



Youth Investment Program Grant Making Pilot Plan 2005–2006

**FINAL DRAFT
FOR BOARD REVIEW**

September 19, 2005

YOUTH INVESTMENT PROGRAM GRANT MAKING PILOT PLAN 2005-2006

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Youth benefit greatly from compelling and consistent outdoor experiences, whether in urban or wilderness areas. The outdoors uniquely transforms individuals through personal, social, and academic growth. Unfortunately, our most needy — poor and underserved youth — have the least access to these life-changing experiences. This reality is the impetus behind the Stewardship Council’s youth investment program and our pilot grant making plan for 2005-2006.

Our aim is to make an important difference in the lives of underserved youth in northern and central California through connections with the outdoors. For more than a year, the Youth Investment Committee, supported by staff, Tides Foundation, and EDAW, has conducted research to identify the greatest areas of need, and specifically those areas — both geographic and in terms of focus — that are not being adequately addressed by other private or public sector funding. Simply put, we set out to find the “gaps”. This is where we intend to focus our efforts.

A Historic Decision

In December 2003, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) reached a historic decision settling a range of issues related to the PG&E bankruptcy. One of the most unique aspects of this agreement was the requirement to fund and implement an environmental program for youth. At the urging of the Greenlining Institute, the youth program was envisioned as an opportunity to provide environmental opportunities for youth, “especially disadvantaged urban youth”, and to fund parks in urban areas, “particularly (to) serve the needs of urban low-income youth”.

As provided in the excerpt provided in Attachment A, the Settlement Agreement includes specific language suggesting that approximately one-third of the funds be dedicated to programs, and two-thirds be dedicated to urban parks and recreation areas. It also includes language to suggest that the youth fund, a total of \$30 million to be distributed over a ten year period, is generally to be considered seed money to support the development of programs and park facilities that will be sustainable over time.

The Stewardship Council Youth Investment Committee

By early 2004, the Stewardship Council formed the Youth Investment Committee and began work in earnest to identify how the youth funds could best be used to serve the needs of California’s young people. The Settlement Agreement was used as a starting point and guide, but the Committee agreed that original work and research was necessary to understand how best to use the available funds. Tides Foundation was brought on board in late 2004 to support these efforts, and with staff additions in early 2005 the work of the Committee was expanded.

As the reports and summaries provided in Attachment B detail, the Youth Investment Committee research has been extensive. With the support of Tides Foundation, we have conducted listening sessions and focus groups with hundreds of community leaders throughout northern and central California. We also took advantage of our geographic information system (GIS) work related to the land planning effort to develop a geographic picture of youth at risk and in need. By mapping key indicators such as youth living in poverty, youth obesity, academic achievement, and other environmental health and risk factors, we can clearly see where our efforts are most needed. Attachment B includes representative maps of this data.

Along the way, we have continued to report back to the CPUC, the Greenlining Institute, and other key stakeholders regarding our progress. They have been appreciative of our work and have continued to offer guidance. They have also clearly indicated that the specifics of program implementation are in our hands. This means that while the Settlement Agreement describes the best intentions of the authors at the time, they are looking to us to provide the research and community expertise to implement a program that will make a difference in the lives of those young Californians most in need. They have also repeatedly expressed their hope that we will develop a permanent and sustainable base for long-term contributions to outdoor programs and parks in our state.

Pilot Program Overview

After many months of research, analysis, and discussion, the Youth Investment Committee is ready to initiate the Stewardship Council's Youth Grant Making Pilot Program. We have made every effort to develop an open, inclusive, and transparent grant making program. While we operate as a private foundation, we are mindful of the public source of the funds at our disposal and the obligation to the public trust that we hold.

As our first year of grant making, this will be a "pilot" program. Our program approach includes specific vehicles to ensure we learn from our experience, and that we carefully evaluate the results of our funding efforts. We have also included funds to undertake direct staff work related to convening service providers, providing education and outreach, and developing our role as new leaders in this field in California.

We have targeted a total of \$2.6 million for our pilot program. This includes approximately \$1.5 million directed towards urban parks and \$750,000 directed to programs, with the remaining \$350,000 earmarked for staff initiatives — including convening, evaluations, education, and outreach. While we currently have substantial additional funds available for grant making (youth funds contributed will be \$9 million as of January 2, 2006), we are recommending this smaller amount for our pilot program for a number of reasons:

- As detailed in this plan, we expect to provide grants to between 40 and 100 organizations in our pilot year. We believe this is an appropriate and manageable size for us to oversee and evaluate. We also believe this is a reasonable sample size for evaluation and learning to inform our future efforts.

