

Natural Areas Education and Citizen Science Monitoring Program

Project Definition

Saskatoon's Green Infrastructure Strategy Implementation Plan and program is under development. It will include a Growing Community program, with multiple community education and stewardship components to be implemented over the next decade. A business case for the Growing Community program has been prepared for consideration in the 2022-2023 multi-year budget. Next steps for the Implementation Plan include engagement, that is scheduled for April 2021 with a report is scheduled for the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Service in September 2021. One of the go-early projects identified in the Growing Community program is a Natural Areas Education and Citizen Science Monitoring Program that includes Indigenous traditional knowledge of Saskatoon's natural area and would likely involve other community partners.

Scope and Budget

This application to Healthy Communities is for the establishment of a new program for Natural Areas Education and Citizen Science Monitoring. The program will enable residents to learn about Saskatoon's natural areas and what we need to do to protect them while contributing data that assists with the City's and community partner's efforts to protect these important ecological resources. This program responds to resident strong interest in accessing Saskatoon's natural areas during the pandemic and addresses education gaps for programs that were identified during Green Infrastructure Strategy engagement. Natural areas education will be provided through a variety of tactics and target a diverse audience. The program will use the mobile app developed by Meewasin to enable data collection in a consistent and socially distanced manner. The program will incorporate traditional knowledge alongside western knowledge of Saskatoon's natural areas, making the program more accessible to Indigenous residents.

The application's budget will be focused on education, program implementation, and compensation for Indigenous Knowledge Keepers. The preliminary budget includes:

	Scope	Budget
Administration	Staff time (primarily from Sustainability and Communications Departments) to oversee project and communications	\$25,000
Education & Communications	Communication on program and how to participate; online and/or outdoor (socially distanced) education/training for citizen science; online workshops with both Indigenous and western natural area local knowledge	\$25,000
Program Design and Operations	Compensation for community partner(s)'s services, including training for app, development and delivery of program, and data analysis	\$100,000
Indigenous Knowledge Keepers	Compensation for Indigenous Knowledge Keepers for providing education on natural areas, content development, translation, advising on program design, and data analysis	\$100,000

Evaluation Criteria Alignment

The project demonstrates alignment with the funding application as follows:

Project Rationale

Responds to the impacts of COVID-19 according to local needs and context

- In 2020 and early 2021, interest in Saskatoon's natural areas has grown significantly as residents look for outdoor recreational opportunities that are safe and convenient. This project will enhance that experience through education and programming at natural areas, including appropriate use and engaging residents in natural areas protection.

Considers public health measures in project design

- The program will be designed to have many virtual and self-directed components for both the education and monitoring. In-person training and events will be socially distanced and comply with all provincial health guidelines.

If applicable, considers collaborators or partners to strengthen the project

- There are multiple community partners that will be approached for the application, including Meewasin and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers that will be identified with assistance from Indigenous Initiatives.

Community Engagement

Demonstrates meaningful community engagement, including with those disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and considers equity

- Engagement for the Green Infrastructure Strategy heard feedback from over 600 participants and additional engagement is scheduled for the Implementation Plan. The program's development will use the City's Triple Bottom Line Policy and pilot the Equity Sustainability Initiatives (ESI) Toolkit.

Demonstrates local leadership in decision-making and project delivery

- The program design will be co-developed by the City, community partner(s), and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers. It will be implemented using the City's project management framework.

Demonstrates how it will engage and generate participation in its project

- A comprehensive communication and education strategy will be developed as part of the project.

Outcomes

Demonstrates positive community impact(s) through one of the Healthy Communities Initiative theme(s)

- This project addresses the safe and vibrant spaces and digital solutions themes.

Demonstrates knowledge of community pressures and needs

- The Green Infrastructure Strategy has identified natural areas education as an immediate-term need. The high-level use of natural areas during the pandemic demonstrates community demand for accessing these areas, which could be enhanced through education and programming.

Demonstrates a plan, if applicable, to sustain the project long term

- The project would seek sustaining funding in the 2024-2025 multi-year budget as part of the Growing Community program.

Considers a plan to capture community impact, including gathering stories and lessons learned for future projects, where applicable

- The citizen science portion of this program will include citizen science and monitoring from both western and Indigenous worldviews. The partnerships on this project will support further work on programming for Saskatoon residents in natural areas as well as the development of Natural Areas Management Plans and completion of a Traditional Knowledge and Land Use Assessment.

Project Implementation and Readiness

Provides a responsible budget including clear costing, procurement decisions and equity considerations

- The project budget balances staff costs, education and compensation of community partner(s), and Knowledge Keepers for their contributions to education and program design. Procurement will be done in alignment with the City's procurement policy, including the Indigenous procurement procedure.
- Managed by the Sustainability Department in close collaboration with Indigenous Initiatives and will draw on the expertise of a multi-departmental technical advisory committee that will oversee the Growing Community program.

Demonstrates the project can be completed in realistic timelines

- Multiple community partner(s) have experience operating education and citizen science programs and has already discussed new programming with the City, including authentic inclusion of Indigenous knowledge through all of the work.