

# 2024 Sustainable Communities Grants Cycle QuickStart Guide

The Sustainable Communities Grant Program is an important resource benefit available to South Jersey municipalities located within Atlantic City Electric service territory and participating in the Sustainable Jersey program. Please consider taking advantage of this exclusive funding cycle in order to support your municipality's journey to becoming more sustainable. This QuickStart guide provides a basic overview of the 2024 Sustainable Communities Grant Cycle. More detailed cycle information can be found in the [Application Information Packet](#). Apply [here](#).

**APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY 11:59PM ON JUNE 27, 2024**

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# Eligibility Rules

## Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for a grant in this cycle, the following requirements must be met:

- New Jersey municipality located in [ACE service territory](#).
- **Registered or certified in the Sustainable Jersey Program**. Check your municipality's Sustainable Jersey program status [here](#).
- No open Sustainable Communities grants\*

## Sustainable Jersey Status

Municipalities must be registered **or certified in the Sustainable Jersey program** to be eligible to apply. Use the Participating Municipalities and Approved Actions map [here](#) to check your municipality's current program status. Find the name of your municipality using the "List View". **If the municipality is listed, it is currently participating in the program.**

If your municipality is not listed, that means it is not registered and must do so in order to be eligible to apply for grants (see instructions on how to register [here](#)). Questions on how to register can be directed to Maureen Jones at 609-771-2398 or at [info@sustainablejersey.com](mailto:info@sustainablejersey.com).

## Multiple Applications

**A municipality is eligible to apply for one** Environmental Stewardship Grant **and/or** one Resiliency Grant. However, only one grant will be awarded to a municipality. If you plan on applying for both a Resiliency and an Environmental Stewardship grant, you will need to submit two separate grant applications.

## Previous Grant Recipients

**\*Previous recipients of Sustainable Communities grants can apply for another grant in the current cycle even if their project is not yet complete.** As long as the project is completed by the **end of July**, the grant application will still be considered. Grants cannot be awarded to municipalities that are still working on previous Sustainable Communities grant projects. For more information about closing out a grant or reporting requirements, click [here](#).

**Other Sustainable Jersey grant awards and participation in technical assistance programs will not affect a municipality's eligibility to apply for a Sustainable Communities grant.** For example, your municipality can still apply for a Sustainable Communities grant even if it has an open Sustainable Jersey grant funded by the PSEG Foundation.

## Eligible Grant Projects and Expenses

The Environmental Stewardship Grants are intended to help municipalities plan for, protect and improve public spaces such as local parks, natural areas, and recreation resources. In addition, grants can be used in combination with other funding sources to cover a portion of the expenses associated with developing and/or supporting their open space programs not otherwise covered by state or county programs. Five (5) \$5,000 grants will be awarded.

The Resiliency Grants will be awarded for projects that enhance a municipality's capacity to prevent and respond to catastrophic events and emergencies. Two (2) \$5,000 grants will be awarded.

Matching or in-kind contributions (including volunteer time) are encouraged, but not required. Funding can be passed through to a non-profit, partner organization, or contractor, but the municipality must be the applicant and will be responsible for the reporting requirements. Checks will be made payable to the municipality and sent to its fiscal agent.

## Environmental Stewardship Grants

### Eligible activities:

- Developing or updating open space plans
- Improving applicant-owned open spaces such as meadows, woodlands, and riparian buffers or capital improvements for passive recreation such as installing trails, boardwalks, informational kiosks, and observation platforms
- Acquisition of parcels of land to be used for open space or conservation easements

### Eligible expenses:

- Professional service fees
- Costs associated with obtaining public input on plans such as hall rental, advertising, printing
- Materials and equipment
- Expenses that support the acquisition (by purchase or donation) of open space or conservation easements such as land cost, development rights, legal or consultant fees, surveying, environmental assessments, appraisals, etc.

## Resiliency Grants

### Eligible activities:

- Implementation of strategies to minimize the impact of severe weather events, natural disasters or other emergencies impacting the environment
- Emergency operations planning, training, and community outreach
- Purchase of supplies and equipment needed to respond to emergencies including energy storage and stationary or mobile solar

### Eligible expenses:

- Professional service fees
- Costs associated with implementing public outreach and education efforts
- Materials and equipment

## Ineligible Expenses

- Staff time for municipal or authority employees for any aspect of these projects and basic operating expenses are not eligible expenses.
- Reimbursement for a project underway or already completed. Efforts to be funded by the grant should not start until **after the grant announcement event** that will occur the last week of September. Planning steps can occur beforehand.



