

Program Application: 80864163

Linked Pre-Application Form - DO NOT DELETE

La Mesa Verde Program

Grant Amount Requested

\$75,000.00

Organization Name

Sacred Heart Community Service

Urban Grant Program Application Questions

Overview

Type of project (check all that apply)

Grant category (check all that apply)

Environmental Education

Project Location: Address / Neighborhood

What is the physical location of the project? If there is no physical location, please enter "N/A." If the project will be in multiple locations, please list all. Note: project location(s) must be within the Authority's jurisdiction.

1381 S. 1st St., San Jose, CA 95110

Project Location

Open Space Authority District of Project Location(s)(check all that apply)

Authority District 3

Who does the project serve? Please indicate which Open Space Authority Districts are served (where do the people served by the program live) (check all that apply)

Authority District 2, Authority District 3, Authority District 4, Authority District 5, Authority District 6, Authority District 7

Project Abstract

La Mesa Verde (LMV), a program of Sacred Heart Community Service, proposes the expansion of its community-led environmental education and urban gardening initiative in the Alma neighborhood of San José. For over a decade, LMV has empowered families, primarily low-income, immigrant, and Spanish-speaking households, with the knowledge, tools, and community support to grow their own food, cultivate sustainable practices, and build resilience against climate change and food insecurity.

With support from the Open Space Authority, LMV will launch a Family Environmental Leadership Program. Led by trained promotors, the Family Environmental Leadership Program will provide hands-on workshops in urban gardening, composting, pollinator habitat creation, and water conservation practices. The program will also host community-building events, including neighborhood gatherings and open-community garden days, designed to strengthen social cohesion and foster intergenerational learning. Additionally, the initiative will include two planting days over the course of the year, where families and youth collaboratively plant vegetable beds, pollinator gardens, and create other sustainable landscaping projects.

This initiative uniquely combines environmental education with food sovereignty, teaching participants to grow culturally relevant vegetables and herbs while incorporating practices that support biodiversity and climate resilience. Families will learn to create pollinator-friendly gardens, build soil health, and reduce water waste, all while strengthening their connection to nature in their own neighborhood. The LMV workshops and planting days provide hands-on, practical experiences that reinforce climate literacy, environmental stewardship, and community engagement.

By grounding the program in culturally responsive teaching and peer-to-peer education, LMV ensures that residents of underserved neighborhoods, often disconnected from traditional open space resources, gain access to environmental knowledge, green infrastructure, and meaningful community participation directly within their own neighborhood.

The requested \$75,000 will fund staff support, stipends for promotors, workshop materials, garden supplies, and the logistics for planting days and community-building events. A 25% matching contribution of \$18,750 will be leveraged from Sacred Heart Community Service funds, derived primarily from individual charitable donations and foundation general operating grants.

Ultimately, this project strengthens the region's environmental stewardship pipeline, empowers families as climate resilience leaders, and builds stronger, healthier communities with lasting environmental, social, and educational impact.

Project Planning

Describe the proposed project.

The proposed project, the Family Environmental Leadership Program, is a community-based educational initiative that integrates environmental science, gardening, and climate resilience practices into accessible workshops and garden-based learning opportunities. It is designed for youth ages 6–18 and their families living in San José's Alma neighborhood and surrounding under-resourced areas, primarily serving immigrant, Spanish-speaking, and low-income communities. The program will incorporate Common Core literacy standards through journaling and reflection on gardening experiences, while also aligning with Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) by focusing on ecosystems, resource management, pollinators, and climate systems. All sessions will be bilingual (Spanish and English) to ensure equitable participation. Workshops will be held at LMV's community hub (1381 S. 1st St.) and in urban gardens. By embedding environmental education in culturally relevant food production, this project makes learning engaging, practical, and immediately impactful for participating families.

Describe key project deliverables and estimated completion dates.

Program Launch:

The Family Environmental Leadership Program will officially launch in January 2026 with an Info Session and New Members Celebration, introducing families to the program's objectives, annual schedule, and community expectations. This kickoff event will also provide space for promotors and returning participants to welcome new members and foster early connections.

Workshops (4 total):

Four bilingual (English and Spanish) workshops will be conducted throughout the year, each designed to build participants' skills in environmental education and sustainable gardening practices:

February 2026 – How to Build Raised Garden Beds

This hands-on workshop will guide participants through the complete process of designing and constructing raised garden beds suitable for urban and small-space environments. Families will learn about site selection, soil preparation, material choices, and sustainable design practices that promote water efficiency and healthy plant growth. Promotors will demonstrate step-by-step assembly using affordable and accessible materials, emphasizing re-use and environmentally friendly options. Participants will also explore how raised beds support accessibility, pest control, and

improved crop yields. By the end of the session, families will gain the skills and confidence to build and maintain their own raised beds at home, laying the foundation for a productive and sustainable home garden.

