

Desert Tortoise Council

Grant Request Policy

Approval Date: August 17, 2013

Authority and Responsibilities: The Desert Tortoise Council (Council) encourages activities and/or research benefitting the desert tortoise and/or its habitat, to provide relevant information to the public, and to address other specified related conservation issues, consistent with the goals and objectives of the Council as provided in the bylaws, including:

Bylaws, Article II, Section 2, c. To support, and be an advocate of, such measures as will contribute to ensuring the continued survival of desert tortoises and the maintenance of their habitats in a natural condition;

Bylaws, Article II, Section 2, d. To stimulate and encourage studies on the ecology, biology, management, and protection of desert tortoises;

Bylaws, Article II, Section 2, g. To support conservation actions for the protection of other tortoises, turtles, and ecosystems, as appropriate;

Consistent with the Council's interest in conservation activities and research, the Council, through its Board of Directors (Board), will consider Grant Requests from qualified individuals or organizations for research or other activities on topics related to desert tortoise biology, conservation, or management; the development and dissemination of educational material about the desert tortoise; or in support of other tortoises, turtles, and ecosystems. All Grant Requests are evaluated and awarded as funds are available, at the sole discretion of a majority vote of the Board. Guidelines for submitting a Grant Request for funding by the Council follow.

Submittal: Grant Requests may be submitted at any time and considered at the discretion of the Board. However, to ensure the Board is able to fully consider each request and to make a subsequent funding decision at the next Board meeting, Grant Requests should be submitted by April 1, July 1, or October 1, which should generally allow about 60 days for review before the next Board meeting. All Grant Requests are to be specifically addressed to the **Corresponding Secretary** with a courtesy copy to the **Chairperson of the Board**. The Corresponding Secretary will forward the Grant Request to the Grants Committee Chairperson who will acknowledge receipt of the Grant Request.

Requests for Funding: Grant Requests submitted to the Council for funding must demonstrate a benefit to the desert tortoise, its habitat, or other conservation issues. The format for the Grants Request is flexible in order to meet the circumstances of the proposed project. The following information is required.

1. Name, professional affiliation (if any), and contact information of the person submitting the application.
2. Names and qualifications of participants, with specific emphasis on the lead investigator responsible for the final product.
3. The Grant Request is to include up-to-date résumés of all key participants, highlighting current and past relevant experience. Submission of a Grant Request implies that all key participants have reviewed and approved the request and will be working on the project.

4. A detailed description of the proposed research or activity is to include the following information.
 - a. Goals and objectives of the project.
 - b. The location of the proposed work.
 - c. The specific study design, including a detailed list of tasks to be performed, the sequence of tasks to be completed, personnel required for each task, methods of analysis, and overall timeframe for conducting the work, completing the project, and reporting of results.
 - d. If the Grant Request is for a research project, the hypotheses to be tested should be included in the introductory description along with the project objectives. A thorough literature review is to be conducted and anticipated results identified. Study methods (e.g., study area; data collection techniques; data analysis and statistical testing) are to be clearly presented. The project schedule is to include a timeline for field studies, preparation of draft reports/manuscripts, peer review, and final product completion.
 - e. A detailed budget that itemizes funds to be used for labor and non-labor expenses. Non-labor materials or items are to be identified by unit cost (e.g., per diem, mileage, supplies, and travel). Labor costs should be identified by individual, their hourly rates, and the number of hours proposed for each individual by task. Any sub-consultant or sub-contractor costs must be identified consistent with the requirements of labor as noted above.
 - f. A specific timeline for submitting requests for payment or disbursement of awarded funds.
 - g. Specific criteria for measuring the progress and success of the project.
 - h. A schedule for publishing the results of the research and/or reporting the results to the Board and Council.
 - i. Any permits or governmental or non-governmental authorizations required for the project, and the current status of obtaining those permits and/or authorizations. Final approval of a Grant Request is contingent on all required permits being issued.
 - j. The total amount of funding requested, and a description of other funding needs and/or funding sources that may be required for successful completion of the project.
 - k. A description of how this research will benefit the desert tortoise, its habitat, or other specific conservation objectives.
 - l. Names and contact information for three professional references.

