Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Fiscal Year 2022 Grantmaking Program Request for Proposals

RFP released: August 2, 2021

Pre-proposals due: Sept. 1, 2021 by 5 p.m.

Full proposals by invitation due: Oct. 22, 2021 by 5 p.m.

Questions? Contact:

Grants Program team at grants@openspace.org or (650) 625-6507

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

330 Distel Circle, Los Altos, CA 94022

Para obtener ayuda en español sobre esta solicitud de becas, favor de contactarnos
por correo electrónico: grants@openspace.org o por teléfono: (650) 691-1200

Table of Contents

Background

Who We Are

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) is an independent special district in the San Francisco Bay Area that has preserved a regional greenbelt system of nearly 65,000 acres of public land and manages 26 open space preserves. These diverse and scenic landscapes, from bay wetlands to redwood forests and coastal grasslands, host an incredible diversity of life, making our region one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Midpen preserves have long and complex histories of human use prior to becoming public open space. We actively manage the land and waterways to restore their health and function, helping our local ecosystem become more resilient in a time of climate change. By caring for the land, the land in turn takes care of us, providing tangible and intangible benefits like clean air and water, flood protection, carbon sequestration, and the opportunity for restorative experiences in nature.

On the San Mateo County Coast, where local agricultural roots run deep, our mission also includes preserving viable working lands. We partner with local ranchers to use conservation grazing as a land management tool for enhancing native coastal grasslands and providing wildland fire protection.

Midpen preserves are free and open to the public daily, providing an extensive trail network for ecologically sensitive recreation. Our programming connects people to nature through enriched experiences, including environmental interpretation, docent-led activities, and volunteer opportunities.

By preserving, restoring, and providing access to our region's iconic, cultural, working, and scenic landscapes, Midpen lands offer us opportunities for health, climate change resilience and refuge.

Mission Statement

To acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

Coastside Protection Mission Statement

To acquire and preserve in perpetuity open space land and agricultural land of regional significance, protect and restore the natural environment, preserve rural character, encourage viable agricultural use of land resources, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.

Funding Opportunity

A total of $250,000 in funding is available for organizations and projects that further the understanding and protection of our natural world, build capacity in the conservation field, and facilitate access to the outdoors or augment interpretation and education opportunities for the public.

The grantmaking process is guided by an emphasis on investments that reflect a regional focus and provide avenues for partnership with Midpen or other stakeholders. Consistent with Midpen's Board Policy 3.10, the Grantmaking Program is committed to soliciting proposals from a diverse range of community based and other nonprofit organizations, K-12 schools, student researchers, academic institutions, and public agencies, and is encouraging first time applicants and organizations that reach underserved communities to apply.

Midpen is accepting proposals for three funding priorities, outlined below:

- Applied science - advancing scientific understanding of natural processes and/or promoting environmental stewardship.
- Partnership and network support - cultivating, sustaining and growing conservation networks.
- Access, interpretation, and education - educating and promoting open space protection.

Two funding tiers are available:

- Tier 1 for projects up to $25,000; and
- Tier 2 for projects from $25,001 to $50,000.

Midpen is accepting proposals for all three Funding Priorities for both tier 1 and tier 2 awards.

Grantmaking Program awards from Fiscal Year 2019 can be found on Midpen's Grantmaking Program web page: https://www.openspace.org/grantmaking-program.

Grant Program Priorities

Applied Science

Proposals under the Applied Science priority should focus on academic or practitioner science projects that support the protection and enhancement of natural resources on Midpen lands. The purpose should be to develop and disseminate information that advances scientific understanding of natural processes. Proposals submitted in this round must focus on *Our Changing Ecosystems*, described below.

Our Changing Ecosystems

A host of challenges face our world today. Climate change is impacting ecosystems in a myriad of known and unknown ways, from increased variability in precipitation and vulnerability to fire, to changes in species distributions and dispersal patterns. As a result, ecosystems are facing a combination of accelerated and new stressors, affecting the ability to rebound from any one event. Proposals should focus on research that seeks to understand these changes and identify potential response actions that can be taken related to land and resource stewardship practices.

