

Instructions

QUINNIPIAC RIVER FUND GRANT AWARD - FINAL REPORT QUESTIONS

This form is to be completed by all nonprofit organizations that received a grant through the Quinnipiac River Fund.

Grant Details

Grant Details

Organization Name

Gather New Haven

Grant Description

to support the protection and care of the Quinnipiac Meadows/Fargeorge Nature Preserve, as well as to support enhancements to the Growing Entrepreneurs program, Schooner scholarships, expansion of environmental programming and land acquisition.

Total Grant Amount

18,000.00

Report Questions

1. List the specific objectives/outcomes of the project and tell how they were met during the grant period. Also, provide an update on any special conditions of the grant (if applicable).

1, Infrastructure maintenance and habitat conservation through public and business-oriented workday programs. At least 10 work days involving an average of 10 people each, for 100 volunteer work days.

We held 3 community stewardship days to mitigate invasive species in order to protect the canopy. These stewardship work days allowed us to partner with other local organizations such as Urban Resources Initiative, New Haven

Garden Club, local schools, and individual volunteers. While we were unable to host as many stewardship days as intended, we engaged over 40 people for 80 volunteer hours of infrastructure maintenance. Importantly, volunteers participating in the stewardship days included neighbors of the Quinnipiac Meadows and Hemingway Creek Nature Preserves.

2. An environmental stewardship pipeline via adding an ecological restoration track to our Growing Entrepreneurs program for teens. Work of 3 Growing Entrepreneurs (GEs) over the course of the year totalling over 500 hours worked in the preserve.

Funding from the Quinnipiac River fund enabled us to expand opportunities for youth to engage in environmental stewardship. The 3 Growing Entrepreneurs in the Ecological Restoration Track contributed to our work on the preserves. GEs from other tracks also joined their peers at Quinnipiac Meadows and Hemingway Creek, resulting in an additional 100 hours of work, contributing to the health of the River and preserves, and ensuring that visitors have an enjoyable experience.

3. Schooner scholarships for children in low-income families to further our equity efforts. At least 12 scholarships (full or partial) will be made available through the grant funds.

We were able to recruit and award 12 families to attend Schooner through the scholarship award. program.

4. Expanded public education programming to broaden interest in the ecology, history, and value of the watershed. Production of at least 6 educational events over the year involving attendance of over 120 participants.

In 2023 we hosted 5 educational events at Quinnipiac Meadows and Hemingway Creek, with a total of 95 people attending our events.

5. Jumpstart negotiations to acquire the adjoining 26 acre parcel, noted as an important locally rare and important salt marsh by the National Audubon Society. Advancing the acquisition process toward closing.

Important context is that there were extensive negotiations with the owner of the parcel in question, Blakeslee, Arpiea, and Chapman, a construction company, in 2018 which resulted in a near-final agreement to sell the parcel to the New Haven Land Trust for \$80,000. Grant funding was in place to complete the transaction. Negotiations stalled over language in the sales agreement related to the future uses of the site by the Land Trust and the issue of responsibility for any clean-up of toxic material that might be required in the future.

A representative of Gather New Haven, Jim Farnam, a volunteer and former board member and interim Executive Director in 2020, did review the files related to this negotiation and reached out to the representative of the owner of the parcel in question, David Chapman, to re-initiate discussions about purchasing the parcel in question. Over the course of multiple conversations, Mr. Chapman expressed a willingness to pursue the sale and invited Gather New Haven to re-engage in a process to resolve the outstanding issues from 2018. The pro-bono attorney from Philadelphia who had represented the Land Trust in 2018 was reengaged and assisted in updating our understanding of the 2018 work. However, with the many organizational issues facing Gather

New Haven in 2023 and without a permanent Executive Director in place, the project was again put on hold pending the appointment of an Executive Director. This acquisition remains a priority of Gather New Haven and is now teed up to proceed with a willing owner of the subject parcel once we are ready to proceed.

