

The ComEd Green Region Program

2020 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Purpose

The Chicago metropolitan region is rich in diversity – both in our landscapes that include native prairies, wetlands, woodlands, and a vast network of streams and rivers, as well as in the 10 million people who call this region home.

Recognizing that open space in our communities is crucial to the quality of our lives, ComEd has committed to supporting municipalities, townships, counties, park districts, conservation districts and forest preserve districts in northern Illinois with their ongoing efforts to protect or improve public spaces for the benefit of all. ComEd designed the [ComEd Green Region Program](#) to assist local communities in these efforts by providing funding for some expenses towards these goals.

Underlying the program is ComEd’s endorsement of deliberate planning for open space protection as a means to encourage the wisest use of scarce resources.

Using this Document

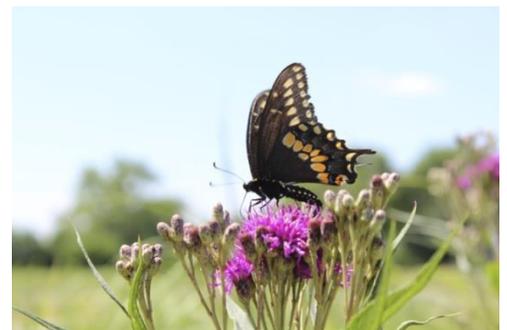
These Program Guidelines, along with the [Program FAQ](#) available at www.openlands.org/greenregion, are intended to be a comprehensive resource for both prospective and current grantees in the ComEd Green Region Program. It is the responsibility of all applicants and grantees to review and utilize the information in the Program Guidelines and the FAQ. Please reach out to the Green Region Program Administrator at greenregion@openlands.org if you have any questions.

Key Dates

Grant Cycle Opens: January 17, 2020, 9:00 a.m. Central Time
Application Deadline: March 13, 2020, 5:00 p.m. Central Time

2020 Special Program Focus: Pollinator Conservation

Pollinator species – such as bees, butterflies, bats, and birds – play important roles in the reproduction of flowering plants, including crops that people depend on for food. In Illinois alone, more than 2,500 species of bees, butterflies, and moths contribute to this vital ecological service. Yet over the past few decades, threats posed by habitat loss, disease, parasites, climate change, and environmental contaminants have all contributed to the global decline of many pollinator species.



Tiger swallowtail butterfly, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Joliet. Photo courtesy of Openlands.

Additionally, as we think about climate change as it relates to natural landscapes, the Green Region grant program encourages applicants to think of the benefit of their project with a climate lens, and how it will aid in addressing nature-based solutions for climate change. The Chicago region has an opportunity to pioneer solutions based in nature that can dramatically reduce our carbon footprint and positively impact the climate. We have resilient landscapes and the knowledge, but we need visions, imagination, and leadership to address this crisis not just today, but over the next 10 years and through the century.

ComEd recognizes the importance of the many programs, partnerships, and individual actions that residents of Illinois are taking to conserve pollinators, support their habitat, and protect pollinator-dependent plants and food crops. As a response to this growing awareness, in 2017 ComEd piloted the first ever special program focus on pollinator conservation in the Green Region Program. The response was overwhelmingly positive and many exciting new pollinator projects were funded.

Building upon this exciting momentum, ComEd has decided to designate 2020 as the fourth year for a special focus on pollinator conservation.

Special consideration will be given to project applications that show a demonstrable benefit for pollinator conservation. Depending on the volume of applications received, this may be accomplished by designating a special pool of funding within the 2020 grant cycle that will be applied specifically to pollinator-focused projects. The Green Region Program Administrator and ComEd reserve the right to modify this approach.

Examples of demonstrable benefits for pollinator conservation include, but are not limited to, projects that 1) establish or enhance pollinator habitat, and 2) incorporate interpretation components, such as educational site signage, that inform the public about pollinators and pollinator conservation.



Monarch butterfly, Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, McHenry County. Photo courtesy of DJ Glisson.

