funding, and accepting awards on behalf of the program).

Specifically asking to hear youth voices first is hugely important. Adult members usually have a wonderful confidence in themselves and in the value of their opinions, which is great and should not be discouraged. However, younger board members can often be in a stage of life during which their confidence is not yet as solid. Because of this, hearing an adult board member confidently state an opinion in opposition to that which was on the mind of the younger board member can be incredibly intimidating, causing the younger board member to doubt their opinion and perhaps choose not to share it. Talk with adult board members privately about the importance of a youth-voices-first policy, making sure that they know that adult voices are still valued but that they can often unintentionally suppress youth voices if spoken first.

In grant review sessions in the past, before we implemented the youth-voices-first policy, we found that the spoken conversation about the proposed projects was not in line with the board’s written comments. When adults spoke strongly in favor or strongly against funding a proposed project, even when young board members had valid comments written down in opposition to that opinion, those comments were not voiced during discussion, potentially leading to a different funding decision. After implementing the youth-voices-first policy, we found that young board members grew more comfortable stating and defending their positions and that a higher percentage of board applicants, both youth and adult, was participating in discussions.

These small actions send the clear and important message that this grant program is truly about young people, both on the administrative side and on the recipient side.

In addition to showing the power and importance of youth through the actions of your board, the other important idea to keep in mind when working to avoid board problems is that of balance. You want to require enough of your board members that they feel an ownership and real connection to your program and its success, but requiring too much of your board members can cause them to feel overwhelmed and like they cannot complete what is asked of them. There is a fine line between the two. This second feeling discourages board members from communicating with the board, as they might be ashamed of not having tasks completed, and can lead a board member not to complete any tasks because they feel that they do not know where to start.

To avoid this problem, talk to your board members, particularly the young members, about how much they can handle before delegating tasks. One-on-one talks can be helpful as not all members can handle the same amount of work. Group talks can occasionally be harmful, as the board members who feel comfortable with the amount of work they are given are more inclined to speak up first, saying that they do not feel overwhelmed at all by their assigned tasks, and this can make those who are overwhelmed feel ashamed of being overwhelmed.

All boards and programs find a different balance to maintain a board feeling of program ownership and success without overwhelming the board members. Know that it will take time to determine where this balance is and how to maintain it. Be patient with yourself and with your board as the process takes place.

# Grant Cycle Process

The process of advertising, reviewing, awarding, and following up with grants can seem daunting at first. With these steps and the documents provided in the grant program package, though, the process should be made significantly easier. If questions still remain or further support is needed, contact us, and we will happily assist you.

## Timeline

We recommend holding only one grant cycle each year, with advertising starting in the fall, presentations taking place throughout fall and winter, grants due at the end of February, grants reviewed in early March, and grants awarded in late March. You should keep an eye open for new board members throughout the year, but board applications should generally be due a week or two after the end of the school year. This due date helps ensure that you can invite youth project leaders to apply for the board after seeing how well they planned and carried out their project, and it recognizes that the end of the school year can be too busy to expect students to have time to complete an application. Board applications should be reviewed based on the process outlined in [Selection Process](#_Selection_Process), and applicants should be informed of their decision no more than three weeks after the date that their applications were due.

A **“Master Timeline”** for the program can be found in the **“Board of Directors”** folder of the program package. Keep this timeline handy to make sure you stay up-to-date on important actions.

## Advertising

A combination of email, in-person, poster, flyer, online, and media advertisements will help you reach the largest audience possible when spreading the word that your grants are available. The [School and Youth Outreach Committee](#_School_and_Youth) will head the in-person, poster, and flyer advertising, giving presentations to interested groups of young people and distributing information to schools. The [Media Outreach Committee](#_Media_Outreach) acts as the program’s connection with the press, putting forth press releases for both print and online sources and cultivating relationships with the media to invite future collaboration. These committee jobs are described in more detail below.

In addition to these committees completing their tasks, all board members should be talking with their personal connections, such as the clubs of which they are a part and the students they know who might be interested in leading an environmental service project. Messages such as **“Email – Advertising Grants to Scouts”** and **“Presentation Solicitation Email”** can be modified to be sent out to individuals or groups known more personally to tell people about the grant availability. Word of mouth is also helpful. Merely starting a conversation about the grant program and environmental service at a school or work lunch table can intrigue people enough to visit your website and look into applying.

It is vital that all board members participate in this advertising in addition to the outreach committees. Although the outreach committees are effective in reaching out to new groups, contacting people or groups with which you have a personal relationship increases the odds of them responding to you and reading your message fully.

Finally, be sure to reach out to those groups or schools that have applied for and/or won grants in the past. Oftentimes certain schools or clubs are more open to supporting environmental service than others, and making sure that those groups are aware that funding is available for them can increase your applicant pool significantly.

## Application Process

When a group decides to apply for a grant, they should be able to do so entirely using documents and information that can be found on your [Website](#_Website). Make sure that your website contains the most up-to-date information and the most recently-edited application documents from the [Website and Documents Committee](#_Website_and_Documents). All updated materials should be put up several months in advance so that applicants who download materials early do not accidentally download and fill out the previous year’s application materials. The main document that applicants will need to complete is the **“APPLICATION FORM,”** a several-page-long document asking for basic group information, two pages of short answer questions about the proposed project, a budget, and signatures verifying the presence of a nonprofit project sponsor and the acquisition of all necessary permissions. Throughout the application process is important to make sure that all potential applicants are aware that board members are available to help answer questions about the application form. Board members can even volunteer to give comments on the application materials as a whole if the application is completed and submitted a week or more before the deadline. This gives an organized group sufficient time to edit the application and re-submit it to make sure their project is in line with the funding criteria of your program. Applications should all be submitted to the program manager.

Groups may need help identifying a project sponsor, a *required* partnership with a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that will receive and handle reimbursements of grant money for each funded project. This project sponsor is necessary, as outlined [below](#_Option_1_(recommended)), so that funding can transfer from your nonprofit fiscal sponsor to the group’s nonprofit fiscal sponsor tax-free. Finding a project sponsor usually does not require going too far, as schools and religious institutions (and therefore groups within those institiutions) have 501(c)(3) status. However, for scout groups and other groups, a nonprofit sponsor is a little farther away. You can help groups find a sponsor by creating a list of local nonprofits and descriptions of those nonprofits, sending the list to those having trouble finding a sponsor and asking them to look for a nonprofit on the list that shares a mission with their potential funded project’s goals. You can send emails **(“To Potential Project Nonprofit Sponsor,” “Seeking Nonprofit Sponsor – Youth Project Leader,”** or **“Seeking Nonprofit Sponsor – Youth Project Leader,”** depending on who is sending the email) to potential sponsors to request sponsorship. Visiting in person works best, though.