- Based on our understanding of total private funding currently dedicated to the field of underserved youth, environmental programs, and parks in California¹, the Stewardship Council will immediately be a philanthropic leader in this field. We hope to use this position to attract and encourage other funding partners, as well as to explore sustainable models for long-term financial support and programming.
- Sustainability is a key core value of the Stewardship Council. Over the next six to twelve months, the Council will embark on a strategic planning process to further define our financial plan to achieve sustainability. For the youth program effort, we want to keep our options open by continuing to maintain substantial funds in our investment account until our long-term plan is more clearly defined.

GOAL

The Stewardship Council will launch its giving program and improve the lives of underserved youth by providing greater access to outdoor experiences — from urban parks in the city to watersheds in the wilderness.

OBJECTIVES

Youth living in poverty are not receiving adequate resources and support to guarantee their participation in quality outdoor experiences. We hear repeatedly that *access* — including transportation, safety related issues, financial constraints, parental concerns, and other barriers to entry — is the primary deterrent to participation. In addition, many of our underserved youth come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and yet, these cultures are not proportionately represented by instructors and other role models in the field. This results in a lack of cultural relevancy and decreases participation by underserved youth and their families. In undertaking our pilot grant making program, we intend to:

- Increase the participation of underserved youth in successful outdoor urban and wilderness programs.
- Improve the cultural relevance of outdoor and park programs to better serve and reflect the diverse youth of California.
- Make the outdoors a more integral part of youth's lives to improve their general health and well-being.
- Improve the infrastructure of urban parks and open spaces to make them more accessible and welcoming.

¹ According to a report from the Tides Foundation, total private funding was less than \$3 million in 2004.

APPROACH

We will use a three-pronged funding approach to meet our objectives. First, we will provide **grant support** to outdoor programs and parks that target underserved youth. Grant proposals will be accepted for:

- resources to support day-to-day operations of programs and organizations,
- investments in larger, more substantial improvements for established organizations with demonstrated capacity to meet the objectives of the Stewardship Council, and
- collaborative ventures that advance the field of outdoor education and cultural relevance through thought leadership and innovative partnerships.

Secondly, we will **initiate and lead efforts** that will support the larger field of outdoor education. The Youth Investment Program is interested in collaborating with strategic partners, funders, experts in the field, and other stakeholders to explore the best practices to meet our objectives. The Youth Investment Program will also initiate solution-focused assessments to field-wide challenges that prevent underserved youth from experiencing the outdoors.

Lastly, the Youth Investment Program recognizes the need for ongoing **data collection and evaluation**. We are committed to learning from our experiences, as well as providing leadership in the field of park development and outdoor programming. Our work will include strategic efforts to evaluate and reflect upon our grant giving practices, the results of our efforts, and the success of our funding. We are acutely interested in the repercussions of our giving and will explore the impact of our giving on outdoor and youth programming within the context of a regional needs analysis. The Youth Investment Committee will also report on what worked and what didn't work in our inaugural year of giving, and make a list of recommendations and best practices for future giving. These findings will inform our future investments and will be shared with our partners and the greater public.

Baseline Criteria for Funding

Given what we have learned from listening sessions, focus groups, and related research, the following baseline criteria will be considered in selecting the organizations, projects, or programs that we fund. At a minimum, grantees should:

1. operate within the geographic scope of the Stewardship Council;
2. be in existence for at least one full calendar year;
3. demonstrate a commitment and capacity to collaborate with others in the field.

The Youth Investment Program is particularly interested in supporting outdoor programs that:

- implement experiences that go beyond the day-long, one-time outdoor experience;
- seek to transfer the lessons learned from outdoor experiences to school, home and community;

- recognize and address the need for adult relationships in youth's lives and seek to incorporate adult relationships as a component in its approach. This relationship may be in the form of mentors, extended kin care, foster care, families or extended family members;
- make the outdoors a more integral part of young people's lives, to improve their general health and well being;
- plan for long-range sustainability; and
- share and reflect the core values of the Stewardship Council.