Types of projects may include applied academic research or proof-of-concept, and may cover a variety of topics relating to *Our Changing Ecosystems* such as:

- Climate change and carbon sequestration
- Habitat loss or climate change
- Habitat fragmentation
- Population shifts
- Plant pathogens
- Fire ecology
- Extreme heat
- Drought and flood management or watershed function
- Sea level rise and shoreline resiliency
- Public access
- Land management

Example projects:

- Research that examines the ecology and potential mitigation strategies to combat the spread of *Phytophthora* species that are of concern.
- Vegetation mapping that contributes to an understanding of how ecosystems are changing (e.g., fine-scale fire risk mapping that results in a coordinated approach to vegetation management).
- Regional carbon sequestration actions on working/agricultural lands.

Network and Partnership Support

California's largest and most pressing challenges require working together to discover and implement innovative solutions. Landscape-scale stewardship is critical to ensuring solutions are scalable and have broad impact. Consequently, this funding category focuses on grant proposals that cultivate, sustain, or grow established conservation networks.

Although future funding rounds may allow for creation of new working groups or networks, in this round only projects submitted by established groups or networks will be considered. Groups or networks should be primarily oriented towards topics that relate to land management, conservation, or public access to outdoor recreation. Applicants are encouraged to emphasize if and how the group or network bridges gaps in access, widens equitable participation, or otherwise helps lower barriers to traditionally underserved communities.

Proposals should focus on developing organizational capacity or implementing projects to engage the group on working together towards developing shared priorities, exchanging best practices, or collaborating on research or educational outreach and education/interpretation, etc. Please note that funds cannot be used for policy or advocacy work and therefore lobbying support is not an eligible project type.

Example projects:

- Development of a network-wide data sharing system.
- Consulting support and staff time to build a strategic plan for a working group to coalesce around a shared understanding for how participants will work together.
- Consulting support and staff time to leverage existing network capacity with a wider outreach to engage diverse partner organizations (e.g., serving additional age groups, diverse abilities, and/or traditionally under-represented communities)
- Consulting support or staff time to build organizational capacity towards building the network strengthening communication and collaboration under a joint vision.
- Support to organize convenings to share research and best practices related to natural resource management.

Access, Interpretation and Education

Funding for access, environmental interpretation, and education will be directed towards facilitating equitable access and broad opportunity for all residents to experience Midpen lands while fostering an appreciation for open space protection, nature study, and environmental stewardship. Proposals should focus on projects that contribute an understanding and appreciation of our natural systems, facilitate opportunities for outdoor engagement and nature-based experiences or provide nature-based educational and interpretive experiences for children and/or adults. Applicants are encouraged to emphasize if and how the proposal bridges gaps in access, widens equitable participation, or otherwise helps lower barriers to traditionally underserved or under-represented communities.

Funding can be used for staff time to create or execute programming, provide transportation to opportunities for outdoor engagement or nature-based experiences, facilitate knowledge of outdoor recreational opportunities, broaden access to the outdoors, engage residents in environmental stewardship activities, etc. Transportation-related projects must be to and from Midpen preserves.

Example projects:

- Public access or educational programs for families or students.
- Develop and/or improve interpretive signs and services along trails, including bilingual materials.
- Complete gaps in a regional trail system that connect communities to trails and open space (e.g. outreach and engagement strategies for community and partner support for regional trail connections).
- Outreach and activity programs that encourage outdoor engagement and nature-based experiences in underserved communities.

Grant Program Requirements

Eligible Recipients

Eligible applicants must be one of the following: a public agency; affiliated with a K-12 school or academic institution; a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; or an organization with a fiscal sponsor. Applicants with eligible projects may work through a fiscal sponsor to apply if the fiscal sponsorship is established before proposal submittal and the project has a primarily charitable, scientific, or educational purpose.