One other obstacle for groups is obtaining proper permission for carrying out their project. Projects taking place in a park must have park permission before applying for funding, and projects taking place in a school definitely need school permission before earning funding.

Check with important locations, such as parks and school systems, to see if applicants need to go through any specific process in order to get permission for a project at that specific location. If locations request a certain process by which projects should obtain permission, be sure to make this process known to grant applicants by posting it on the website. This avoids the potential problems that could arise if an applicant, not knowing about the proper process, asks and obtains permission from someone who does not have the power to give permission for the project.

For example, as the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program became more established in the community, more and more students in the district schools were applying for funding and needed permission to complete their application. Because one school in the district was particularly large, it had multiple assistant principals, several of whom were approached to obtain project permission. Although each of the assistant principals had power to give permission according to our program’s requirements, the school had a different system of obtaining approval that was different than our program (ie, the school requires all project proposals must go through the same individual, while our program just requires a signature of approval from a school administrator). Because one applicant group was unaware of and therefore did not follow the school’s approval process, their school project could not be funded even though it followed the program’s permission requirements. To avoid this problem in the future, our program created an **“Administrative Approval Form”** for all projects taking place in that school. The form requires a short summary of the proposed project and includes information on who to send the summary to in order to get project approval.

If you find that one or more of your schools requires a special permission process, consider creating a form for this process and posting the information on the website to prevent permission discrepancies from occurring at the expense of your grant applicants’ projects.

Beyond troubleshooting these harder parts of the application, the most important part of the application process for the board members is being available to support grant applicants and field questions. Check email frequently, and be prepared for most of your questions and applications to come in on the day of the grant deadline. Send grant applicants a reminder of the deadline a week before the grants are due, reminding them that *all* application materials must be received by that deadline for an application to be considered complete, and send one final reminder the day before the grants are due.

Applicants should be sent **“To Grant Applicants – Application Received”** upon receipt of their grant submission.

## Grant Review Session

Once the deadline has passed, all completed applications should be emailed out to all board members for review. (Incomplete applications can either be immediately rejected or be given a few days’ grace period to submit missing application parts, depending on what your board feels is appropriate.) Board members should carefully read through all applications, writing down questions and comments about each one as they read.

At the same time that board members are emailed the applications, grant applicants should be sent the **“To Grant Applicants – Upcoming Review Session”** email letting them know about the grant review session.

The grant review session is an informal, ten-minute interview between the applicant group and the grant program board. (Alternatively, if you have a lot of applicants and little interview time, your board can split up into two groups, each in a different room interviewing a different group, therefore doubling the number of groups you can interview in a given time. In this case, the interview would then be between the applicant group and a subset of the board.) It should be planned by the [Award Ceremony and Review Session Committee](#_Award_Ceremony_and) far in advance so that board members and grant applicants can plan around it, as it is a *mandatory* event. Grant applicant groups who fail to send any representatives to the review session will be denied funding unless absence was due to an unplanned emergency. Exceptions can also be made for groups that notify the board beforehand that absolutely no members of their group can attend the session, in which case board members can set up a separate time and location for an interview.

Each project is allotted ten minutes of interview time, with 10-15 minutes of board member deliberation time immediately afterward and then about an hour of discussion and decision-making after all projects have been interviewed. As the interviews take place, interviewing board members should use the **“Tips for Interviewing Applicants”** and **“Interview Checklist”** to kindly critique projects.

Each applicant group is asked to bring to the review session at least two youth representatives and one adult sponsor, with as many youth project participants attending as possible. For the first five minutes of the interview, youth project participants are invited to tell the board members about their project, explaining details of the project and letting the board know why they decided upon that specific project idea. The point of these explanations is to find out how much the young people own the project and have done the planning themselves. Groups with strong youth ownership will typically have youth confidently explaining the project with little to no adult input. It is fine for adult sponsors to prompt the young leaders with open-ended questions (ie, why don’t you tell the board members about the educational component of your project?), but if they begin to speak at length or dominate the conversation, politely tell them that you’d really like to hear from the youth. In cases of particularly young applicants, adult sponsors can speak more and help out the youth as they explain their project. For example, it makes sense for the adult sponsor of a Daisy scout project to be more involved in the proposed project than the adult sponsor of a high school environmental club project.

After the group has finished telling the board about their project, the board has the last five minutes of the interview to ask the group any questions about the project or the group’s application. Here it is helpful for board members to use the notes that they made while first reading through the applications. Bring up any questions about the budget that have not yet been addressed. Ask how they decided that they wanted to address their particular environmental issue and why they cared about it. Ask about the impact they wish to make and the educational component of the project, if not yet mentioned. Are there any concerns that the board members have about the potential success of the project and, if so, what part of the project makes you have those concerns? Ask about that.

To wrap up the review session, ask the applicants if they have any questions for you. Thank them for coming, and let them know when they’ll be hearing back from you with their grant decision.

Once the group has left the room, the board interviewers should take 10-15 minutes to briefly discuss the project. Youth board members should speak first, giving their impressions of the project and stating what they felt were the project’s strengths and weaknesses. Once youth have spoken, adults give their impressions, and an open discussion begins. The board makes a preliminary recommendation to fund the project fully, fund the project partially, not fund the project, or set aside the project for further discussion once the rest of the projects have been interviewed.

All members of the next project are then invited into the interview room, and the process continues until all projects have been interviewed and have left.

The board then convenes for discussion. (If the board divided into two groups so that two applicants could be interviewed at once, the two groups will come together at this point.) One by one, projects will be highlighted and discussed. A youth board member will give a short description of the project to jog the board members’ memories and then will summarize how the interview went, give the strengths and weaknesses that the interviewers agreed upon after the interview, and give the preliminary recommendation for or against funding. The project will then be opened up for whole-board discussion, where all concerns about and praises for the project can be voiced. If the board split up for interviews, those who did not interview this project can ask questions to those who did about how the interview went.