Additionally, applicants are encouraged to think about how pollinators in their project are nature-based solutions to climate change. The Chicago region has an opportunity to pioneer solutions based in nature that can dramatically reduce our carbon footprint and positively impact the climate. We have resilient landscapes and the knowledge to address this crisis, but we need visions, imagination, and leadership to take impactful action-not just today, but over the next 10 years and through the century.

Please note that 2020 grant cycle applications are not required to have a pollinator focus. However, all applicants are encouraged to consider how pollinators might be supported by their particular project. Eligible applications for projects that meet regular Program Guidelines will still be accepted for consideration, regardless of whether they focus on pollinator conservation.

For more information, visit www.openlands.org/planning/greenregion/focus.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants are municipalities, townships, counties, park districts, conservation districts and forest preserve districts within ComEd's service territory in the following counties: Boone, Bureau,

Carroll, Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Ford, Grundy, Henry, Iroquois, Jo Daviess, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, LaSalle, Lee, Livingston, Marshall, McHenry, Ogle, Rock Island, Stephenson, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago and Woodford.

Before applying, please check ComEd's [service territory map](#) to ensure your proposed project is located within the service territory boundaries and that you are a ComEd customer. ComEd is unable to fund projects that are located outside the service territory boundaries. For more information, please contact greenregion@openlands.org.

Past grantees are eligible to reapply only if they have fully completed their grant requirements, including, but not limited to, submitting their final grant report with all required attachments (resolution, expense reports, etc.). Preference will be given to projects that have not previously received funding.

****Please note that though past grantees are eligible to reapply, new project applications cannot be a continuation of a previously funded project. For example: An applicant received funding in 2015 for the planned Phase 1 ecological restoration of a certain area in a public park. Upon completing this work and submitting their final grant report, this applicant cannot submit a new grant application for the 2020 grant cycle to fund a related Phase 2 ecological restoration project in a different area of the same park.**

Non-profit organizations and all other units of government not listed above (such as schools, school districts, and housing authorities) are not eligible to apply, but are strongly encouraged to partner on joint projects with an Eligible Applicant. Please see the [Program FAQ](#) for answers to some common questions about eligibility.

Eligible Applicants must be in good standing with ComEd related to provision of utilities.

Eligible Activities

Priority is given to projects that demonstrate a) significant impact on the surrounding community by increasing the public's access to open space and encouraging their engagement with the project; and b) active partnerships within the community. Additional preference may be given to projects that support a special focus area that has been designated for the particular grant cycle. Eligible activities include:

- **Developing or updating open space plans.** Expenses may include consultant fees, costs associated with obtaining public input (hall rental, advertising, etc.), and publication costs.
- **Improving applicant-owned open spaces, including planning costs.** Funds may be used for habitat improvements such as installing or improving natural areas such as prairies, woodlands, wetlands, associated buffers, and other native natural communities. **The plans also may include the installation of capital improvements for passive recreation**, such as trails, boardwalks, kiosks, and observation platforms. Parking lots are not eligible for funding. Expenses related to capital improvements may include consultant fees for landscape architects, park designers, botanists, restoration specialists, engineers, etc.

- **Acquisition (by purchase or donation) of parcels of land to be used for open space.** Expenses may include land cost, legal or consultant fees, survey, environmental assessments, appraisals, etc.
- **Acquisition (by purchase or donation) of conservation easements** (also known as “development rights”) on parcels of land to be used for open space. Eligible expenses include legal costs to purchase development rights, consultant fees, survey, environmental assessments, appraisals, etc.

Ineligible Expenses

- **Staff time and ancillary expenses for applicant’s employees or interns, for any aspect of the project.** To avoid your application being marked as ineligible, please clearly describe any contractor expenses involved in your project, both in the application form and your budget attachments, to show these are not staff or intern expenses.
- **Relocation of owner or tenant, condemnation, or building repair or demolition.**
- **Expenses not directly related to the use of land for open space and/or passive recreation.** For example, construction of a parking lot or a public works garage on municipal parkland would not be considered an eligible expense.
- **Active recreation amenities** such as ball fields, golf courses, tennis courts, playgrounds, swimming pools, etc.
- **Any activities that are required in connection with regulatory compliance.**