Faculty at accredited academic institutions must sponsor research-related projects; practitioner science projects may require faculty sponsorship and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Grants Program team prior to proposal submittal to establish whether a faculty sponsorship will be required.

Applicants from the FY18-19 Grantmaking solicitation cycle are eligible to apply for a second award.

Grant Period

Projects funded through this program must be complete and funded expended by three years after the grant agreement is executed.

Project Location

Projects without a field work component can take place outside Midpen boundaries. All proposed field work must take place on Midpen preserves. Transportation-related projects must be to and from Midpen preserves. Proposals with a regional focus are encouraged.

Eligible Costs

Grant funds may be used to cover expenses related to the implementation of proposed projects within the approved project budget. Eligible expenses must be incurred during the performance period as specified in the grant agreement.

ELIGIBLE COSTS		
Budget Item	**Eligible Cost**	**Required Documentation**
Salaries, Wages, and Benefits	Salaries and wages of employees employed by the grantee who is directly engaged in the execution of the grant project. Benefits include employer contribution of fringe benefits.	Timesheets or similar documentation detailing days and hours worked on the project.
Consultants and Contractors	Direct consultant and contractual services necessary to achieve the objectives of the grant.	Invoices from consultant/contractor identifying expenditure, services performed and period of services.
Travel	Travel costs associated with travel to and from project sites, meetings, etc., directly related to the grant project. Costs must be considered reasonable and necessary for the completion of the project.	Receipts identifying travel costs (i.e., lodging, rental cars). Mileage must be documented by either employee travel claims or vehicle mileage logs for vehicles owned by the grantee.
Equipment and Supplies	Supplies and/or equipment required for project or program execution. Purchased supplies and/or equipment are to remain in the possession of the grantee during and after project completion.	Receipts identifying item purchased, cost, and date of purchase. Use of grantee equipment must be substantiated with an equipment usage log that identifies the equipment used, rate, and total rental cost.
Indirect Costs	Indirect Costs are costs associated with doing business that are of a general nature and are incurred to benefit two or more functions within the grantee organization.	Applied on a percentage basis of direct costs.

Ineligible Costs

The following activities and costs are not eligible:

- Conducting lobbying, carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation or political decision making
- Influencing the outcome of any specific election through any means
- Purposes other than those that are charitable, scientific, or educational
- Fundraising
- Budget shortfalls or endowment funds
- Scholarships, fellowships, or grants to individuals
- Land acquisition or real estate purchases
- Costs incurred before or after the project performance period
- Late fees, penalties, and bank fees

Matching Funds

Matching or in-kind funds are not required but applicants are encouraged to look for creative ways to combine funds to create a more complete or effective project.

Application Process

A public webinar will be hosted online on Wednesday, August 18 at 7:00 PM. The webinar will be recorded and available online afterward.

Pre-proposals will be accepted through September 1, 2021 by 5:00 PM. The Grantmaking Review Committee will be conducting preliminary screenings to (1) develop an understanding of interested organizations and potential grant applicants across the three funding priorities, and (2) ensure appropriate project endeavors and a balance across the three grantmaking priorities. Applicants are encouraged to schedule consultations prior to submission of their pre-proposal. See Appendix A for pre-proposal and submission guidelines.

Based on pre-proposals received, applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal by October 22, 2021 by 5:00PM. Not every applicant may be invited to submit a full proposal.

Applicants submitting Applied Science projects are <u>required</u> to consult with Midpen staff prior to full proposal submittal to determine whether faculty sponsorship is required. See Appendix B for full proposal and submission guidelines.

Midpen is not soliciting, does not wish to receive, and will not treat any information received in a grant proposal as proprietary or confidential.

Preliminary Grant Award Selection

Midpen's Grantmaking Review Committee will rank pre-proposals and full proposals based on the following considerations:

- Technical review scores and comments based on the Evaluation Criteria below.
- Balance/distribution of funds by geographic area, project type or type of institutions, and availability of funds.