If the board feels that the project might deserve funding but would need certain improvements, the board can determine conditions for funding. For example, if the board feels that a tree-planting project would be great for the community but lacks an educational component, they can decide to vote on project funding with the built-in condition that, if funded, the group will use some of the funds to buy an educational sign to put next to their planted trees. Conditions should be specific and realistic, given the group’s abilities and their funding constraints.

Once board members have discussed conditions and feel that their questions have been answered, a vote will be taken. If conditional funding was decided upon as necessary, this will be built into the vote (ie, voting for full funding indicates that you support full funding with all decided upon conditions). Members with a conflict of interest relating to the group (for example, if a board member is or was part of a club asking for funding) will abstain from the vote, and the remaining board members will vote “yes” or “no” on funding.

If a “no” on funding gets the majority vote, no further voting is required. The project will not be funded. Discussion moves on to the next project.

The projects that get a majority “yes” on funding will have another vote taken in which board members vote for either full or partial funding.

If “partial funding” gets the majority vote, discussion will open up again on how much funding should be awarded. In these cases, it helps to go back to the project budget and see what items could be cut from the project while still maintaining its essence and impact. A board member will make a motion for the amount of funding that they see is fit, and if the motion is seconded, a vote will be taken. Board members will either vote in favor for that amount of funding or against it. If the majority votes against that amount of funding, another motion should be made for amount of funding to award. This process continues until the majority votes in favor of a proposed amount of funding to award.

Once all projects have been voted on, the grant review session ends. The program coordinator will send follow-up email to the board that night, summarizing the grant applicant groups and the amount of funding that will be awarded to each. Board members should check this for accuracy.

## Decision Notification

Once decisions have been made after the grant review session, groups will be notified of their decision via one of the following emails: **“To Grant Applicant – Grant Accepted”** or **“To Grant Applicant – Grant Rejected.”**

The **“To Grant Applicant – Grant Accepted”** email will not usually need major modification. However, if your group decided on conditional funding, all conditions should be clearly spelled out in this email. Be sure that the group feels comfortable with these conditions and knows that you can clarify the conditions for them, if necessary. In this email, you can also choose to let the project know who their project mentors are. Project mentors are members of your grant program’s board who will be in contact with the funded group throughout the process of the project completion and who will act as a support system for the group. Project mentors can also be given to groups in a later email, **“To Grant Recipient – Project Dates Requested.”**

The **“To Grant Applicant – Grant Rejected”** email should be *strongly* modified according to the project that you decided not to fund. Because the point of this program is to empower youth in environmental action, it is of the utmost importance to make this email kind and supportive to make sure that rejection for funding does not lead to discouragement from future environmental service. To avoid applicant discouragement, try to focus first and foremost on the strengths of the proposed project. Even if the project itself wasn’t especially strong, compliment the young peoples’ presentation or enthusiasm. If the application was well-written, say so, and make sure that the applicants know that you appreciated the time they put into the entire application process.

Kindly state why the project was not chosen for funding. Did it not meet the basic selection criteria? Was permission not obtained? Did the project have a non-environmental focus? Was there not significant environmental impact or educational aspect missing? Say that because these basic criteria were not met, your program is unfortunately unable to fund the project.

Finally, unless the project is dangerous, harmful to the environment, or has been rejected permission, encourage the applicants to continue forward on the project, if possible. Donated materials and other grants can help make this happen. If you know of another opportunity for small-scale project funding, let them know. United Way’s Youth as Resources (YAR) is a similar granting program to the Green Teen programs, but it has a focus of service in general rather than environmental service specifically. If your grant applicants either need more time to create a better project plan or have a service project with a non-environmental focus, check to see if there is a YAR in your area, and if there is, send your grant applicant information on YAR. If you know of any other resources that would be useful to the applicant, send those, too.

Finally, close the email by encouraging the applicant to apply again next year if they are still interested. Thank them for their dedication to service and the environment, and wish them good luck in future endeavors.

Have someone else read the email to make sure that it leaves a positive feeling about service before sending it off.

## Award Ceremony

In order to celebrate and show appreciation for grant awardees and their dedication to service, about two weeks after the grant decisions are made, a grant award ceremony should be held. (See the [Award Ceremony and Review Session Committee](#_Award_Ceremony_and) section for specific steps that can be taken to plan this ceremony.) All members of the grant-winning projects are invited to attend, as are their families, project adult advisors, project sponsors, representatives from your sponsoring organization(s), and special guests.

The ceremony is typically held at an outdoor venue, weather permitting. This makes for a more natural-feeling environment and for better photos. If you hold your ceremony outside, though, be sure to identify an alternate location in case of surprise inclement weather.

The ceremony will begin with opening remarks from a youth board member. The remarks should welcome everyone to the ceremony, tell a little bit of background about the program and why you started it, state a few impacts of the program (or perhaps the expected collective impact of the newly-funded projects), and convey the excitement you have for the newly-funded projects.

The microphone then turns over to any special guests that you have invited to the ceremony to speak. These special guests can potentially be your mayor, a superintendent, a principal, a well-known teacher, a governor, or any other person whose presence at the ceremony would be exciting for the youth awarded with grants and would reflect well on your grant program. If your guest obliges, you can invite them up to the podium to speak. Make sure you communicate with your guest at least one week beforehand (and more for bigger public figures or busier individuals) about whether or not they will be speaking, what the topic of their remarks will be, and how much time they have allotted for their remarks.

The next part of the award ceremony is the presentation of the checks, during which board members take turns awarding big checks to the grant awardees. Board members should present checks to the project that they have been assigned to mentor. During the presentation of the checks, board members will introduce themselves and welcome all members of the mentee project up to the podium. The board member will then introduce a spokesperson from the group, inviting them to give a two-minute summary of the funded project and why the group chose to do it. While handing a big (11”x17”) check to the group, the board member will congratulate the group for its work and officially award the grant money. All people standing up at the podium (group members, adult advisors, special guest speakers, and the board member mentor) then pose for a photo together with the big check in hand. People are invited to be seated, and the process is repeated until all projects have received their big check.

