

Project Description

This is a General description of the Grant project. Outline in detail the humanitarian need your project will address, the intent of the project, how the project will be implemented, and how Rotarians will be directly involved in the project. Note that the Estimated budget is only the initial grant request amount; to outline details on the various budget items, including those from other funding sources, go to the Budget tab.

Grant Project:	Frontera Inspiration Garden Project
Primary Sponsoring Club:	Rotary Club of Weslaco
Contact:	Enriquez, James
Date Submitted:	Jul 31, 2015 at 2:55 PM
Project Total Budget:	\$11,500.00
Grant Budget:	\$11,500.00
Project Expected Income:	\$9,000.00
Grant Expected Income:	\$4,500.00

General Description

Describe the project and the problem or need it will address, including the intended beneficiaries and how the project will benefit the community in need. Provide the estimated length of time needed to complete the project.

See Memorandum of Understanding between applicant and District 5930

The Frontera Audubon Sanctuary, a 15-acre nature park in the heart of the City of Weslaco, Texas seeks to provide outdoor programs on gardening and green living that take place within a new demonstration garden. This project request is for the planting of a demonstration garden, the Frontera Inspiration Garden, that will feature six 10ft by 3ft raised bed plots within a 35ft by 30ft fenced area, with tables and benches for gardening and green living classes. Signage, gardening supplies and materials, and educational handouts are included in this request.

The garden will showcase primarily native plants, labeled to display information about care, benefits and uses whereby families, individuals and school children can participate in gardening and green living workshops within an outdoor classroom, learn about the importance of plants to the ecosystem, and gain inspiration for planting gardens of their own. Participants will not only benefit physically and mentally from the hands-on learning opportunities, but also enhance the overall community's quality of life and well being by creating habitat spaces at their homes, businesses and schools for birds and butterflies to thrive.

The Frontera Audubon Sanctuary provides a haven for birds, butterflies and other wildlife that thrive among the native habitats of its Tamaulipan Thornscrub forest, orchard butterfly garden,

wetlands, and ponds. Our organization, a nonprofit established in 1978, serves the Rio Grande Valley communities by providing environmental education opportunities for all ages at our 15 acre urban nature park in Downtown Weslaco. The Frontera Audubon houses a Visitors' Center and gift shop and the Spanish Mediterranean-style Skaggs House, a Texas Historical Landmark built in 1927. The mission of Frontera Audubon is to preserve and promote the natural and historical environment for the education and enjoyment of the community.

The Frontera Inspiration Garden will be located next to the Historic orchard, adjacent to the Skaggs House. Special guest speakers, such as volunteers from the Texas Master Gardeners and Texas Master Naturalist Programs, will conduct lessons and workshops such as the following:

1. Plant and Maintain a Butterfly Garden
2. Landscape with Native Shrubs
3. Design a Native Cactus Garden
4. Incredible Edibles (Indigenous plants, their history, folklore and household uses)
5. Beneficial Bugs (how to reduce pesticide use in the garden)
6. Rain Gardens and Systems (easy ways to collect and conserve water)
7. Composting in the Garden

For this project, we will launch three of these programs within the grant period. Initial beneficiaries of this project will be local families and individuals who attend the aforementioned public programs. The garden will be open to the public for viewing during regular hours, Tuesday through Sunday.

Beyond the grant period, the Frontera Inspiration Garden will help us launch other initiatives currently in the planning stages. For instance, we just submitted a grant to initiate the Audubon Bird Tales program at Frontera Audubon, designed to improve and enrich the lives of the senior population, specifically those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's. The program uses multisensory stimulation and the outdoor world of birds to help people living with dementia share a meaningful experience with others while also providing local bird populations with newly improved habitats. The Frontera Inspiration Garden will serve as an outdoor classroom to train care center and private caregivers on how to build and enhance habitat for birds at their facilities and homes. When possible, the care facility clients will also have the opportunity to visit the garden and attend a workshop. This program is based on dementia care expert Randy Griffin's studies which show that multisensory stimulation and interaction with nature provides an array of physical, emotional, behavioral, psychological, spiritual, and/or cognitive health benefits.

Additionally, we recently received funding for 500 students to visit Frontera Audubon by the end of 2015 to learn about ecosystems and habitat for birds and butterflies. We hope to reach even more students and teachers through hands-on activities and training programs within the Frontera Inspiration Garden beyond the grant period.

Community Assessment & Impact

Describe how the benefiting community has been determined and what impact will be made by this project after grant funding has been fully expended.

Frontera Audubon serves a socio economically disadvantaged and underserved population in Hidalgo County, Texas located in the Rio Grande Valley along the US-Mexican border. Hidalgo County has a population of just over 831,000: 91% Hispanic; a median household income of \$34,146; and, 34.8% persons below poverty level. This compares to Texas' median household income of \$51,900 with 17.6% of people living below poverty level. With the county's population centers being located within the Rio Grande Valley, these census statistics are reflective of the individual cities and towns comprising the Mid-Valley region of the Rio Grande Valley served by Frontera Audubon (Weslaco, Donna, Mercedes, etc.). However, it needs to be observed that due to the uniqueness of the Thornscurb thicket and the significant bird migratory patterns through the RGV, many other people come from around the nation and the world to visit Frontera Audubon. (US Census, 2013 estimate)

Of our total annual visitation average of 5,000, we estimate 500 visitors will view the Frontera Inspiration Garden by the end of this grant cycle. A ribbon cutting, one guided tour per month, and three workshops will be held; therefore, we estimate we will have 500 active participants for this grant period.