The Grantmaking Review Committee may recommend modifications, such as reducing the requested grant award amounts to meet current and potential future program priorities, funding targets, and available funding limitations.

General Manager and Board Action

The Grantmaking Review Committee's grant award recommendations will be presented to Midpen's executive team and general manager. The general manager will consider the comments and recommendations from the entire review process and will determine the final grant award recommendations to be presented to the board of director's Legislative, Funding and Public Affairs Committee for consideration prior to presenting the recommendations to the full board of director for funding approval. The board of directors has sole and absolute discretion to approve or reject funding for a project. Upon approval, the Grants Program team will work with selected applicants to develop grant funding agreements.

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Points
Alignment with Midpen's mission and goals and Grantmaking Program priority Scoring for this category is based on how well the applicant demonstrates that their project would: • Promote Midpen's mission and Strategic Plan goals (FY22 Update). • Advance the goals set forth by the applicable Grantmaking Program priority (applied science; network and partnership support; or access, interpretation and education).	20
Project Scope Scoring for this category is based on how well the applicant demonstrates: • A clear project description with key project deliverables that are aligned with the Project Budget. • A timeline that is feasible and will be completed within the grant performance period.	20
Impact Scoring for this category is based on how well the applicant demonstrates the likelihood the project will have a profound impact or address a specific need, or how well the project employs a new or innovative methodology, program, or management technique.	20
Engagement Scoring for this category is based on how well the project reaches underserved communities, broadens the range of organizations served by Midpen, has strong public support and/or was developed with widespread community participation, or involves one or more partner agencies or organizations.	20
Organizational Capacity Scoring for this category is based on how well the applicant demonstrates they have the capacity, expertise, resources, and support to ensure project completion. Note: Midpen will evaluate requests for capacity-building support to engage a broader range of grantees (e.g., subject matter expert input, technical data, reporting assistance). Scoring for this category is also based on clarity of the support requested from Midpen.	10
Preliminary Project Budget Scoring for this category is based on the cost-effectiveness of the budget and how it aligns with the project description, intended outcomes and/or deliverables. Note: pre-proposals do not require a project budget to be submitted and will not be evaluated against this criterion.	10
Maximum Points	**100**

Tentative Application and Award Schedule

PROPOSAL SOLICITATION	
Grant application packet released	July 30, 2021
Public workshop	Wednesday, August 18, 2021 at 7:00 PM
Pre-proposals due	Wednesday, September 1, 2021 by 5:00 PM
Invitations to submit full proposals	Monday, September 20, 2021
Full proposals due	Friday, October 22, 2021 by 5:00 PM
REVIEW & AWARD	
Staff screens applications Note: Applicants may be contacted to provide minor clarifications to their proposals	October 25, 2021 – November 10, 2021
Review committee prepares award recommendations	November/December 2021
Committee and board meetings for award decisions	December 2021 – January 2022
AWARD PROCESING	
Award notifications	January 2022
<u>Earliest</u> date grant agreements are anticipated to be executed and projects begin Note: Some grant agreements may take longer	February 2022

Requirements if Funded

Reimbursements

Funds can be disbursed after a fully executed grant agreement is in place. Midpen will issue payments on a reimbursement basis, barring exceptions for projects with demonstrable need. Reimbursement requests can be submitted as frequently as quarterly but at least annually if reimbursable expenses are accrued.

Advance payments may be considered at the Midpen's discretion and with demonstrable need. No advance payment shall exceed 25% of the total grant award. Advances must be fully utilized within a six-month period unless additional time is approved by Midpen.

Reimbursement requests must be accompanied by documentation that details the work performed over the reporting period, a budget report that demonstrates which funds are being requested for reimbursement against the fund balance, and appropriate receipts or other necessary documentation. Midpen has designed the forms and procedures to keep organizational effort to the minimum for grantees.