Evaluation of Grant Requests: When a Grant Request is received by the Grants Committee Chairperson, appointed by the Board Chairperson, the Grants Committee Chairperson will, on a request-by-request basis, identify and appoint at least two members to the Grants Committee, including at least one current Board member, and may include non-Board members that are members of the Council. The committee may seek additional information from other knowledgeable persons. The Grants Committee reviews each request for completeness prior to forwarding the request for Board consideration.

1. The Grants Committee will evaluate the Grant Request based on the following criteria.
 - a. The benefit to the desert tortoise and/or its habitat from the proposed project.
 - b. The benefit to non desert tortoise specified conservation objectives.
 - c. The benefit of providing information to the public on conservation issues.
 - d. The appropriateness of study methods, analytical techniques, and reporting.
 - e. For research projects, critical evaluation factors include the quality of the hypotheses to be tested and/or objectives, as well as the potential for successful project completion and publication of a high quality report and/or manuscript.
 - f. The likelihood of success of the proposed project, based in part on the experience of the lead investigator(s).
 - g. The cost of the project and the funds available to the Board.
2. The Grants Committee is to evaluate each proposal. For incomplete Grant Requests, the Grants Committee will either reject the proposal or seek additional information from the author(s). For complete Grant Requests, the Grants Committee will provide their recommendation to the Board for consideration for funding. This recommendation would generally fall within the following framework:
 - a. Provide full support for the project as proposed;
 - b. Offer partial funding in support of the project;
 - c. Request additional information and/or provide a set of conditions to be met for funding;
or
 - d. Decline funding of the project.
3. Evaluation of the Grant Request by the Grants Committee and/or Board may result in a request for additional information on project participants, project approach, analytical methods, costs of the project, or other factors related to an assessment of the potential benefits of project implementation.
4. The Board will consider the recommendation of the Grants Committee as a motion for discussion and vote. A majority vote, by a quorum of the Board participating in the consideration of the Grant Request during a scheduled meeting, will determine if the project will be supported. Under special circumstances, this discussion and vote by the Board may be by email or conference call.
5. The Grants Committee will provide a formal response to the applicant that conveys the decision of the Board and may include information regarding the Grant Request that influenced the Board's decision.

Additional Information for all Grant Requests:

1. Grant Requests will be acted on by the Board at the next scheduled Board meeting following the Grants Request submittal schedule of April 1, July 1, and October 1, unless special circumstances warrant expedited action.
2. Generally, Grant Requests of \$500 to \$10,000 will be considered as appropriate to the project and the availability of funds. Higher levels of funding may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3. All Grant Requests must be submitted electronically in portable document format (.PDF).
4. The Council will exercise appropriate efforts to ensure confidentiality of the Grant Request and any proprietary information contained therein, but cannot guarantee such confidentiality.
5. Should a majority vote of the Board approve a Grant Request, a letter of funding approval from the Grants Committee Chairperson will be provided. This letter may contain stipulations such as, but not limited to, payment and deliverable schedule (e.g., withholding of a certain percentage of the total funding pending delivery of final product), quality standards and criteria, and/or expectations for a presentation of the project's results at the annual symposium. Written acceptance of the Board's offer, including any stipulations, will function as the contract for the proposed project.
6. By submitting the Grant Request, the person(s) submitting the request acknowledges that funding is specifically at the discretion of the Council's Board, and that no guarantee of funding is implied or offered prior to consideration of the Grant Request by the Board.
7. Priority consideration for funding will be given to:
 - a. Projects that are in response to a specific emergency situation that may result in tortoise mortality and/or loss of habitat.
 - b. Projects that have the potential to address far-reaching issues.
 - c. Projects that address a current management issue that is important for recovery and is not being addressed by public agencies or other entities.
 - d. Projects that can be implemented quickly and provide demonstrable results.
 - e. Projects for which Council funding would leverage other funding sources.
8. Each year the Board may budget specific funding to be considered for awards under the Grants Policy.
9. Each year the Board may identify and announce specific types of projects that would receive priority consideration for funding.
10. Any questions concerning submission of a Grant Request may be directed to the Chairperson of the Grants Committee or the Chairperson of the Board.