March 2026 – How to mend the soil – This workshop will focus on restoring and enriching soil health to create a thriving foundation for home gardens. Participants will learn how to assess soil quality, identify common issues such as compaction or nutrient depletion, and apply natural methods to improve soil fertility. Promotors will demonstrate techniques including compost integration, cover cropping, mulching, and the use of organic amendments. Families will also explore how healthy soil supports pollinators, water retention, and long-term plant productivity. By the end of the session, participants will understand how to build living, nutrient-rich soil that sustains abundant and resilient gardens.

June 2026 – How to install a drip irrigation system- This practical workshop will teach participants how to design and install a simple, efficient drip irrigation system to conserve water and ensure consistent plant growth. Families will learn about the components of a drip system, including tubing, emitters, timers, and connectors, and how to adapt the system to different garden sizes and layouts. Promotors will demonstrate step-by-step installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting techniques using low-cost materials accessible to participants. The session will also highlight the benefits of water-wise gardening, emphasizing drought resilience, and sustainability in urban settings. By the end of the workshop, families will be equipped to build their own drip systems and reduce water waste while maintaining healthy gardens year-round.

September 2026 – Vermicompost – This interactive workshop will introduce participants to the practice of vermicomposting—using worms to transform food scraps into nutrient-rich compost for their gardens. Families will learn about the natural decomposition process, the types of worms best suited for composting, and how to create and maintain a healthy worm bin at home. Promotors will guide participants through each step, from building simple bins with recycled materials to harvesting finished compost. The session will also explore how vermicomposting reduces household waste, supports soil health, and strengthens sustainable food systems. By the end of the workshop, families will understand how to turn everyday kitchen waste into valuable organic fertilizer for their gardens.

Community-Building Events (3 total):

March 2026, May 2026, and August 2026 – Ancestral Food and Activity- This cultural and educational workshop will celebrate traditional food practices and physical activities rooted in participants' ancestral heritage. Families will explore how Indigenous and ancestral knowledge promotes health, sustainability, and community connection. Promotors will lead cooking demonstrations using culturally relevant ingredients grown in home gardens and facilitate group activities such as traditional cooking, storytelling, and cultural activities that highlight the link between food, culture, and well-being. The session will foster intergenerational learning, cultural pride, and a deeper appreciation of how ancestral practices contribute to holistic health and sustainable living.

Planting Days (2 total):

Two collaborative planting days will mobilize families, promotors, and volunteers to grow culturally relevant foods and support pollinator-friendly ecosystems:

April 2026 – Spring planting of vegetable beds and native pollinator plants.

Families, promotors, and volunteers will come together for a hands-on spring planting day to prepare and plant seasonal vegetable beds alongside native pollinator plants. Participants will learn proper planting techniques, soil preparation, and companion planting methods that promote biodiversity and natural pest control. The event will highlight the importance of native species in supporting pollinators such as bees and butterflies, while reinforcing sustainable garden maintenance practices. This collaborative day will also foster community connection and shared learning as families begin their growing season together.

October 2026 – Fall planting day focused on cool-season crops and soil enrichment.

The fall planting day will focus on preparing gardens for the cooler months through the planting of nutrient-dense, cold-tolerant crops such as leafy greens, root vegetables, and herbs. Participants will also engage in soil enrichment activities—adding compost, mulching, and planting cover crops to restore soil fertility after the summer season. Promotors will guide families in assessing their garden's productivity, reflecting lessons learned, and planning for the next cycle. This event will reinforce year-round food production, ecological stewardship, and sustainable soil health practices within the community.

End of the year Celebration (1 total):

November 2026 – End of the Year Celebration

The End of the Year Celebration will bring together participating families, promotors, and community partners to honor the accomplishments achieved throughout the Family Environmental Leadership Program. This festive event will showcase participants' home gardens, harvests, and creative projects developed during workshops and planting days. Families will share personal stories of growth, cultural traditions, and lessons learned, reinforcing the sense of pride and connection built over the year. The celebration will also include a community meal featuring produce grown by participants, recognition of promotors leadership, and distribution of completion certificates. This event will serve as both a reflection on collective impact and an inspiration for continued community engagement in sustainable, local food systems.