After the grant presentations, the program manager takes the stage and thanks the board for their hard work. Members are invited up and introduced by name. Any exiting board members (those who will not be returning next year) are personally thanked and, if funds allow, given a small token of appreciation. This can be anything from a recycled-materials keychain to flowers.

While all other board members sit back down, the one who gave the opening remarks remains at the podium to give the closing remarks. These remarks include final thank-yous and project encouragement. Once the remarks have concluded, all members of all projects are invited up for one big group picture. All people are then released to mingle and eat refreshments. (These refreshments will hopefully be food and drink donated by local stores. Be sure to use environmentally-friendly materials – cutlery, napkins, cups, etc. – and provide recycling bins for proper disposal of materials, as well.)

Before project leaders leave, be sure to get from them their “**Project Contract Form.”** In return, give them a folder containing the **“Project Report Form Cover Letter,” “Project Report Form,”** and the actual check cut by your fiscal sponsor.

## Project Completion

In the months following the award ceremony, your grant awardees will be hard at work carrying out their funded projects. Be sure to keep track of the project dates and any changes to project dates on the **“Master Email List”** so that your board members can visit the projects as they are being completed, taking pictures, showing support for the youth project volunteers, and even lending a hand with the project if the grantees and board member desire. If at all possible, one or more board members should be present at each project while it is being completed, and if the project’s mentor can be present for that particular project, that would be preferable.

## Follow-Up

Gathering information about the project after it has been completed helps to document its impact. The **“Project Report Form”** is the main mode of communication of project impact between your funded projects and your program. This form will be handed to each grant recipient during the grant award ceremony so that they can keep track of project progress as it occurs. Unfortunately, despite its importance, many project leaders have a tendency to forget about the project report form because it is a part of the grant process that occurs after funding has already been awarded. Send email updates as needed to acquire the completed project report, editing and sending **“To Grant Recipients – Project Update Requested”** to remind your grantees that you would love for them to send you the requested information so that you can put together their project webpage.

Once the project report form and a sufficient number of photographs are in, the project webpage can be completed. See [Website](#_Website) and [Website and Documents Committee](#_Website_and_Documents) for more details.

# Program Funding

Securing reliable funding can be one of the more difficult aspects of running your grant program. Thankfully, several grants are available to fund large environmental projects like your grant program. Either additionally or in its stead, individual contributions and corporate donations can keep your program financially supported. Consider all of the following options, and then pursue the one(s) you see as most promising. Contact us for additional ideas, if these paths do not lead to success.

## Grants

Applying periodically for grants within the range of $3000 – $15,000 can maintain your grant program without the need for a long-term program donor. This type of funding can be especially helpful when you are first starting out, as many grants fund projects or programs not yet in process, and many individual contributors might want to see results before investing in your program.

The Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program was initially funded by a $10,000 Green Heroes Grant, a (now discontinued) online national grant contest sponsored by Clorox GreenWorks Green Cleaners. This type of funding worked very well for us because we only had to provide a plan for the program rather than already have deliverables. You may find that this funding option is a good place to begin.

To get you started on potential funding opportunities through grants, look through the **“Funding Opportunities”** document in the grant program package. You can also find a surprising number of relevant opportunities merely by searching “environmental youth grants” in Google. When applying for grants, utilize the tips found in **“Tips on Applying for Awards”** to maximize your chances of receiving funding. As detailed in that document, keywords are an incredibly simple yet incredibly effective manner of connecting with your judges. Don’t lower your chances by forgetting this easy step!

Keep in mind that, for most funding opportunities through grants, you must have 501(c)(3) nonprofit / tax-exempt status or be associated with an institution that has such a status to qualify for funding. Find a [fiscal sponsor](#_Option_1_(recommended)) before applying for funding. They can provide you with the status and necessary proof of status.

Also take note of the terms of acceptance of the grant you seek to earn. Do you need to be sending receipts or other forms of documentation to the organization that gave you the grant? Should you be putting their logo on your big checks or on your website? Keep your granters updated on the progress of your program, and be sure to thank them for making it possible. Cultivating a positive relationship with this granting organization could help you secure more permanent ongoing funding from them in the future. By being in communication with the granters, you can show them how well you are using the money that they originally gave you and showing that perhaps additional funding would be a good investment, too.

## Corporate Sponsorship

For more continuous funding, you can ask a specific company, corporation, institution, or organization to provide you with yearly funding.

For the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program, this was the option we pursued after our initial grant ran out. One of our biggest stakeholders, the City of Carmel, was so interested in seeing our program continue that they offered to find us $5000 yearly as funding. This security of yearly funding is wonderful for a program that does not see an end to the program in the near future. Long-term sponsorship often requires more proof of success and more concrete deliverables than does a one-time grant, so it could be a better fit for your program once it becomes established in the community.

The tricky part about corporate sponsorship involves making sure that the sponsoring company or organization does not stand for ideas or actions that contradict your program’s goals. For example, be wary of sponsorship from companies that have a reputation for being environmentally unfriendly or that might have used child slavery to create cheap products to sell. You do not want to be associated with or support corporations with unacceptable actions and poor reputations.

The **“Funding Outreach Letter”** can be edited to include your program’s information and delivered to potential sponsoring corporations, preferably by hand during an in-person meeting, to highlight your program’s importance to the community and the world environment. Be sure to also discuss why your program would be a good investment for that company. Does your program line up with the values of the company? Do you see your program giving positive press to the company? How will you publicize your partnership with this company (their logo on your website, big checks, award ceremony programs, etc.)? Remember to talk about how you can give back to the company in addition to how the company can give to you.

## Individual Donors

Occasionally, a wealthy individual or two will show interest in providing funds for the program. Unless these individuals indicate that they have the donating capacity to act as a corporate sponsor, individual donations should be a supplement to more consistent funds rather than a relied-upon main source of funding. Ask your fiscal sponsor how people wishing to make a donation to your program should donate (ie, what the check should be made out to).

To thank donors for their contributions, you can add their names to the award ceremony program of the grant cycle they helped to fund. Sending a handwritten thank-you card to your donor with signatures from all of your board members would also be a good token of thanks. Including a photo or two of a youth project that the donor helped to fund makes the letter extra special. For donors who fund a high percentage of your yearly budget, you can thank them in a similar way that you would thank corporate sponsors.