APPLICATION, EVALUATION AND AWARD PROCESS

The Stewardship Council staff, with the assistance of Tides Foundation, is currently in the process of developing grant application and evaluation materials. These materials will continue to be refined and will be ready for the launch at the end of October.

Application

The grant application process will generally be run via our web site, with hard copy application materials available as needed. Responding directly to input from the field, we are designing the application process to be commensurate with the level of request — a simpler process for the smallest grants and a more complex process for the larger grants.

As shown in Table A, small and mid-size grant applications will be a one-step on-line process. The larger Partnership Grants will require a two-step application process. Organizations seeking Partnership Grants will be required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) as a first step to receiving funding. In the LOI, the organization will outline why it should be selected to receive a Partnership Grant. After review and consideration by Council staff, only select organizations will be invited to submit full proposals. The LOI ensures that organizations do not expend limited resources on a process through which they stand little chance of receiving funding.

Evaluation and Approval

The grant application review process will be one of the most difficult aspects of our work. We anticipate more highly qualified applicants than we can fund, so we must implement a demanding and discerning review process. This process will also be transparent, understandable, and equitable to gain the trust and respect of applicants.

All applications will be reviewed for completeness of application and suitability for funding. As outlined in Table B, following an initial screening, the review and approval of grant awards will be commensurate with the level of funding being awarded. Grants under \$20,000 will primarily be a staff responsibility. Mid-size grants between \$20,000 and \$50,000 will be reviewed by staff, and recommended to the Youth Investment Committee for final approval. The larger Partnership Grants, above \$50,000, will go through a more extensive process of staff and Youth Investment Committee review, and recommended to the full Board for final approval.

In all cases, we will be using an External Advisory Panel (EAP) to provide technical expertise and guidance in the ranking of competing applications. Members of the EAP will include identified leaders in the field of outdoor and youth programming that will bring a real world perspective to the application process and add transparency and fairness to our reviews. The Advisors will provide an independent recommendation to the Council and create an additional layer of credibility to our evaluation process.

The Panel will be made up of 10 volunteer members, selected through a nomination and application process. Selected panelist will be screened for any potential conflict of interest and their names will be held in confidence. Staff is currently refining this process in consultation with Tides Foundation. The EAP nomination and selection process will be ready for implementation prior to the first round of grant application deadlines.

The Stewardship Council is committed to creating a transparent grant giving process. Staff and other reviewers will keep full written records on the results of each application and will provide input to grant seekers (both successful and unsuccessful) as requested. As part of our outreach efforts, we will also provide coaching to promising applicants that may be denied funding during our pilot program. Board members will be kept in the loop with timely updates, and will also be able to access and review the records kept by our reviewers at any time.

GEOGRAPHY

The Stewardship Council covers a vast geographic area — including 48 counties with a population of over 15 million people. While we have significant financial resources at our disposal, we know the need far outweighs the supply. The question becomes: Where do we start? Where do we focus?

To a degree, the grant applicants will tell us where the needs are greatest. We expect to implement a comprehensive outreach program to encourage the widest possible audience of grant applicants. But in some areas of California, we are aware that local community efforts may not be well-organized, or that the capacity of organizations to apply for grants may not be as developed. We also know that some of these very same areas are devoid of parks and safe outdoor areas for youth. For those areas, we expect to do significant staff outreach to convene potential partners and support developing community leaders.

Our research to date — including the GIS socioeconomic and park location data, the focus groups, and the listening sessions — clearly tells us that youth living in poverty in highly dense urban areas are at greater risk for behaviors that will make it difficult for them to achieve positive outcomes as young adults. If you combine other factors, including childhood obesity and environmental risk factors, the challenge is compounded. (See maps in Attachment B for sample profiles.)

As a result, we expect to predominately focus our pilot grant making in the major urban areas of the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as urban communities along the Highway 99 corridor from Stockton to Bakersfield. While the focus on certain Bay Area communities is predictable, the level of youth identified as “at risk” in the Central Valley (Highway 99 corridor) is somewhat less familiar. It is clear, however, that the patterns of youth at risk in the most disadvantaged of Bay Area communities is now mirrored in the growing urban areas of the Central Valley.