Reporting

Grantees are required to provide Midpen with progress updates throughout the project performance period. Tier 2 grantees must submit annual reports detailing project progress along with a financial report to describe how the funds were spent based on the budget submitted. Tier 1 grantees will not be required to submit annual narrative reports but will be asked for brief status updates along with payment requests.

Tier 2 grantees should submit an annual narrative report (5 pages or fewer) and include:

- Project highlights (e.g., new opportunities discovered, partnerships developed).
- Project delays related to anticipated activities or milestones, the reason for the delay and how this might impact the project's goals, budget, or timeline.
- Proposed changes to the approach, project, timeline, or budget for the upcoming year.
- Total expenditures against the project budget.

Loss of Funding

The following are examples of actions that may result in loss of funding:

- Grantee fails to obtain a grant agreement.
- Grantee fails to complete the funded project (conform substantially to the agreement).
- Grantee fails to submit all documentation within the time periods specified in the grant agreement.
- Grantee fails to secure environmental clearance to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or other necessary project permits.
- Grantee changes the project scope without the concurrence of Midpen.
- Grantee terminates the project by written notice 30 days in advance.

Changes or Amendments

Grantees seeking changes to the scope or budget (greater than 10% from a budget category) must obtain Midpen's approval. Changes in project scope must continue to meet the need cited in the original proposal. Grantee will jeopardize funding should changes be made without prior notice to and approval by Midpen.

Audits and Accountability

Projects are subject to audit annually and for three years following the final payment of grant funds. If the project is selected for audit, grantee will be contacted in advance. The audit shall include all books, papers, accounts, documents, or other records of grantee, as they relate to the project. All project expenditure documentation should be available for an audit, whether paid with grant funds or other funds. Grantee must maintain an accounting system that accurately reflects fiscal transactions, with the necessary controls and safeguards to provide an adequate audit trail.

Project Recognition

Grantees will be required to identify the funding source during public announcements relating to the project. Printed or web-based public materials relating to the project should acknowledge Midpen as a funding source. In addition, if the grantee uses social media, the grantee should acknowledge the project and Midpen funding at major milestones, as well as other sources of public outreach, such as newsletters or blog posts whenever possible.

In addition, the Grants Program team will prepare an annual report to the board of directors on the Grantmaking Program that details the proposals received as well as those selected for funding, and the results of research received. Grantees must be available to present to the board of directors annually, if requested.

Public announcements relating to the project should be listed in the grantees annual grant reports to Midpen (tier 2 grantees), or in disbursement requests (tier 1 grantees).

Entry Restrictions

Eligible projects must not result in permanent damage and/or impairment to habitats or natural resources on Midpen lands and will be in compliance with Midpen's Permit to Enter procedures (required for each research project).

Appendix A – Grant Pre-proposal

Applicants will select the appropriate Grantmaking Program priority and funding tier. Submit this form to the Grants Program team at grants@openspace.org.

Applicant Information		
Organization	Mailing address	Tax status
Name and title of applicant	Email	Phone number
Name and title of project manager (if separate from applicant)	Email	Phone number
Pre-proposal Information		
Grantmaking Program priority	Funding tier	Requested grant amount
Project title		

Project Summary

Instructions: Describe the project alignment with the applicable Grantmaking Program priority. Include key tasks, intended outcomes or deliverables, timeline, potential partnerships, project team and intended audience or population served. Specify which project element(s) would be funded by the grant (500-word maximum).

Criteria Highlight

Instructions: Select one of the 6 evaluation criteria and describe how the proposed project aligns with the selected criterion (150-word maximum).

Appendix B – Full Proposal (by invitation only)

Applicants will select the appropriate Grantmaking Program priority and funding tier. Submit this form, all items listed below in the application checklist, and proposal narrative via email to the Grants Program team at grants@openspace.org.