# Financial Management

In order to maximize the amount of your funds that can go directly to youth-led environmental projects, you will want to find a way to achieve non-profit tax-exempt status, legally known as 501(c)(3) status, which eliminates the obligation to pay taxes. Below are two ways to do so.

## Option 1 (recommended) – Fiscal Sponsorship

With a small environmental granting program, the easiest way to manage finances is through a larger nonprofit organization that shares your general mission and location and agrees to fiscally sponsor you. This organization, hereafter referred to as the nonprofit fiscal sponsor or simply the fiscal sponsor, would support you by holding your money in one of their financial accounts, therefore effectively sharing with you their tax-exempt status. The fiscal sponsor would then cut checks for reimbursements of program administration expenses and for your funded projects. Because funded projects are required to have a nonprofit project sponsor, funds can be transferred from your nonprofit fiscal sponsor’s account to their nonprofit project sponsor’s account, which is an entirely tax-exempt process, helping to minimize worries about taxes and to maximize the amount of money that you can provide to projects as funding. See more about fiscal sponsorship [here](http://grantspace.org/Tools/Knowledge-Base/Funding-Research/Definitions-and-Clarification/fiscal-sponsorship).

To find a nonprofit fiscal sponsor for your grant program, look online for nonprofit organizations near you that share a similar mission. Are there nonprofits nearby that work with the environment? Are there organizations that focus on empowering young people? Are there service-learning groups? Perhaps there is a nonprofit seed grant organization without a focus on youth or the environment yet? Remember that the organization need not share your grant program’s entire focus, but it should share at least one aspect of your mission. Looking for nonprofits with which you already have some sort of connection is also helpful. Do you or any of your potential board members have personal connections to any of these nonprofits? Think of which organizations would actively want to see this sort of youth environmental empowerment program accomplish its mission, and approach these organizations first.

Once you have identified several possible nonprofit fiscal sponsors, check to make sure that each organization is reputable, sturdy, and making yearly progress. You do not want to be associated with an organization that misuses funds or has a negative impact on the world. Additionally, your sponsoring organization should be structurally strong enough that it will not likely cease to exist any time in the near future. Check annual reports to gauge whether the nonprofit is moving forward with its mission, indicating a dedication to the mission and likely organizational stability, or if it is struggling to stay afloat. Remove the weaker organizations from your list of potential fiscal sponsors. (Of course, don’t disregard them as potential partners or as valuable organizations; you just want to make sure that your fiscal sponsor’s future appears stable.)

When you have narrowed down your list to a small handful of potential nonprofit fiscal sponsors, use the email template **“To Potential Non-Profit Fiscal Sponsor”** to create an email to the director of the most-desired potential fiscal sponsor. This email will introduce your grant program and request a meeting to further discuss your ideas for collaboration with the nonprofit. Although it may be tempting to pitch your request for fiscal sponsorship via email, talking with the head of the nonprofit in person better conveys your excitement for your grant program and often results in more positive answers than do emails. Furthermore, even if the meeting does not result in an agreement to fiscal sponsorship, it can lead to a different sort of support from the approached nonprofit that emails typically do not result in.

Read through, edit, and print out **“Fiscal Sponsorship Meeting Notes”** before your meeting. These will help you hit the important talking points to give the head of your potential sponsoring organization the important pieces of information they need to determine whether or not to sponsor you fiscally. During your meeting, be sure to smile, be confident, and let your enthusiasm for your grant program shine. Thank the organization director for his/her/their time.

Continue to meet with organizations until one agrees to be your fiscal sponsor.

If you have approached all organizations on your list and are still having trouble getting a fiscal sponsor, try the [Fiscal Sponsor Directory](http://www.fiscalsponsordirectory.org/index.php) online. They have a database of willing fiscal sponsors in various areas around the United States. However, their fiscal sponsors charge a certain percent (usually 5-10%) of your yearly funds to sponsor you. Clearly, it would be best to minimize or eliminate this fee so that more money can go to funding youth-led environmental projects. But even a grant program with less funding available to fund projects still funds projects, making a positive impact on the world and on the young people involved in the program. Because finding a fiscal sponsor is critical to your program’s existence, paying a fee may be what it takes to have a functioning program.

Once you have your sponsoring organization, talk to them about how their finances work. Request that they have a way to earmark your program funds to be used for your program only and not for the sponsoring organization’s activities. Ask about how donations to your grant program can be made (ie, to what name should checks be made out to ensure that the funds reach your program?). Also ask them how they would like you to submit requests for checks to be written, and find out how far in advance you should request a check to be written. This will ensure that your projects receive the funding they need in time. Write this key information down.

Keep your fiscal sponsor up-to-date on your program’s success. If you receive recognition or press, share this with the sponsor. This sort of positive publicity will encourage a longer-term relationship with your fiscal sponsor. Also be sure to invite representatives from your sponsoring organization to attend your award ceremony and to visit funded projects as they are being completed.

Put information about your fiscal sponsor on your website and put its logo on award ceremony programs, on big checks, and other documents as you see fit.

## Option 2 – Independent 501(c)(3) Status

This option is only for those who have the time, money, and legal expertise to tackle the paperwork necessary to gain official nonprofit status for their grant program. (Really, only if your grant program is becoming very permanent and very well-funded is it even worth considering independent tax-exempt status.) Because the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program has not chosen this option, we can only direct you to online resources for this process. *Please know that this option usually costs several thousand dollars.*

Please see the [IRS pamphlet](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4220.pdf) and the [IRS application instructions and forms](http://www.irs.gov/Charities-%26-Non-Profits/Application-for-Recognition-of-Exemption) to explore how to file for 501(c)(3) status.

## Accounting

A majority, if not all, of your accounting can be done using the **“Expense Summary”** spreadsheet. It has space for you to track your initial funding, additional donations, how much funding you have awarded to each project, and your administrative expenses. These together can be used to calculate your remaining available funds.

The section on administrative expenses also has a place for you to note whether your board members who have paid these expenses have been reimbursed yet.

In order to be reimbursed, most fiscal sponsors require your original receipts as evidence of purchase. We recommend scanning your receipts into your computer immediately after each purchase to avoid losing receipts and forfeiting reimbursement.

