



# VSN STEWARDSHIP FUND (2023 - 2024)

## Instructions and Application

**Application Deadline: Friday, July 14, 2023**

The Volunteer Stewardship Network (VSN) — a partnership between The Nature Conservancy and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission — is a statewide program that supports, promotes and expands the role of volunteers and communities working to protect and manage native ecosystems, community gardens, parks, and other green space in Illinois, as well as supporting efforts that foster community connections to nature. Currently, more than 145 organizations belong to the VSN, including public agencies (e.g., forest preserve districts, conservation districts, park districts), private organizations (e.g., land trusts), and grassroots/ community-based organizations (e.g., community gardens, affinity groups).

The VSN lends support to its members by providing stewardship tools and trainings and serves as a platform for groups to share information and resources. In addition to the VSN Stewardship Fund, specific support includes:

- **Gatherings Newsletter** – A bi-monthly email newsletter to inform the stewardship community of new resources, upcoming events, funding opportunities, workshops, and news from across the state.
- **Network for Nature** – The VSN hosts and sponsors virtual and in-person Network for Nature meetings and workshops to allow its members to share ideas, inspire collaboration, and learn new skills.
- **Community Convening Fund** – Annual fund that provides support to organizations that foster community connections to nature and meaningfully engage Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTIQA+, veterans and other groups that have not been prioritized in the past, in the programming of outdoor activities and care and protection of green space.
- **VSN Scholarship Fund** – TNC works with several partners to host networking and training opportunities – i.e., Wild Things Conference, DEIJ workshops, and scholarships to attend courses through The Morton Arboretum at no cost.
- **Website Promotion** – “Volunteer for Nature” – Members may list their sites on an interactive map that helps potential volunteers find volunteer opportunities near home.

## VSN Stewardship Fund

Each year, the Volunteer Stewardship Network dedicates funds to support volunteer and community organizations that care for natural areas and green space. Organizations may request stewardship tools and safety equipment and support for newsletters, websites, and educational materials. To make a request, please complete the questions on the attached application. **Requests should not exceed \$2000.**

Applications will be evaluated by the following criteria:

- ❖ Activity level of the VSN group
- ❖ Need – could the request be satisfied by the landowner or another funding source?
- ❖ Urgency – is something in imminent danger of being lost?
- ❖ Benefit to the natural resource and/or community
- ❖ Does it leverage other resources and funding?
- ❖ How well it fits in with the spirit of the VSN
- ❖ Items requested clearly match the needs of the organization

***As you identify your needs, please keep in mind the funds awarded in 2023 - 2024 MUST be spent and receipts received by June 1, 2024.***

You will be notified by August 1, 2023 if your funding request has been approved. If approved, you will receive a letter indicating the amount of funds available to your group. It is important to note that the money is not a grant (you will not receive the money in advance). Either you will be reimbursed in a timely way for expenses approved through this process or tools and supplies will be ordered and shipped to you directly.

**Please note:** The VSN is also providing support to organizations through the **Community Convening Fund (CCF)**. The goals of the CCF are to support people and nature by:

- funding projects that foster community connections to nature;
- meaningfully engage Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTIQA+, veterans, and other communities that have not been prioritized in the past, in the programming, care and protection of green space;
- providing co-benefits for human and environmental health.

If your group is engaging BIPOC, LGBTIQA+, veterans and/or people with disabilities, and is in need of funding for trainings, expertise sharing, conferences/meetings, cultural and community building events, travel and transportation, or community development/research, please contact Brooke Thureau at [brooke.thureau@tnc.org](mailto:brooke.thureau@tnc.org) to request an application. VSN groups must complete a separate VSN Community Convening Fund application by **Friday, July 14, 2023**. **\*Groups may apply for both funds.**

## VSN Stewardship Fund Application (2023 – 2024)

We accept requests once a year. Please fill out the application completely and submit it to [brooke.thurau@tnc.org](mailto:brooke.thurau@tnc.org) by **Friday, July 14, 2023**. If there are barriers associated with completing this application, please contact [brooke.thurau@tnc.org](mailto:brooke.thurau@tnc.org).

Please provide the following information with your request:

1. Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_
2. Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_
3. Group Name \_\_\_\_\_
4. Landowner(s) (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ (including city, state, zip code)
6. Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_
7. Site(s) Managed (please indicate if the site has INPC protection status). If your group does not manage a specific site, please describe your group's volunteer activities in the past year.
8. Total Volunteer Hours (in the past year) \_\_\_\_\_
9. Total Number of Volunteers (in the past year) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Does your group regularly hold or attend community/volunteer stewardship workdays?
11. Amount of Request \_\_\_\_\_
12. Describe the urgency of the request.

13. Using the following chart, please list specific items, sizes, quantities, and costs for each.

ITEM(S)	USE (i.e. Loppers for Buckthorn removal)	SIZE	QUANTITY	COST \$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
				\$
<b>TOTAL</b>				\$

**Examples of Approved Budget Items from Past Years:**

Seed supplies: drying racks, flags, box repairs, inoculant, bags	Backpack sprayer
Seeds for native pollinator plants	Hand pruners
Volunteer management software	Liquid fence repellent concentrate
Native plant ID signs	Field Fence
Interpretive signs	UTV Insurance
Pigskin gloves	Glyphosate concentrate
Folding saws, chain saws	First aid kits
Miscellaneous: gas for chainsaws, insect repellent	Zoom Subscription
Chainsaw safety helmets	Citizen science equipment
Shovels	Binoculars
Brushcutter & clearing saw	T-shirts
Replace worn parts on Stihl Brushcutter	Communication and educational materials