Participant Outcomes:

25–30 families will attend the info session to learn about the Family Environmental Leadership Program, its goals, and expectations.

Across all four workshops, at least 25 families will participate consistently, with an average attendance of 20–25 participants per session.

At least 50 participants across all three events will engage in ancestral food demonstrations and cultural activities promoting healthy, sustainable lifestyles.

Each planting day will engage 65 families, including returning participants and new community members, in hands-on activities that promote climate-resilient gardening practices.

Does this project require permission, permits, or other approvals? If so, please describe the status of these.

No, this project does not require additional permissions, permits, or approvals. All activities will take place at existing community garden sites, in families' own backyards, and in neighborhood spaces already secured for La Mesa Verde programming. Since the program does not involve new construction or changes to land use, no permits are necessary. Workshops and events are designed to operate fully within current site permissions and community agreements.

What is the lifetime of this project? If applicable, describe plans for operating and maintaining the project in the future.

The Family Environmental Leadership Program is designed as an ongoing initiative. While this grant funds a one-year program, LMV has a long-term plan to continue environmental education and urban gardening initiatives through additional funding sources, partnerships, and volunteer engagement. The gardens and infrastructure created will be maintained by families, promotors, and Sacred Heart staff, ensuring sustainability beyond the grant period.

Describe the project's readiness for implementation.

LMV is fully prepared to implement the Family Environmental Leadership Program immediately upon grant approval. Promotors are trained and ready to lead workshops. Garden sites are secured, and curriculum materials have been developed based on prior program success. Partnerships with local schools, community groups, and volunteers are in place to support participant recruitment, garden maintenance, and community-building events.

Project Budget

Budget Summary - Grant Request & Budget Summary - Matching Funds

Grant request: Personnel

\$39,000.00

Grant request: Contracted Services

\$6,000.00

Grant request: Supplies / Materials

\$18,000.00

Grant request: Other Direct Costs

\$7,000.00

Grant request: Indirect Costs

\$5,000.00

Total Matching Funds

\$18,750.00

Total Budget

\$75,000.00

Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:

UGP_Project_Budget_Sacred Heart 2025 (1).xlsx

Materials and Budget Template (item #9) found here: <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/programs/grant.html#Materials>

Provide a brief budget narrative to explain the expenses listed in each of the budget categories (e.g. Personnel).

PERSONNEL

Funds from this grant will be used to support partial staff salaries for La Mesa Verde's (LMV) Program Manager, LMV program Coordinator. These team members will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the project, including planning, implementation, data collection, and reporting. Their leadership will ensure that program activities are carried out efficiently, meet stated goals, and maintain high standards of community engagement and accountability. By investing in staff capacity, the project will strengthen LMV's ability to deliver high-quality environmental education and sustain long-term program impact.

CONTRACTED SERVICES

The grant will also provide stipends for community promoters who play a central role in leading workshops, organizing planting events, and conducting participant follow-up visits. Each promoter will receive acknowledgement for their time and expertise as facilitators, mentors, and community educators. Their involvement ensures that the program remains culturally grounded, peer-led, and responsive to the lived experiences of participating families. By acknowledging promoters for their leadership and outreach, the project reinforces LMV's commitment to equity, valuing community knowledge as a vital component of sustainable environmental education.

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

Includes educational materials, soil, seeds, native plants, garden tools, pollinator plants, compost bins, and workshop supplies. Materials will be used in both community sites and home gardens.

OTHER DIRECT COSTS

Covers printing of bilingual educational handouts, translation/interpretation services, outreach materials, volunteer appreciation materials, community event logistics (tables, tents, refreshments), and youth activity kits.

INDIRECT COSTS

Supports administrative overhead (e.g., insurance, fiscal management, facility utilities) related to project execution.

TOTAL MATCHING FUNDS

25% of project funds will be provided through Sacred Heart's operating budget, in-kind volunteer time, partner contributions and individual charitable donations.

Award Amount: The Board reserves the right to award partial funding on projects. If your project were to receive partial funding, what would this mean for your project?

The project is integral to our social justice mission and our essential services. We would run the project with reduced external funding amounts if needed.

Project Goals

Describe the specific problems, issues, or unserved needs the project will address.

There is a lack of access to green spaces and environmental education opportunities for low-income, immigrant, and Spanish-speaking families in San José. The limited availability of culturally relevant and bilingual environmental learning programs further restricts opportunities for these communities to engage with nature and sustainability practices. At the same time, growing concerns about food insecurity and climate-related challenges in urban areas highlight the urgency of building long-term community resilience. Empowering residents through local leadership and sustainable practices is essential to address these issues effectively. Additionally, the urban core faces an ongoing shortage of pollinator habitats and biodiversity spaces, underscoring the need for intentional efforts to restore ecological balance and promote environmental stewardship within city neighborhoods.