Applicant Information		
Organization	Mailing address	Tax status
Name and title of applicant	Email	Phone number
Name and title of project manager (if separate from applicant)	Email	Phone number
Proposal Information		
Grantmaking Program priority	Funding tier	Requested grant amount
Project title		
1-2 sentence description of project for announcement (e.g., social media, press release, etc.)		

Application Checklist
Instructions: Submit each of the following attachments along with this form. Please use the file name conventions described below.

1. Proposal narrative (PDF format; filename: "Narrative")
2. Project team (PDF format; filename: "Team")
    o Provide brief description of role and bios for key members and identify team lead.
3. Project location map (PDF format; filename: "Location Map")
    o Provide if applicable.
4. Financial information
    o Non-profits to submit their most recent IRS Form 990 or internally prepared financial statements (preferably audited)
    o Schools and public agencies to submit recent annual budgets
    o Large institutions to provide department or program budget
    o If the application includes a fiscal sponsor, the financial statements should be for the fiscal sponsor.
5. Fiscal sponsor documentation (filename: "Fiscal Sponsor")
    o Provide 2 years of audited financial documents and a letter of support from a fiscal sponsor, if applicable. If audited documents are not available, then non-audited financial documents will be accepted.
6. Faculty sponsor or collaborative partner documentation (filename: "Faculty Sponsor")
    o Provide a letter of support if faculty sponsorship or partner contributions are required.

Proposal Narrative

Instructions: Applicants are encouraged to review the scoring criteria to ensure their responses adequately address each criterion. The proposal narrative should not exceed 3 pages for tier 1 applications and 5 pages for tier 2 applications. Please answer the following questions:

Alignment with Midpen's mission and goals and Grantmaking Program priority
- Describe how this project promotes Midpen's mission and Strategic Plan goals (FY22 Update).
- Describe how this project advances the goals of the applicable Grantmaking Program priority (applied science; network and partnership support; or access, interpretation and education).

Project Scope
- Describe the proposed project including key tasks, intended outcomes or project deliverables, and project team. Key tasks must align with tasks described in the project budget.
- Provide a project timeline and estimated completion dates for key project deliverables
- Discuss the status of any permission, permits, or other approvals this project requires.
- Describe the challenges you expect to encounter and how you will address them.

Impact
- Describe the project's anticipated impact.
- Describe how the project employs innovative approaches.
- Describe how the project aligns with the long-term goals of your organization.

Organizational Capacity
- Describe your organization, including the mission and vision, and its ability to successfully implement the project. If applicable, please describe both the fiscal sponsor and sponsored organization.
- Does your organization require support from Midpen to achieve the project as described in this proposal? If so, describe or discuss your support in addition to grant funding (e.g., subject matter expert input, technical data, reporting assistance) needed from Midpen.

Engagement
- Describe how the project reaches underserved communities, broadens the range of organizations served by Midpen, has strong public support and/or was developed with widespread community participation, or involves one or more partner agency or organization beyond Midpen.

Project Budget

Instructions: Please list budget task line items that <u>directly relate</u> to the project scope. Review the listed eligible and ineligible costs in the RFP for detail on allowable expenses.

Task #	Budget Task Line-Item Description	Requested Amount	Other Sources (if applicable)	Total Task Amount
TOTAL GRANT REQUEST				

Project Budget Narrative

Instructions: Describe the cost-effectiveness of the project budget and how the budget line items align with project deliverables or intended outcomes. Describe any other sources of funding, including in-kind support. Matching funds are not required. (200-words max)

Please check the following boxes as applicable:

☐ The Project will be entirely funded by a Midpen grant (matching funds not required), or

☐ The Project requires additional funds by other sources beyond a Midpen grant and applicant
    resources.

Other Funding Sources		
Instructions: If the project requires additional funds by other sources beyond a Midpen grant and applicant resources, list all funds that will be used.		
Funding Source	*Received, Committed, or Pending Review*	*Amount of Funds*
TOTAL OTHER FUNDING		