

Sustainability Project Fund Application Form

Project Title: SPF Critical Review

Budget Requested: \$2,000

Applicant/Project Leader: David Gray-Donald

Faculty/Department: Sustainability Coordinator, Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU)

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Project goal:

A collaboration between the leadership of the contributing students' societies to investigate the effectiveness of the Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF), and document changes to be considered. The outcome will be accessible information on the SPF that will help inform the conversation as it goes to referendum through SSMU and MCSS in November and PGSS in January. The costs will cover hiring students or recent alumni to conduct confidential interviews with relevant stakeholders, SPF Working Group members (past and present), document the findings of those conversations, and help compile a 5-10 page report that compliments but does not duplicate the contents of the SPF Annual Reports. These efforts will be coordinated by representative from each society with relevant mandates - i.e., SSMU Sustainability Coordinator, PGSS Environment Commissioner, MCSS Environmental Advisor.

Project eligibility:

The project will contribute to building a culture of sustainability on campus by helping keep the SPF design and process well informed as to whether and how the SPF is achieving its mandate. Questions to consider include (there are too many here than may be possible to answer):

- Is the Working Group comfortable and with intra-group dynamics? Does it have a reasonable time commitment for members? Do members feel they are representing a group on campus? Is there the right expertise in the room? Should there be the ability to speak with applicants during review meetings?
- In looking at similar funds at other universities and our own campus context, is the SPF too big or too small? Does it have the right mandate? Should there be ear-marked funds for certain things? Are knowledge management systems in place to keep this system working well if and when key positions turn over – e.g., Working Group members; Jen Cox, Senior Accounting Clerk; Lilith Wyatt, SPF Administrator; Eva Poon, Campus and Space Planning receptionist; Jim Nicell, Associate Vice-Principal, University Services?

- Is it well promoted? How is it perceived by the community? Does the community find it accessible? Is the information on the website accurate and clear? Could it be more helpful? Could tools be put in place to better prepare and aide applicants?

The following people have expressed explicitly that they desire to see this project happen and believe that the outcome will provide tangible benefits to the community in informing the SPF's future:

Josh Redel (SSMU President), Allison Cooper (SSMU VP Clubs & Services), Haley Dinel (SSMU VP University Affairs), Emily Yee Clare (former SSMU VP University Affairs), Jonathan Glencross (co-founder of the SPF), David Morris (former Gorilla Composting Coordinator), Kelly Nugent (PGSS Environment Commissioner), Shona Watt (PGSS Sustainability Coordinator), Raphael Dumas (author of the SPF Annual Report 2011), Tanya Taggart-Hodge (former SSMU Environment Commissioner), Kevin Chin (Knowledge and Evaluation Officer, McConnell Foundation).

Timeframe/Milestones:

- Late June (completed): Planning, led by David Gray-Donald through conversation with many of the people listed above.
- Early July (completed): Refining scope and who to talk to, led by David Gray-Donald, through conversation with Jonathan Glencross, Lilith Wyatt, and Kevin Chin (McConnell Foundation)
- Late July/ASAP: Hiring a knowledgeable but somewhat removed student or recent alumni member to help with this process, including conducting confidential interviews.
- August to Early September: Hired individual sets up and conducts interviews with SPF Working Group members.
- Late September: Hired individual, SSMU Sustainability Coordinator, PGSS Environment Commissioner and MCSS environmental Advisor work together to craft a 5-10 page document outlining the findings.
- Early October: Finished product released.

What performance indicators may be used to gauge the success of the project?

- How many undocumented insights are documented?
- How widespread is the readership of the report?
- How well informed is the level of conversation in campus media surrounding the referendum vote on the SPF in the coming months?

How will the outcomes be shared with the community?

The outcome will be the document. It will be sent to the SPF Working Group, the Office of Sustainability, all the campus media sources, student governments (SSMU, PGSS, MCSS, Faculty Societies), and to relevant central administrative offices.

Other than the project team, who will have a stake in your project?

It will be the whole community, but most immediately it will be undergraduate students, then graduate students, the SSMU executive (though PGSS non-executive staff have expressed interest), and the Office of Sustainability.

In what capacity will they be involved?

They will provide expertise in understanding various aspects of how the SPF acts and is perceived to act, SSMU will contribute in-kind donations through the hours of time their Sustainability Coordinator will be working on this project.

Please provide details of the budget that is being requested in the tables below

Detailed expenses: Community member to conduct interviews and help compile the report along with the SSMU Sustainability Coordinator, PGSS Environment Commissioner and MCSS Environment Advisor: \$720-\$1,200 for 60 to 80 hours at \$12 or \$15 an hour (depending whether the hired individual is a student or recent alumni, respectively).

Alternative proposal for discussion by the SPF Working Group: To solicit financial contributions from each students' society to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest.

Provide supporting information regarding the qualifications and/or related experience of the project leader and other project members

David Gray-Donald has been working in the sustainability field on the McGill campus for several years, as both student and now staff. He has been the SSMU Sustainability Coordinator full-time for one year. He was uninvolved in the creation and operation of the SPF, but has attended one Working Group meeting as a resource person, and has spoken with students about the SPF for years.

The only person who I can think of on campus to conduct the interviews and provide a balanced but knowledgeable perspective on this subject would be recent alumni David Morris (B.Eng '12), former Coordinator of Gorilla Composting and generally involved community member. David Morris has indicated he is available and interested, but other suggestions are welcome, and it would of course be an open hiring process.

Note on external consultant support for evaluation:

I'm against spending a lot of money on this project by hiring outside consultants, but the Natural Step and Sustainability Solutions group are already on contract with the Office of Sustainability for Vision 2020 and are somewhat underutilized. They could perhaps lend some expertise here. Kevin Chin (McConnell Foundation) mentioned that the rule of thumb many funds go by is to allocate 10% of the fund to its evaluation (which would be \$84,000 for the SPF, and seems excessive, though I haven't really investigated whether that would be worthwhile).