



Upstate Master Naturalist Association (UMNA)

Description of Community Grants Program and Guidelines for Applicants

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Upstate Master Naturalist Association, in accordance with the South Carolina Master Naturalist Program coordinated by Clemson University, is to promote awareness and citizen stewardship for South Carolina's natural resources through science-based education and community service. The mission of the UMNA Community Grants Program is to utilize funds designated by the Association to help accomplish this purpose.

GOALS OF THE COMMUNITY GRANTS COMMITTEE

The committee shall recommend to the UMNA Board funding that initiates, expands or enhances programs that

- UMNA, as an organization, values,
- Meet a specific or defined need to enhance UMNA's activities,
- Develop ongoing programmatic elements where the expenditure for objects/purchases has recurrent or long-term program use,
- Further the values of the Master Naturalist Program, and
- Provide opportunities for UMNA members.

VALUES OF UMNA

Engage citizen volunteers through science-based training and place-based experiential environmental education.

- Promote awareness of natural resources by teaching the geological, floral, and/or faunal components of ecosystems.
- Foster stewardship of natural systems by connecting ecology and the impacts of humans on the landscape.
- Encourage community service to protect, preserve, and/or restore biodiversity through volunteer opportunities.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS MAY INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Teachers, staff, or volunteers with public schools and other educational institutions
- Individuals or organizations who have 501(c)(3) status
- Community and/or neighborhood groups/homeowners associations

- Scout troops
- Established community organizations
- Upstate Master Naturalist members

GRANT AWARDS

- The number and monetary value of grant awards may vary annually according to the availability of funds and the number of qualified grant requests selected for funding
- The minimum grant amount which may be awarded is \$100
- During any year, UMNA retains the option of not awarding any grants in the event of a lack of association funds or the absence of qualified grant requests

EVALUATION PROCESS

Using the following categories, The UMNA Community Grants Committee will review and evaluate all grant applications in view of the project's ability to reflect the values of UMNA and the Grants Program outlined above.

- Promotion of UMNA Values
- Merit of the need addressed by the project
- Identification of stakeholders involved in project
- Impact of Project
- Quality of financial plan for project
- Determination of project's success

During the evaluation process, the Community Grants Committee may interview the applicant and/or visit the site of the proposed project.

GUIDELINES FOR GRANT APPLICANTS

The Application Deadline is June 1, 2026 at 5:00 pm. Applications will be neither accepted nor revised after the application deadline. Grants should be submitted by email to Polly Powell, Chair of Community Grants Committee, at pollypowellpp@gmail.com. Questions concerning the grant may also be submitted to Polly Powell.

The project must benefit the upstate area of South Carolina and further the values of UMNA. The upstate is considered to include Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg Counties. Projects located in counties other than those listed will be considered.

A grant application may be for a project that is a new initiative or a continuation of an established program. It is expected the grant award will cover the project's needs within the timetable of the grant year. If a project requires more than one year to complete or more funding is needed, a separate Grant Application must be completed each year.

Grant funds may be used to purchase equipment and materials necessary for the implementation of a well-planned program or project integrated with other curriculum materials and activities.

No personnel salaries or personnel benefits may be paid by grant funds.

A mid-cycle narrative and financial report are due to the Community Grants Committee Chair by January 1, 2027. These reports should detail progress on the project's activities and outcomes and compare expenditures versus budget projections. A final narrative and financial report that details the project and the financial expenditures are due to the Chair of the Grants Committee on June 30, 2027. (The Community Grants Committee Chair is Polly Powell, pollypowellpp@gmail.com.)

A brief presentation about the project is to be given at the July, 2027 general meeting of UMNA.

In keeping with UMNA's relationship with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service, any project receiving grant funds must welcome people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. A statement of compliance with this policy must accompany the grant application.

In keeping with UMNA's status as a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, any project receiving grant funds must refrain from disseminating propaganda, attempting to influence legislation or participating/intervening in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. A statement of compliance to this requirement must accompany the grant application.

The applicant must submit a copy of the sponsoring organization's tax-exempt letter from the Internal Revenue Service.

TIMELINE FOR GRANT APPLICATION AND SELECTION

MARCH 1, 2026

Announcement of annual UMNA Grants Program by the Chair of the Grants Committee. Application and guidelines will be posted by the Chair on the UMNA website, other social media sites and in the UMNA newsletter. Notification will also be sent to other related organizations, such as the SC Native Plant Society, SC Environmental Education Association, and public schools and libraries.

JUNE 1, 2026 (5:00pm)

Submission deadline for Grants applications

Confirmation of receipt will be sent to the applicant by the Grants Committee Chair.

JUNE 2 – 20, 2026

A member of the Grants Committee will conduct interviews and site visits, as needed. The Community Grants Committee will evaluate the grant applications and recommend the grants to be funded to the Board.

JULY 1, 2026

The Chair of the Community Grants Committee presents the slate of grant recipients to the UMNA board for final approval. Once approval has been given, the Chair of the Grants Committee will notify the recipients of their award. The applicants of grants that were not approved will also be notified.

JULY GENERAL MEETING (FOURTH THURSDAY OF JULY), 2026

The Chair of the Grants Committee will announce the grants to be funded and present a check to the project leader, who will give a brief description of the project. The project leaders for the previous grant cycle will also share a brief summary of the project and whether or not the project met its goals.

JANUARY 15, 2027

Mid-cycle progress narrative and financial report are due to the Chair of the Grants Committee.

JUNE 30, 2027

Final narrative and financial report are due to the chair of the Grants Committee.

The Chair of the Community Grants Committee is Polly Powell, pollypowellpp@gmail.com.

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