Metro | *Making a great place*

Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants
Full Application Review Criteria

This document outlines how the criteria will be considered in the review of the **full applications**. It is intended to provide transparency in the decision making process by describing how previously funded projects have addressed the criteria and how the review committee determines the strength of the responses. Applicants invited to submit full applications will receive a more specific instruction packet.

ReNature Criteria	
ReNature applies to projects that increase and/or recover the ecological functions and processes in order to protect water quality and enhance habitat. 1. How does the project <u>scope</u> meet this criterion? Previously funded projects have: a. Enhanced diverse riparian vegetation and stream character b. Increased fish passage c. Promoted wildlife passage d. Restored wetland functions e. Preserved habitats of concern such as oak savannas, forested wetlands and wildlife corridors f. Protected the integrity of a stream or natural area from the impacts of urban development and human use by restoring natural processes.	*ReNature projects will be scored according to the scale and quality of the ecological functions being restored.*
2. How has the <u>need</u> for the project been identified? How does it address goals and objectives of larger planning/restoration efforts that contribute to ecological networks, corridors and linkages? Previously funded projects have cited: a. Watershed basin plans and other local planning efforts b. Regional Conservation Strategy c. Coordinated efforts of multiple partners d. Efforts build on other restoration projects.	*The project will be considered in the context of the larger ecological landscape. Projects that demonstrate how they address the limiting factors within a watershed basin, wildlife corridor or network will score better.*
3. How are existing human uses and <u>impacts</u> being addressed in the project's scope? How will future impacts to sensitive natural areas be managed? Will there be appropriate means for people to interact with the project site? Previously funded projects have: a. Discouraged people from using sensitive areas of the site or made the site inaccessible due to the sensitive nature of the habitat b. Minimized impacts in trail siting and/or encouraged people to stay on the trail to minimize impacts c. Included active conservation education programming or outreach at the site d. Added signage and interpretation with appropriate amenities.	*Projects that demonstrate a thoughtful approach to managing human impact will score better.*

ReGreen Criteria	
ReGreen applies to projects that increase the presence of nature (water, trees and other vegetation) to enrich people's experience and help strengthen a physical connection to the region's ecology. 1. How does the project enhance people's ability to access and experience nature? Previously funded projects have: a. Acquired land that improves access to a nature park b. Acquired land that preserves the presence of nature in an urban neighborhood c. Incorporated trails, play areas, boardwalks, interpretation and other amenities to improve people's ability to access a natural area currently in public ownership d. Integrated nature in meaningful ways into new urban development projects e. Provided universal access for people with disabilities.	*ReGreen projects will be scored based on the quality of the experience, the location and how effectively it demonstrates it can reach the people it is designed for and intended to serve.*
2. How does the project's location strengthen access to nature within a given community? Previously funded projects have used a variety of data sources to describe the affected community, such as: a. Regional Equity Atlas or local jurisdiction's analysis of park deficiency b. School's free and reduced lunch data, neighborhood demographic data or other regional data to demonstrate that the project is located in a low-income or underserved neighborhood c. Data that can demonstrate that a community experiences disproportionate environmental impacts that the project can address (such as air quality).	*During the 2015 review cycle, the review committee will continue to favor projects in low-income and park deficient areas.*
3. How does the programming strengthen the communities' access to nature? Previously funded ReGreen projects have included a range of programming to accompany the capital investment: a. Passive – once built, it is expected that community use will automatically happen b. Proximity - access to the investment will be provided due to its proximity to existing or planned users/uses c. Intentional – The site is intentionally being programmed for uses such as conservation education.	*Projects will be scored according to the quality of the engagement that will accompany capital investments. Projects that include plans to activate the use or have demonstrated community support for activating user groups at that site will score higher.*
Partnerships and Community Engagement	
The project must demonstrate the existence of public and private partners who can and will leverage human and financial resources.	*While partnerships may vary in terms of the numbers and extent, projects that have more meaningful partnerships, particularly with community partners, will score higher.*
Metro has funded projects that have a wide variety of community engagement outcomes. Previously funded projects have addressed community engagement in the following ways: • **High** - These projects create or build on community ownership and pride. They initiate new or expand on existing relationships between organizations and are designed to provide engagement with diverse communities to maximize outcomes. • **Medium** - The project or property acquisition initiates a new or expands an existing relationship between partners or organizations with more meaningful community engagement. • **Low** - The project or property acquisition is agency-driven and involves typical and obvious community partners through less meaningful engagement activities.	*Projects with more meaningful community engagement will score better than projects with less community engagement.*