## Need Help Thinking of a Project?

View projects that have been funded through previous grant cycles via the [Previous Recipients and Projects page](#) on the Sustainable Jersey website.

## Application Sections

The [online Sustainable Communities grant application](#) is comprised of two sections:

1. Municipal Grant Proposal
2. Grant Authorization Documentation

Instructions on how to complete each section of the grant application are available in the [Application Information Packet](#) but a brief overview is available below. The first section must be completed by **June 27, 2024**. The second section does not need to be completed until **July 31, 2024**.

### Section One: Grant Proposal

Complete this section requesting information about your municipality, its status in the Sustainable Jersey program, its Sustainable Communities grant history, the grant amount/type you are applying for, and your proposed project. The main proposal sections include:

- Project Title and Brief Project Description
- Action Plan and Timeline
- Project Team
- Community Engagement
- Project Impact and Evaluation
- Budget Narrative and Detailed Project Budget
- Optional Information

Templates are available for use for some sections:

[Action Plan & Timeline](#)

[Project Budget](#)

Google Doc versions of the templates are available in the [Application Information Packet](#).

### Section Two: Grant Authorization Documentation

After submitting the completed grant application, you will gain access to the Grant Authorization Documentation stage that has a longer deadline than the grant application. Please make sure that you are submitting the correct resolution. **The grant authorization resolution is not the same as the resolution required to register in Sustainable Jersey or the resolution required to establish a green team.** A municipality must submit a signed and dated Board Resolution supporting the grant application.

[Sample Board Resolution](#)

Google Doc version of the template is available in the [Application Information Packet](#).

You are not required to use the template as long as the grant authorization document names the **specific grants cycle** (2024 Sustainable Communities Grant Program funded by Atlantic City Electric), **the requested funding type and amount** (Environmental Stewardship or Resiliency grant; \$5,000), and the **name of the applicant** (your municipality's name).

It is recommended that the municipality begins the process of obtaining the resolution as soon as possible to ensure it is adopted by the deadline.

## Selection Process

A municipality can apply for one Environmental Stewardship Grant AND/OR one Resiliency Grant. However, only one grant will be awarded to a municipality. The selection committee will evaluate applications that meet the grant eligibility requirements based on criteria listed below. Sustainable Jersey reserves the right to reallocate the funding based on the quality and quantity of grant applications received. The selection committee will also consider the needs of the community and the distribution of grants throughout the ACE service territory.

## Proposal Evaluation

Below is the criteria that will be used to evaluate the grant proposals. Download a PDF of the criteria [here](#).

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<b>Project Description</b>  15 Points	The description concisely summarizes the specific project to be funded by the grant award
<b>Project Team Members</b>  10 Points	The designated project team appears qualified to undertake the proposed project. The project team includes representation from municipal and community stakeholder groups that will be involved in or impacted by the implementation of the proposed project.
<b>Action Plan &amp; Timeline</b>  15 Points	The proposed project action plan addresses the steps needed to successfully complete the project. Target completion dates are realistic and will enable the project to be completed within the 12-month performance period. <b>Events where the grant will be promoted, such as a ribbon cutting ceremony, and materials will be distributed are identified.</b>

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**Community Engagement**

10 Points

The proposed project will capitalize on collaborations between community stakeholders including representatives from the schools, municipal and county agencies, civic or community-based organizations, non-profits, professional organizations and local businesses. Details on how the project will be shared with the community are included.

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**Project Impact & Evaluation**

25 Points

The proposed project will address the community need identified in the proposal. The project will preserve, protect, and improve public spaces designated as open space or used for passive recreation or contribute to a more resilient community. The project will augment existing green team efforts and contribute toward making progress in the Sustainable Jersey Certification Program.

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**Budget**

25 Points

The Budget Narrative clearly summarizes project expenses and identifies all the sources of funding needed to complete the proposed project, including in-kind contributions such as volunteer hours. The project leverages no or low cost resources to cost-effectively complete the proposed project. It is clear that all additional funding besides the grant is in-hand or committed. The detailed project budget is consistent with the Budget Narrative and clearly identifies the eligible project expenses that will be billed to the grant. The budget is realistic, costs are justified and resource contributions, including in-kind, have a reasonable value.