How does this project serve the community?

Number of people served

208

Number of youth served

35

Number of programs provided

11

Other Grantee Goal #1 (optional)

Build capacity among 10 community promoters who will gain facilitation, leadership, and environmental education skills to continue supporting LMV's long-term sustainability.

Other Grantee Goal #2 (optional)

Impact

Describe the lasting impact of the project. Please include whether the program is open to the public and whether any materials developed will be available to the public.

The Family Environmental Leadership Program will create a lasting impact by fostering community ownership of local green spaces and enhancing environmental literacy among families. Open to the public, the program ensures accessibility and inclusion by providing all materials, curriculum, and workshop content in both English and Spanish. Educational resources such as garden guides, pollinator-focused curriculum, and reflection journals will be made available online through Sacred Heart's website and distributed at community events to expand outreach and engagement.

Beyond the grant period, this initiative will continue through La Mesa Verde's (LMV) well-established volunteer network and partnerships with local schools, ensuring continuity and community-driven leadership. By building capacity within participating families and youth, the program will establish a sustainable model for urban environmental stewardship that promotes long-term ecological awareness and collective action.

Climate Resilience

How does this project enhance and/or raise awareness about climate resilience? Please include any metrics that can be used to help quantity or understand the climate benefits of the project.

The project directly advances climate resilience by integrating hands-on environmental practices that empower families to take meaningful local action. Through the establishment of native planting and pollinator gardens, the initiative will enhance urban biodiversity, support pollinator populations, and help mitigate the urban heat island effect. Water conservation education will equip participants with practical skills for efficient irrigation and drought-tolerant gardening, promoting responsible water use in a region increasingly affected by drought. Composting and soil health workshops will further strengthen climate resilience by reducing household waste and increasing carbon sequestration in urban soils.

At its core, the program emphasizes community-based adaptation, enabling residents to lead local solutions to climate challenges while fostering a sense of stewardship for their environment.

Metrics for success include:

Family Training: Train 27 families in water conservation, composting, and soil-health techniques, with at least 85% demonstrating application of these methods at home (verified through site visits or photo submissions).

Community Engagement & Learning: Engage 20 participants who will complete both pre- and post-program surveys, with at least 75% reporting increased awareness and 60% adopting at least one sustainable practice such as composting, mulching, or installing drip irrigation systems.

Environmental Impact: Achieve a measurable reduction of at least 15% in household green-waste output among participating families, as self-reported and verified through program logs.

Community Engagement / Stakeholder Support / Community Building

Describe the community support and/or community engagement process. Please upload any community support letters in the Documents Upload section below.

The Family Environmental Leadership Program was co-designed through a collaborative process involving La Mesa Verde (LMV) promoters, neighborhood families, and community partners. Sacred Heart Community Service conducted listening sessions, community surveys, and individual 1:1 meetings to gather input on residents' priorities related to garden-based learning, sustainability, and family engagement. This participatory approach ensured that the program design is rooted in community voice and addresses the real needs of local families.

The project has strong community backing, supported by letters of commitment from local schools, partner organizations, and participating families who recognize the program's value in promoting environmental education and resilience. Central to its success are the promoters, who serve as trained peer educators. Drawing from their lived experiences as immigrant and low-income residents, they play a vital role in shaping culturally relevant content, facilitating workshops, and ensuring that the program remains accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the community it serves.

Underserved Communities

Describe how the project addresses open space needs for sensitive populations such as residents of park-poor neighborhoods, underserved, or disadvantaged communities, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, or is located within an under-resourced community.

This project directly serves under-resourced neighborhoods in San José, with a primary focus on the Alma and Washington-Guadalupe areas, communities where residents face limited access to parks, open space, and green infrastructure. By creating micro green spaces in home gardens and community sites, the program brings nature directly into the neighborhoods where families live, learn, and gather.

All activities are bilingual (English and Spanish) and family-centered, ensuring that participation is inclusive and culturally relevant. The program intentionally addresses barriers commonly faced by low-income and Spanish-speaking households, offering hands-on learning experiences that build both environmental knowledge and community connection. In addition, the initiative prioritizes accessibility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing adaptive gardening tools, raised beds, and volunteer assistance. Through these efforts, the program ensures that everyone, regardless of age, or physical ability, has the opportunity to engage in and benefit from local environmental stewardship.

