

Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant - Sample Application Four

The following text illustrates responses to some of the narrative questions on the *Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant* application form. These responses were provided by teachers whose application scored highly with all the reviewers. Please do not copy the responses into your own application form. Read them to see examples of some complete, high-quality responses to the questions. Please note that the application form is revised annually, and the narrative questions in the current application form may not match the narrative questions from the older application form that these responses represent.

Application Four

1a. In 50 words or less describe the proposed project (who, what, where, when, how).

As part of a year-long study of the importance of pollinators, fifth grade students will plant a pollinator garden outside their classroom building. Students will plan the garden and choose plants in November and plant them in May. Future classes will monitor and learn from the garden.

1b. What are your goals for this project (why do you want to implement the project)?

We hope to increase the biodiversity of flora and fauna on our school grounds and create an outdoor learning area for all classes at our school. We also hope to encourage students to plant for pollinators in their own yard.

1c. How will you measure the success of the project?

We will consider the project successful if we have a thriving garden that attracts a variety of pollinator species and is aesthetically pleasing throughout the year. The project success will also be determined by student involvement and investment: they will plan, plant and care for the garden.

2a. What planning activities did the students perform for the project? Be specific.

After learning about pollinators and their importance, students were introduced to the school garden areas that they would be converting into a pollinator garden. Because of remote learning, faculty measured/assessed the garden area and shared that information with students. Students worked in groups to choose plants that would provide food and habitat for a variety of pollinators, bloom throughout the growing season and fit within the garden area. Students created maps of their proposed garden design.

2b. What implementation activities will students perform for the project? Be specific.

When native plants become available, students will plant the garden. They will water the area and maintain it (weed, etc.) until school lets out for summer. Students will also write/design a sign for the garden that explains the importance of pollinators.

2c. What maintenance activities will students perform for the project? Be specific.

When school is in session, students will weed and water the area until the native plants are well-enough established to no longer need this maintenance.

3a. Describe how the project will enhance the educational use of the area. Please do not list learning standards.

The pollinator gardens will be available for all classes at our school to use as a learning area. Fifth grade students will be observing the garden to see pollination interactions up-close. They will blog about the garden's progress and happenings, working on their writing and art skills while keeping the community informed. Students will also be collecting data about plant growth and insect populations for use in math class.

4. Describe how the proposed project will positively affect wildlife, improve wildlife habitat and demonstrate relevant ecological concepts.

Our new pollinator gardens will increase the biodiversity of our campus by including a variety of native flowers, grasses and shrubs. These are selected to specifically attract birds and insects, providing food and homes. The selection of plants will encourage pollinators to visit our garden, allowing students to observe this important interrelationship up close. In all likelihood, they will also be able to observe food chains, the cycling of nutrients and other key ecological processes as well.

6. What is your time line for this project? List the major activities associated with development of the project and when you expect to perform them.

Fifth grade students learn about pollinators and their importance to the prairie ecosystem – September to October

Students research native plants to attract pollinators and create garden plans/maps – November

Order native plants – April

Prepare garden beds for planting (remove weeds, till soil, etc.) – early May

Plant native plants in garden – late May

Create and install sign – May

Water, weed and nurture plants through their first growing season – June to September

Monitor, learn from and watch our garden flourish! – March and beyond

7. A long-term care/maintenance plan for the project is imperative.

7a. How will the area be maintained during the school year? Who will do the work?

During the school year, garden maintenance will mainly be performed by the students/teachers, with the help of facilities staff for any work that is too physically demanding for students.

7b. How will the area be maintained during the summer? Who will do the work?

We hire a four-person summer garden crew to maintain the all the campus raised beds, classroom garden areas and other aspects of landscaping around campus. They will maintain this garden area when school is not in session.

7c. How will the area be maintained in subsequent years? Who will do the work?

Native plants have been selected because the need for watering and long-term care should be minimal. However, students will monitor and care for the area as needed during the school year, and the summer garden crew looks for and removes invasive plants and problematic weeds throughout the campus.

8. Tell us about the resources that you utilized in preparing for this project and discuss how you will involve other people (teachers, community members, etc.) in the project.

The school's Dean of Environmental Learning and two teachers attended a six-day professional development through the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation, during which we worked on developing the service-learning component of this project and improving upon/adapting for remote learning our pollinator unit of study. Other resources used in preparing for this project include the pollinator/native plant information provided by the IDNR and information provided by native plant providers.

Remote learning has posed challenges, but it has also provided opportunities for students' families to become more involved in their learning, and students assessed their yards and neighborhoods for pollinator activity. They were encouraged to work with their families to plan and plant for pollinators in their own yards.

On the school campus, the fifth grade will make efforts to involve the rest of the school community in the pollinator garden. They plan to give tours to elementary classes so that everyone knows what is there and to make sure that all the other teachers at school feel invited to use this garden area as an outdoor classroom. Students will also install a sign so that visitors to campus can learn about the garden installation and the importance of pollinators. Students will also keep a blog, linked to the school Web site, so that community members can learn about the garden and see its progression through the seasons.