We also recommend always keeping the Expense Summary up-to-date and available for your board members or outside organizations to see upon request, as this shows your program’s financial responsibility. Keeping your administrative expenses at 10% or less of your total yearly budget also helps build your program’s repute.

# Documentation

Being able to calculate and articulate concrete evidence of the impact of your program on your community is vital to its ongoing community support, high reputation, and continued funding. The following four aspects of documentation are *highly* encouraged for all grant programs.

## Impacts

Both numerical and narrative impacts should be recorded in order to track your program’s success in achieving its goal of both environmental impact and youth development.

Obtaining numbers to quantify the total environmental impact of all funded projects combined is an incredibly powerful way to show how much your program is making a difference. We have spent a lot of time creating an **“Impact Assessment”** spreadsheet by which you can calculate the numerical impacts, particularly amount of money saved and the carbon dioxide emissions prevented from entering the atmosphere, of common types of projects, including tree planting projects, recycling programs, water bottle reduction projects, shopping bag reduction projects, CFL bulb distributions, organic gardens, and more. Calculations not shown in the **“Impact Assessment”** spreadsheet are shown in the **“Impact Assessment Calculations”** document. For further help with impact calculations not included in these files, see the [EPA Clean Energy Calculations](http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/refs.html) webpage.

Once each project is completed, you can send them the **“Project Impact Calculation Guide”** so that they can calculate the impact of their project to put into their **“Project Report Form.”** However, because project reports unfortunately do not get returned 100% of the time, because some younger groups need extra help with calculations, and because numerical calculations will not always be done in the same system of measurements (ie, some groups will give the amount of carbon diverted rather than the amount of carbon dioxide diverted), it helps to be able to quickly plug project information into the **“Impact Assessment”** spreadsheet yourself to get out a solid number.

Numerical impacts will be crucial to [awards](#_Awards) applications, increased press, and continued program support.

Separately, quotes, stories, and personal reflections make help people connect on a more intimate level with the program. Hearing a bunch of numbers can be impressive, but hearing a story of a young person growing significantly or finding her passion for service through this program can be more emotionally appealing. Gathering quotes from applicants can be great, too. Keep a pencil handy during grant award ceremonies to record insights spoken by each projects’ youth spokesperson and use these in press releases, project webpages, and as general inspiration. One of our favorite quotes from the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program award ceremonies, spoken by a Cub Scout awardee named Sam, is, “A small change made by small people can make a big difference.” Quotes and insights like this give those who hear it a sense of joy, inspiration, and hope. They make the program and its impacts more real to us, and they give board members a feeling of fulfillment, that what they are doing makes a difference in the lives of young people.

## Website

A program website keeps you in touch with your grant applicants, grant awardees, and the general public. Although it may seem daunting to start and run an entire website, rest assured that it is not nearly as difficult as it sounds. We have a [model website](carmelgreenteen.org) on which you can base your project website, and we can direct you to incredibly easy-to-learn, easy-to-use website builders. Depending on your comfort level with computers and websites, you can explore builders such as [Weebly](weebly.com), [Strikingly](strikingly.com), [Jimdo](jimdo.com), [Wix](wix.com), [Moonfruit](moonfruit.com), [WordPress](wordpress.com), and more. The easiest website builder, in my opinion, is [Weebly](weebly.com). Weebly has an incredibly intuitive interface that involves dragging and dropping elements onto the page, working far more like PowerPoint than anything else. For example, if you want to add a photo onto your website, you simply drag the icon that says “Image” from the Weebly building sidebar to the location on the website that you want to see that image, then click on the box that says “Upload Image” in order to upload your image. If you want to edit the image or add a caption, simply click on the image to see your options. Easy enough, right?

Additionally, all of the website builders listed above have an option that allows you to have a free sub-domain (example.weebly.com, example.strinkingly.com, etc.) with a large number of editing options and website templates available. Unless you want to purchase your own independent domain (example.com) or you want to have more advanced editing options, you won’t have to pay a cent for your website. If you want those extra options, you can choose to pay monthly for these options.

We have set up our Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program model website to contain the pages that we see as important. You may add or delete pages to your own website as you see fit, according to your program’s needs. Have fun with it, and be sure to oversee your [Website and Documents Committee](#_Website_and_Documents) as they start up and maintain the website.

If you are confused about editing your webpage, we highly recommend searching your website builder’s online support center. If you still have questions remaining, you can contact us. Please know that none of us are expert website builders or coders. We have just played around with the website builders and used their online support to create what you see as your template, but we will do our very best to help you.

## Photos

As simple as it sounds, taking photos to document your board members, your award ceremonies, and your funded projects is one of the best ways to show others the impact of your program.

Photos of children with big checks and big smiles, big group photos of all funded groups, photos of young grant recipients explaining their projects to an audience from behind a podium, and images of grant winners shaking hands with a distinguished guest are great ways to showcase your grant award ceremony. These photos can be used on your website and in press releases as images of the power of youth.

At least one group photo of the board should be taken each year. Put this on the website, too, to show appreciation for your board members.

Photos of funded projects are the most important photos to take. These help to document the progress of the project and youth leaders in action. They are also vital to the funded project webpages on your website. If at all possible, try to have at least one board member present when each project is being completed. The board member shows program support for and interest in the project, and they can also take photographs while the project is taking place. Be sure to get a group photo of all people who helped to complete the project. “Before & After” photos are good, too, if applicable to the specific project.

## Awards

Although it may sound shallow, earning recognition for your program is highly important and recommended to help encourage continued support from funders and continued press from various media sources. For more information about why awards are important, how to apply for awards, and where to start looking, please see the **“Recognition and Awards”** folder in the program package.

In the past, the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program generally had the program manager and the founder applying for awards on behalf of the program. However, this job could be assigned to any committee or individual that has some extra time. The [Media Outreach Committee](#_Media_Outreach) might be particularly well-suited for the job because of their experience writing about the program in a clear, concise manner.

# Committees

The board is divided into committees in order to allow board members to build an expertise in a subject and in order to more efficiently delegate tasks. The following six committees are those used by the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program, but they can be altered, removed, or supplemented as needed.

## Award Ceremony and Review Session

The Award Ceremony and Review Session Committee, as its name suggests, works to plan the two major events for the grant program, the [grant award ceremony](#_Award_Ceremony) and the [grant review session](#_Grant_Review_Session), as well as carry out other event planning as needed.