By providing an outdoor classroom garden space, Frontera Audubon hopes to expand its environmental education opportunities for all ages to incite even more appreciation, discovery and conservation of nature. We hope to create meaningful, fun and positive experiences that foster a connection to the natural world by demonstrating ways to restore nature and add back to the environment. Finally, we wish to empower people to see the ways they can positively impact the environment and enhance and change their health for the better. Participants will be inspired to improve or create their own outdoor habitats using native plants and to practice environmentally conscious gardening techniques.

We will measure the impact of these programs by obtaining a random sample of 10-20 individuals from the Mid-Valley area who participated in one or more of the workshops or visited the Frontera Inspiration Garden. We will request to follow up with the 10-20 individuals by a phone call from a staff member or volunteer one week after their visit and ask the following: 1.) Please describe your experience at the gardening workshop or tour of the Frontera Inspiration Garden; was it positive or negative, and why? 2.) What, if anything, did you discover or learn during the workshop or your visit to the Frontera Inspiration Garden? 3.) What ways do you plan, if any, to improve your outdoor space or implement an eco-friendly practice? 4.) Do you plan to use native plants in your gardens or everyday life? 5.) May we follow up with you in one month? Results of these conversations will be recorded and submitted in the grant report.

Participants will also be contacted after the initial phone interview. The number of people or families who planted native plants in their gardens or implemented a new eco-friendly technique will be counted and reported after the grant period ends. They will also be asked which technique or practice they have implemented and if they plan to continue in the future.

The overall impact of this project is to raise awareness of the need for native habitat for wildlife and human health and well being. Other ways this project will impact the community is by encouraging appreciation of plants and nature, strengthening the connection to the environment, and providing life-long learning opportunities to improve quality of life.

Sustainability

Please explain the plan on how to maintain this project for a long period of time.

Texas Master Gardeners will advise on planting and design of the gardens. The volunteers will conduct the workshops.

Texas Master Naturalists will also assist with planting and design of the gardens and assist with conducting workshops.

Implementation Plan

Describe specific activities of the sponsoring club and any partners in implementing the project. What will the Rotarians who are members of the partner clubs do during the project? Please note that financial support is not considered active involvement.

Months 1-3: Build fencing area & raised bed planting boxes.

Months 3-5: Build or purchase tables and benches.

Months 5-6: Purchase seeds and plants, begin planting. Purchase gardening materials and supplies. Design and order plant labels and signs.

Months 6-8: Design and print educational brochures. Publicize upcoming workshops.

Months 8-10 Hold 2 workshops. Initiate first phone survey for final reporting.

Months 10-12 Hold a third workshop. Complete follow up survey and submit final report.

Rotary volunteers will assist with planting and building the gardens, distributing informational brochures to local businesses and schools, and assisting as volunteers during the initial workshop programs.

Texas Master Gardeners will advise on planting and design of the gardens. The volunteers will conduct the workshops.

Texas Master Naturalists will also assist with planting and design of the gardens and assist with conducting workshops.

Mike Heep Native Plant Nursery will provide plants at a wholesale rate. City of Weslaco Parks and Recreation department will provide assistance with publicity and volunteers.

Frontera Audubon's Executive Director, Sarah Williams-Salazar, will be the lead project manager, with the close assistance of the Frontera Audubon Thicket Committee volunteers. Mrs. Williams-Salazar has held this position for almost 5 years. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in English, with a specialization in creative writing from the University of Texas San Antonio and a Master of Science in Non-Profit Management from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio. Her nonprofit management skills include the following: fundraising and development, public relations and marketing, project management, staff and volunteer management, board training, accounting and finance, nature site management, and partnership building. Ms. Williams-Salazar will provide the daily oversight for the Frontera Inspiration Garden Project to ensure that it is carried out according to plan, efficiently, and with excellence.

Mrs. Williams-Salazar will publicize the project via press release to the media (print, radio and television), social media updates, and email newsletters to Frontera's 1,000 subscribers. Rotary International will be given recognition throughout the process, and honored during a public ribbon cutting ceremony. A sign commemorating the Weslaco Rotary's 90th anniversary will be unveiled at the ribbon cutting. Rotary International will be recognized on other signage and educational materials as well.

Expected Expenses

List all anticipated expenses for this project, including those that will be funded outside of the District grant portion.

Description	Supplier	Currency	Total	Amount
In-kind donations for lumber, gardening tools, and supplies	Home Depot	USD	\$500.00	\$500.00
Workshop supplies and educational materials	Rotary	USD	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Benches and tables	Rotary	USD	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00
Signage, labels, and printing	Rotary	USD	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Gardening tools, equipment and supplies	Rotary	USD	\$1,500.00	\$1,500.00

Description	Supplier	Currency	Total	Amount
Fencing, bricks, cement, lumber, other materials	Rotary	USD	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00
Other/Indirect (as related to educational workshops)	Rotary	USD	\$500.00	\$500.00
Plants, mulch & soil	Rotary	USD	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
In-kind contribution of staff and administrative time	Frontera Audubon	USD	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
			Total:	\$11,500.00

Expected Income

List all anticipated income for this project, including funds that will be contributed by the club, other partners and the District grant portion.

Description	Funding Source	Amount	%
	Club/Other	\$4,500.00	50.00 %
	District Grant	\$4,500.00	50.00 %
Total:		\$9,000.00	100.00 %

Local Club Partners

List any partnering clubs within the District. Note that only one grant application needs to be made by the main sponsoring club.

There's no Sponsoring Clubs specified for this application.

Cooperating Organizations

Explanation: Cooperating Organizations are any other groups or organizations (other than partnering Rotary clubs) that are working with the sponsoring club in either funding or implementing the project.

Rotary Club Weslaco
City of Weslaco Parks and Recreation
Mike Heep Native Plant Nursery
The Rio Grande Valley Chapter of Master Naturalists
The Rio Grande Valley Chapter of Master Gardeners
Frontera Audubon Thicket Committee Volunteers