Ecologically Effective and Cost Efficient	
How are the design solutions ecologically effective and cost efficient? Previously funded ReNature projects have addressed this criteria in the following ways: a. Use of Best Management Practices for restoration b. Building on past investments to increase the effectiveness of ecological functions. Previously funded ReGreen projects have addressed this criteria in the following ways: a. Reclaiming surplus, abandoned, underutilized urban land such as highway right-of-ways or brownfields. b. Using or mimicking natural processes to manage stormwater beyond regulatory requirements to promote a healthy environment, strong economy and well-being of residents c. Use of green infrastructure facilities to manage stormwater for an area larger than what is currently required by code d. Demonstrates new or innovative urban development practices that integrates nature into sustainable infrastructure and uses sustainable construction materials.	*Projects that are ecologically effective and cost efficient will be given higher scores in the review process.*
Multiple Benefits for People and Nature	
How does the project achieve additional environmental, social and economic benefits? Previously funded ReNature projects have: a. Been a catalyst for future investments in restoring ecological functions within a basin b. Intentionally involved the community in restoration and monitoring efforts c. Contributes to a community's sense of ownership and pride d. Intentionally responds to opportunities to educate and engage local users and schools Previously funded ReGreen projects have: a. Partnered with workforce development organizations b. Design of the space included intentional programming and/or education c. Leveraged the presence of nature to drive a community's broader agenda for change and transformation that builds community cohesiveness, health and a sense of place.	*Projects that include added environmental, social and economic benefits beyond the specific project scope will be given higher scores in the review process.*
<u>Contracting with MWESBs</u> Metro's policy is to provide equal opportunity to everyone to access and participate in locally-funded projects, programs, and services by removing barriers to participation and promoting economic opportunities for certified minority-owned enterprises (MBE), women-owned enterprises (WBE) and emerging small businesses (ESB). New this year, every applicant will be asked to describe the applicability of MWESB policy of the Government Sponsor to the project and how the contracting for this project will help meet the goals of the policy.	*The review committee may take into consideration in their funding recommendation the projects commitment to MWESB utilization and/or other methods for providing economic benefits to underserved communities.*

Additional evaluation measures	
Cost/Benefit Is the overall cost of the project in line with the benefits and outcomes achieved for the public or for nature? *Other considerations:* • Leverages public dollars beyond the 2:1 match	*As the 2015 review cycle is likely to be competitive, the review committee may need to consider reducing some funding requests. For example, the committee may reduce a funding award to be more in line with what they feel is an appropriate level of support for the outcomes the project is likely to achieve.*
Project Readiness In previous funding cycles, Metro has been willing to fund projects that are innovative and therefore may include higher risks related to scope or funding. As the Natural Areas bond program is nearing completion, Metro needs to fund projects with more certainty. Therefore, projects in this review cycle must: • Ensure that match can be secure by December 2015 • Demonstrate that the project will be completed within three years of contract or July 2018 at the latest. • Appear feasible with reasonable constraints to design, permitting and funding.	
Likelihood of project success *The committee will consider the following feasibility factors (at a minimum):* • Experience and commitment of applicant and partners • Project management plan • Project timeline including fundraising, design development, permitting, bid/contract process, construction and community celebration • Challenges identified by applicant, staff or review committee • Secured matching funds and/or reasonable fundraising goals	*When considering ambitious projects that have the potential for wide-reaching community impacts, the committee will consider what it takes to achieve those impacts against the perceived commitment of the partners.*
Regional Distribution To date the Metro Council has awarded 37 capital grants totaling more than $11 million in funding to communities around the region. Some areas have received grants in close proximity to others. In some cases, projects have received more than one round of funding. During the 2015 review cycle, the Capital Grant Review committee will consider projects in the context of previous funding decisions and levels of investments made by the Metro Council.	*During the 2015 review cycle, the review committee will favor projects in areas of the region that have not yet received a capital grant.*