A detailed list of tasks for this committee is outlined in the **“Award Ceremony and Review Session Committee Checklist”** document. Deadlines should be assigned for each task at the beginning of each grant cycle in respect to when the grant applications are due. For your convenience, the checklist has been recreated and edited here:

[Grant Review Session](#_Grant_Review_Session)

1. Establish date and time of interview session
2. Reserve room for interview session
3. Confirm with location - number of chairs, tables, as well as ability to provide food
4. Confirm with location - ability to place sign to direct interviewees to location
5. Ensure there are enough power strips for laptop computers
6. Provide **"Tips on Interviewing Applicants"** document to board members
7. Make copies of **“Interview Checklist”** document for board members
8. Make 2-3 hard copies of grant applications for reference
9. Ensure that the board has enough laptops to share for applications

[Grant Award Ceremony](#_Award_Ceremony_1)

1. Establish date and time of grant ceremony
2. Confirm availability of any special guests
3. Reserve a location for your award ceremony
4. Identify alternate location in case of inclement weather (if original location is outside)
5. Approach local stores for food donations for the ceremony using **"Donation Request Template"** as a starting point for a letter
6. Confirm that the location has a microphone, podium, and electricity
7. Confirm that the location has tables for refreshments
8. Coordinate 1-2 photographers for ceremony pictures to be used on website and press releases

Award Ceremony Program

1. Confirm sponsors for back of program
2. Provide draft of program to the grant program manager and to all Award Ceremony & Review Session committee members once donors and awardees are identified. Use **"Award Ceremony Program - Inside"**and **"Award Ceremony Program - Outside"** as a starting point.
3. Upon completion of program, send program to board members and to any sponsor requiring pre-approval of their logo
4. See if printing of the program can be donated by a local company, office, or organization
5. Coordinate opening comments, guess speaker(s), and closing comments with the board
6. Coordinate the length of time available for remarks with guess speaker(s)
7. Assign a committee member to write a brief script based on **"Speech - Presentation of Checks"** to present each grant's project

Award Ceremony Big Checks (checks should be completed for each grant one week prior to ceremony)

1. Update prior year’s **"Big Check"** with current year’s sponsors
2. Create a big check for each grant awarded, with mentors signing and assigned to present the checks to the project that they will be mentoring
3. Get checks printed on 11x17 paper and trim to check size. Support with heavy stock paper

In addition to completing these tasks, this committee can invite special guests to attend and, if desired, speak at, the grant award ceremony. Special guests make the award ceremony exciting to those youth grant award winners who recognize them and also show community support and endorsement of the program. Invite your mayor, your school superintendent, principals, and teachers to come see all that your program and the youth of your city can and will accomplish.

## Board Member Recruitment

Please read [Selection Process](#_Selection_Process) to see a description of the steps to be taken to select new board members. This committee will serve as the point people in carrying out these steps.

Board members are recruited via personal recommendations, nominations, and particularly positive impressions from past project leaders. The board application will not be available online publicly but is instead sent individually to recommended people, those who have been nominated, and impressive leaders from projects that your program funded in the past.

This committee’s main task is to identify and follow up with potential board members.

To identify potential new board members, this committee sends out the **“Email – New Board Member Solicitation”** to trusted groups and teachers. The committee can choose to require recipients of this email to fill out an official **“Board New Member Nomination Form”** if they wish to recommend someone for the board, but note that this requirement might deter some individuals from recommending someone. An easier way is to make the nomination form optional and allow recommenders to simply suggest a person by name and, with the consent of the recommended person, put the board in contact with that person. The committee can then send them an invitation to apply to the board along with the **“Board New Member Application”** form, the **“Board Charter,”** and the board meeting schedule for the next year.

The board can then periodically follow up with these applicants, asking if they have any questions about what it means to be on the board, what the time commitment is, or how to apply. A reminder email should also be sent to applicants in the few days before the application is due.

After the board application deadline, the committee will send all received applications to the rest of the board for review. If more information is needed about the applicants before making a decision about whether or not to accept the applicant to the board, an informal meeting can be set up during which the applicant and a few members of the board recruitment committee can meet in a public place and chat. The committee members will ask questions on behalf of the board, and the applicant can ask the committee members any remaining questions about the board.

After this, the interviewing committee members report back to the rest of the board with the answers that the applicant provided and a recommendation on approving the applicant for the board, approving the applicant for a liaison position, or denying the applicant. Each applicant will then be sent an email with their decision **(“To Board Applicants – Welcome to the Board,” “To Board Applicants – Liaison Position Offering,”** or **“To Board Applicants – Application Rejected,”** respectively).

This committee will then help to match new board members with more experienced board member mentors, matching youth with youth and adults with adults.

## Media Outreach

The Media Outreach Committee’s job is to bring your grant program into the public eye by writing press releases, submitting them to publications, and encouraging grant awardees to do the same.

The most important press release of the year is that which advertises the availability of the grants. Without this press, there will likely be far fewer applicants. A press release should be written two months before the grant deadline and should be sent out to various press sources at least a month and a half before the grant deadline. If personal connections with local media have been or can be cultivated, that will definitely increase your chances of getting published. Visit or call publications to pitch your story idea, following the instructions on **“Press Release Tips”** to maximize your chances of getting published. Keep track of media contacts on the **“Master Email List”** provided in the grant package.

School newspapers, newsletters, etc., should also be approached about including information about grant availability in their publications. If there are students in a school that have either gotten funding for a project or have served on the board, the school newspaper can write a human interest story about the funded project or the board member’s experience on the board and then include information about grant availability.

Local and school newspapers often also have places for advertisements. Approach the editor of the newspaper, explain your program (highlighting the good it does for your community and the student involvement in leading it), and ask about whether they would be willing to donate an advertisement space to your program to help you get the word out about your program in hopes of funding more projects. Even if they are not willing to donate a space, they may at least provide you with a discount.

Once project applications have been submitted and funding has been decided upon, another press release should be written and sent out to local media. This release should congratulate the projects that earned funding and announce the award ceremony that will be occurring to celebrate.

Finally, once the ceremony is completed, a press release should be written and distributed describing the ceremony and including quotes from board members, grant winners, and potentially an important guest speaker, if applicable. Photos of the ceremony should also be included with this press release.