Grant Amounts and Timing

- Grants will be for amounts up to \$10,000 and may be used to pay for **up to 50% of eligible activities.**
- The grantee must have either secured a source of matching funds or have submitted a pending application for such funds. **Matching funds must be in cash. In-kind services cannot be submitted as match.** The status of all matching funds, whether secured or pending, must be indicated on both the application form and in the required budget attachments.
- Grants will be awarded once per year.
- The online application system will close at 5:00 p.m. Central Time on March 13, 2020. **Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.**
- Applicants awarded funds for their projects will be expected to fully expend the grant award within 18 months of its receipt. A final grant report is due within two months of the full expenditure of funds. Please see the “Grant Conditions” section below and the [Program FAQ](#) for important information about final grant report requirements.

- Retroactive reimbursement for costs accrued between the application deadline and the grant award may be allowed on a case-by-case basis. All requests for such reimbursement must be made in writing to greenregion@openlands.org. It is not guaranteed that such requests will be approved.
- Awards are made based on the project presented in the application. Any major changes to the scope of a project must first be approved by ComEd to avoid forfeiting the grant award. Contact greenregion@openlands.org if you anticipate there will be a major change to your project scope.

Grant Conditions

- The facility or property where the project is located must be open to the general public on a regular basis.
- If grant funds are used for acquisition of an interest in land, the applicant must demonstrate that a restrictive covenant, deed restriction, or similar instrument will be recorded against the property, stating that the property must be held in perpetuity for open space purposes. If the property is diverted from open space use, the grant recipient shall return to ComEd all Green Region funds received.
- **Within two months of the final expenditure of grant funds, the applicant must submit a final report summarizing the work accomplished with the grant.** Accompanying the final report will be photographs or other documentation of the project.. ****Please note: The resolution must be completed and approved BEFORE the project begins and submitted along with the other grant materials.** A resolution template can be found on the Grantee Resources page located at <https://openlands.org/planning/greenregion/resources/>.

The report must also include an explanation of accounting justifying the use of the grant funds, such as documentation of invoices, cancelled checks, recorded deeds, settlement sheets, etc., as necessary for the particular project.

Failure to submit a final grant report with all of the required attachments by the posted deadline may prohibit applicants from participating in any future grant cycles. If you have questions about the final grant report and its attachments, please reach out to the Green Region Program Administrator at greenregion@openlands.org.

- During the grant period, award recipients will agree to participate in press conferences or events, to be quoted in ComEd literature describing the ComEd Green Region Program, and to identify ComEd as a funder in any materials produced to explain or promote the funded project.
- Recipients will agree to acknowledge the use of ComEd Green Region Program funds for the project, either through signage for capital projects or written acknowledgement in documents. Contact greenregion@openlands.org for more information about signage.

Applications

Applications are accepted on-line via <http://openlands.submittable.com/submit>. You will be asked to create a free profile to begin the submission process. For additional information regarding the submission process, please refer to the [Program FAQ](#). Upon submission of your application, you will receive a receipt confirming that your application has been successfully submitted.

The online application is the primary method for submitting an application. If for some reason you are unable to submit your application online, please contact the Green Region Program Administrator at greenregion@openlands.org.

Advisory Committee

Completed and eligible applications will be reviewed and ranked by a geographically-diverse advisory committee composed of county government officials and members of the region's land conservation community. Final decisions on award recipients and amounts are at the discretion of ComEd.

Time for Decisions

Decisions on grant awards will be announced between late June and early July 2020. All communication regarding your application, including notification of awards and distribution of grant funds, will be directed to the contact person listed on your application.

To avoid delays in receiving your notification of award or other important correspondence, **please contact greenregion@openlands.org right away if your contact person, address, or other important information changes after you submit your application.**

Administrator

The administrator of the ComEd Green Region Program is Openlands, a non-profit conservation land trust protecting open space in the greater Chicago region for over 55 years.

We encourage you to review all available information for the 2020 grant cycle at www.openlands.org/greenregion before starting your application. If you are unable to locate an answer to your question on the website, please reach out to the Green Region Administrator at greenregion@openlands.org.