Urban density and youth living in poverty, however, does not explain all of our findings. As many of our listening session participants let us know, anomalies do exist. There are rural areas with low population density where youth have many of the same or similar risk factors as their urban counterparts. Our pilot grant program will have a certain focus on urban youth needs, but will also strive to incorporate efforts to provide appropriate resources for compelling park and youth program requests from rural areas. We will also be very interested in urban/rural partnerships that might serve to benefit both urban and rural youth in need.

BUDGET

Table A shows our financial targets for our pilot year of grant making. We propose a total budget of \$2.6 million with the following allocation:

Table A

		TOTAL	SMALL	MID-SIZE	PARTNERSHIP
		AVAILABLE	GRANTS	GRANTS	GRANTS
AVAILABLE FOR INVESTMENT			(20%)	(30%)	(50%)
	<i>Park Grants</i>	\$1,500,000	\$300,000	\$450,000	\$750,000
	<i>Program Grants</i>	\$750,000	\$150,000	\$225,000	\$375,000
	<i>Initiatives & Evaluation</i>	\$350,000	-	-	-

Approximately two-thirds of the grant funds are dedicated to parks, and one-third to programs. The budget provided above also includes \$350,000 for staff (and consultant) work to directly oversee new initiatives that will support our objectives. Specific activities conducted by staff may include education, convening, mentoring, and field-related analysis. These funds will also be used to support our evaluation efforts, including evaluation of grantee progress and consultation on how they might improve or enhance their efforts.

Our findings show that potential applicants have differing needs and capabilities to implement grants. To address these differences, our pilot grants program has three tiers of giving. As detailed in Table B, smaller (under \$20,000) and mid-size grants (\$20,000-\$50,000) will be distributed through a traditional grant making process. Larger grants (over \$50,000) will be more partnership-focused and exploratory in nature. The scale of both the proposal and selection processes at each tier will be commensurate with the size of the investment. In all cases, Stewardship Council staff will oversee the grant making process and provide evaluation and follow-up to ensure investments are producing the results we want to support.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Under this pilot plan, the Stewardship Council will award its first grants in February 2006. Over the next several months, staff will be working diligently to develop detailed procedures to manage the grant program, including the preparation of grant agreements, reporting requirements, and financial tracking and reporting. We will be particularly attentive to monitoring of our grant recipients, not only to ensure successful program implementation, but to establish an environment of continuous learning within our own organization and between grantees.

Grant Agreement

Staff is working with legal counsel to develop and review the documents necessary to distribute Stewardship Council funds. No grants will be disbursed without a signed grant agreement and the submittal of required legal documents.

Financial Accounting

The Stewardship Council staff will track and account for each award. Staff will create tracking and reporting systems to ensure that our giving meets state and federal tax-reporting requirements and that our grantees operate within the values of the Stewardship Council. Grantees will provide full accounting of their expenditures and justify any changes in their grant agreement and budget. The staff Financial Manager will also provide the Youth Investment Committee and the Board full financial updates on the status of the grants program and its grantees.

Reporting

In addition to financial reporting, all awards will require regular updates and reports. All grantees will be expected to evaluate their program outcomes; larger grants will undergo more extensive assessments. Partnership Grants will work with evaluation experts to customize an evaluation process that will measure the success of the programs and their partnership with the Stewardship Council. In addition, staff will conduct site visits to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of their organizations.

Table B

First Year Grant Distribution Target Profile and Process Overview

ELEMENT		GRANT PROGRAMS		
		SMALL	MID-SIZE	PARTNERSHIP
Budget	Parks	\$300,000	\$450,000	\$750,000
	Program	\$150,000	\$225,000	\$375,000
Total		\$450,000 (23-50 grants)	\$675,000 (13-33 grants)	\$1,125,000 (8-15 grants)
Range		Under \$20,000	\$20,001-\$50,000	Over \$50,000
Solicitation		Open	Open	Open LOI during first year; potentially by invitation in Year 2
Proposal		Short on-line	Full RFP online	LOI→RFP by invitation
Review		Staff External Advisory Panel	Staff External Advisory Panel	Staff External Advisory Panel Board
Approval		Staff	YIC	YIC→Board
Frequency (Grants disbursed)		2x/yr: Feb and Aug	1x/yr: March-April	1x/yr: May-June
Evaluation		Simple online template	Cluster approach; contracted	Contracted both for front and back end
Multi-year		No	One year with option to re- grant based on progress	One year with option to re- grant based on progress
Capacity		Access to YIP common tools		