In addition to writing press releases, the Media Outreach Committee should contact grant winners to encourage them and assist them in the writing of press releases about their specific funded project. Give each project the **“Why and How to Publicize Your Project”** document, checking back with them periodically to see if they need additional assistance in writing the release.

Photographing the award ceremony and projects in action can also be a part of this committee’s job description. These photos can accompany the press releases.

Finally, the committee should make and maintain a Facebook page, a Twitter account, and/or other social media pages in order to connect with more potential youth applicants. Weekly posts are recommended.

## School and Youth Group Outreach

The School and Youth Group Outreach works directly with groups of young people to give them presentations about the grant program, to encourage them to apply, to assist them through the process of applying for a grant if necessary, and to follow up with them when the grant application deadline is nearing. The committee also works to design and put up posters in and around schools and other frequented locations, with the consent of the locations. Flyers are also designed and distributed to young people who might be interested in applying for a grant

The **“Committee – School and Youth Group Outreach”** folder in the grant program package is full of documents created to help your committee members get started.

Committee members can begin by identifying groups that would potentially be interested in leading an environmental project and applying for a grant for funding. Are there any school clubs that focus on leadership, environmentalism, or service? Are there any nearby scouting troops? Are any local scouts looking to complete a Girl Scout Silver or Gold Award or a Boy Scout Eagle Scout Project? Are there any religious service groups in the area? Don’t forget to look for nontraditional schools as well, such as private schools, boarding schools, special needs schools, etc. Reach out to these sorts of groups by either talking to group leaders or adult advisors in person (recommended) or by email (using the **“Presentation Solicitation Email”** and the **“Email – Advertising Grants to Scouts”** as a starting point) to see if their group would be interested in hearing from you about your grant program at the group’s next meeting. Make sure to be extra polite and thankful, regardless of their response.

The **“Example PowerPoint Presentation”** and **“Example PowerPoint Presentation Notes”** can both be used as templates for committee members to edit according to your program’s needs before using them to present to interested school clubs and other youth groups. Bring along flyers (examples included in the folder) and/or brochures (also in the folder) to give to those who request them, bearing in mind the environmental and financial costs of printing out too many flyers. After presenting to a group, ask if they have any questions or if you can help them brainstorm potential project ideas. Remember, the program aims to fund as many projects as possible, not to reject as many projects as possible. The committee members can help encourage these projects and give advice to make their applications as successful as possible.

Follow up with a group the day after the presentation saying thank you and again making yourself available to answer questions. You can also offer to read through their application ahead of time if they send it to you more than a week before the grant deadline.

While offering to do presentations with youth groups, committee members should also be putting up posters advertising grant availability. The **“Committee Poster Assignments”** document can help you organize who is putting up posters where so that all important locations can have posters and so that locations are not double-postered. Beyond posters, **“Locker Signs”** can be taped to the lockers of board members (if their schools have lockers) to bring further attention to the grant program.

## Sponsorship and Funding

The Sponsorship and Funding Committee’s task is to ensure the longer-term organizational stability and sustainability of the program. If your grant program does not seek to last more than two years, this committee may not be necessary. However, if the program seeks to continue for three or more years, relations with a long-term [fiscal sponsor](#_Option_1_(recommended)) and a long-term [funder](#_Program_Funding) should be cultivated.

This committee is new to but very active in our Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program because our original fiscal sponsor is no longer able to continue handling our funds. The committee therefore is working to identify new potential fiscal sponsors and to identify which potential sponsor is the best fit for our grant program.

Expanded funding should also be investigated by this committee. A **“Funding Outreach Letter”** has been included in the program package for your use in approaching potential funders. Edit it to match your program’s information.

## Website and Documents

This committee is charged with maintaining the website and updating important board documents.

Before the beginning of each new grant cycle, this committee should carefully review the **“Grant Selection Criteria (Detailed),” “APPLICATION FORM,” “Project Contract Form,”** and **“Project Report Form.”** After reading through each document more than once, the committee will talk amongst themselves about any proposed changes that they might see as necessary. These proposed changes will then be brought before the board as a whole and voted upon at the next full board meeting or via email, as preferred. Other board members will also be invited to propose changes at this time. For most proposed edits, a majority vote will cause the change to go into effect and the edits to be made to the document, which will then be added in its edited form to the website. For major changes that would potentially shift the program’s focus or structure, three quarters of the board must vote in favor for the proposed change to occur before any changes are made. This should all be completed before major advertising for grant availability begins.

As described in [Website](#_Website) above, our [model website](carmelgreenteen.org) has been provided to you so that you can base your website off of it. Website hosts listed in the [website](#_Website) section, which are incredibly intuitive and easy to use, with a drag-and-drop interface to add things such as photos, text boxes, slideshows, and more, should enable most board members to be able to edit the website directly. If some committee members are uncomfortable editing the website directly, you could instead designate one committee member as the webmaster. The other board members could select the photos and write the text to be used for the webpage, potentially using the **“Project Webpage PowerPoint Template”** as a model, and then the webmaster could copy them into the webpage.

The majority of the work on the website occurs before advertising, when documents are being updated online, and after projects have been completed, when project webpages need to be created. Once a project has turned in their project report form along with project photos, the website committee will create a webpage for that project. (See an example [here](http://www.carmelgreenteen.org/current-projects/trees-for-generations-2014/).) It will include 7-9 photos with captions describing the project and its impact. Once the webpage is created, the link will be sent to the youth project leader and adult advisor in the email **“To Grant Recipients – Project Webpage is Up.”** Be prepared to make edits to the webpage if the project leaders indicate that a caption is incorrect or that they would like additional information included. Also keep in mind when creating these websites that your project leaders are minors. Their full names should *not* be included anywhere on the website in association with their photo unless they specifically request it and have the permission of an adult guardian.

Besides reviewing grant documents and creating project webpages, the Website and Documents Committee can review the website as a whole to ensure that it remains up-to-date. Assign specific pages to specific committee members to read through carefully. Ask them to think about whether the text on the page would make sense if they were not familiar with the grant program and whether they have any questions remaining about the program after reading through the website information. If so, make necessary small edits to clarify or bring bigger edits before the board as a whole for a vote.