On February 29th, 2024 the board appointed Jonathon Savage, our Farm Manager for the last three years and a New Haven native, to serve as Executive Director. Jonathan brings his passion for the mission of Gather New Haven and his deep community connections to the task of continuing the consolidation of the 2020 merger that created Gather New Haven and the work of integrating Gather's programs around the theme of "Neighbors and Nature Thriving Together." Jonathan will lead efforts to engage the whole community in Gather's programming and increase our impact on the health and well-being of our residents. He will work with the board to advance this important acquisition as soon as other organizational priorities are addressed.

2. Please share your successes, challenges and any lessons learned through the implementation of your project. Were there any unintended consequences or lessons learned that may affect how you operate your program moving forward?

Successes:

Our public educational events, including field trips, provided us the opportunity to reach 95 New Haveners with education about the Quinnipiac River's natural history, projected impacts due to climate change, and learning about the native and invasive species along the river. Hosting a diverse group of volunteers during our stewardship days was a great success this year. Volunteers also learned about the theoretical and actual impacts of the surrounding residential areas on the nature preserve, which includes the positive impacts of consistent stewardship and regular visits to Quinnipiac Meadows.

Through our outreach efforts we were able to provide 12 families with full Schooner Camp scholarships. Without these scholarships, many families would not have the opportunity to engage in outdoor educational experiences and the STEM education offerings we provide.

Challenges:

Our new Environmental Educator, Zion Jones, joined us in early 2023, around the time of this award. Now that Zion has been with us for a nearly full-year of programming, we anticipate better being able to meet our environmental education and engagement goals.

The rate of pay we currently offer Growing Entrepreneurs is a recruitment challenge to increased enrollment in that program. It has become clear to staff that in order to expand the enrollment, and keep students engaged, a higher pay rate, or opportunities for additional work hours is needed.

3. What are the opportunities and needs of your organization as it continues to move forward with its work to positively impact the Quinnipiac River?

Opportunities and needs going forward include:

1. Make the preserves more engaging by offering a consistent schedule of activities and opportunities for Preserve visitors, including providing passive education opportunities.
2. Seek funding for preserve management plans, and ecosystem assessments, and engage with local researchers and foresters to complete this work.
3. Engage residents in the Quinnipiac Avenue neighborhood in a Friends of the Fargeorge Preserve group to engage more area residents in active stewardship of the preserve,
4. Expand the Growing Entrepreneur cohort from 10 to 15-20 youth, and supply the Ecological Restoration Track with their own supplies to complete restoration work. This would allow more consistent, more focused, and more productive work on the Quinnipiac Meadow Preserve.
5. Be more intentional in our Schooner Camp scholarship outreach efforts, especially in New Haven's under-resourced neighborhoods, to expand the number of low-income attendees of Schooner summer camp.

Attachments

Financial information (required): Please provide a detailed accounting of how the specific grant dollars were spent based on the budget submitted in the grant application.

Detailed Accounting

2023 Financial Information- Gather Q RIVER .xlsx

Pictures (optional): Please attach one to three pictures in JPEG format, in the highest resolution possible, of activities that have occurred throughout the grant period as a result of grant funding. By providing pictures, your organization is consenting to unlimited use of the pictures by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and/or the Valley Community Foundation in publications in print and online (including www.thequinnipiacriver.com).

Please include a description of each photo and, when known, the photographer to be credited.

Picture 1

QRiver Field Trip.jpg

Description and Photo Credit

New Haven students engage with Environmental Educator Zion Jones during a Field Trip to the Quinnipiac Meadows Nature Preserve. Photo credit: Gather New Haven

Picture 2

20230830_170158.jpg

Description and Photo Credit

Growing Entrepreneurs participating in the ecological restoration track ready to start their work day. Photo Credit: Gather New Haven

Picture 3

Schooner.jpg

Description and Photo Credit

Schooner Campers sailing on New Haven's waterfront. Photo credit: Gather New Haven