Organizational Capacity

Briefly describe the organization and its ability to successfully implement this project. This might include successful past projects, key staff qualifications, financial resources, etc.

Sacred Heart Community Service has a sixty-year, proven track record of outstanding coordination of subcontractors, or network partners, and administration of all of its contracted programs, including budget oversight and overall system data reporting and analysis. Coordination of subcontractors includes providing oversight of a range of services – screening, enrollment, provision of financial assistance, and case management – as well as providing training, evaluation of performance, and administration of subcontractor budgets.

Notably, SHCS played a crucial role in creating, implementing, and evaluating the Santa Clara County Homelessness Prevention System (HPS). Since its launch in 2017, the

Network Coordination Team at SHCS has helped create, implement, develop, evolve, evaluate, improve, and expand HPS, and has an impeccable record in the administration of all aspects of the HPS.

Additionally, our organization has demonstrated successful contract and fiscal management at this funding level with the City of San Jose, the State of California, the California Public Utilities Commission, as well as private foundations (Silicon Valley Community Foundation, First 5, Google Foundation, Packard Foundation, Stanford University, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Sobrato Family Foundation, Packard Foundation) and corporate donors such as Google and Bank of America.

We currently manage a \$31 million County of Santa Clara contract for homelessness prevention, \$2.4 million in other local government contracts, a \$2.5 million local utilities contract, \$1.3 million in CSBG grants and \$2.7 million in foundation grants.

Directly related to urban agriculture education, we have been awarded a \$145,000 LMV environmental education grant from the Santa Clara Valley Water Authority.

Leadership & Innovation

Describe how this project employs innovative approaches or encourages collaboration and partnerships.

We support home gardening and community garden innovation by providing the resources (raised beds, irrigation systems, soil, vermiculture) and education (mentorship program, monthly workshops, community presence) to create sustainable agricultural practices:

Container gardening

Smart technology

Resource management

water conservation

Reduce food miles

Improved urban environment

Community and education

Food security

In the future, we plan to incorporate hydroponics and rooftop gardens.

Sacred Heart/LMV works in collaboration with the following urban gardening agencies in Santa Clara County, both formally and informally: Shamahl Science Lab, California Native Garden Foundation, The Forge Garden at Santa Clara University, Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, Our City Forest, Garden to Table, Valley Verde, and Veggielution.

As a member of this food coalition, we also advocate city-wide food policy, identify viable sites and promote best practices in urban gardening.

Documents Section

Document Uploads (please combine into one file if possible)

2025 OSA Resolution Template FOR Match Commitment (1) (1).pdf

Additional files (if needed)

Additional files (if needed)

Submitted Date - Internal

Summary Field:

Name: Average Score (no bonus)

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: average

Field: Base Score Total

Decimal: 2

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
 - isComplete | is | true

Summary Field:

Name: Total Count of Submitted Reviews

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: count

Field: NONE

Decimal: NONE

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
 - isComplete | is | true
 - Folder | is | Submitted

Program Application: File Attachments

Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:

UGP_Project_Budget_Sacred Heart 2025 (1).xlsx

Document Uploads (please combine into one file if possible)

2025 OSA Resolution Template FOR Match Commitment (1) (1).pdf

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
RESOLUTION 2025.10 OPEN SPACE AUTHORITY

Resolution of the **Board of Directors** of the **Sacred Heart Community Service**, authorizing **Sacred Heart Community Service** to enter into a grant agreement for funding for a **\$75,000** grant under the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority Urban Grant Program for **Family Environmental Leadership Program**, located at **1381 S. 1st St., San Jose, CA 95110**;

Whereas, in accordance with the voter-approved Measure T Expenditure Plan, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Authority) has established a competitive Urban Grant Program (the Program) for projects that provide healthy and safe open space and park areas and environmental education programs within and near urban areas of Santa Clara County; and

Whereas, the **Sacred Heart Community Service**, has identified **Family Environmental Leadership Program**, at **1381 S. 1st St., San Jose, CA 95110** as a priority project; and

Whereas, the **Sacred Heart Community Service** believes that the Project meets the criteria for the Authority's Urban Grant Program; and

Whereas, the total project cost for the implementation of the Project is **\$93,750**; and

Whereas, the Authority's Program requires applicants with annual revenue above \$10 million to provide at least 25% match of grant request; and

Whereas, **Sacred Heart Community Service** will provide **\$18,750** from unrestricted general operating grants and/or individual private donations; and

Whereas, **Sacred Heart Community Service** will be responsible for operation and maintenance of the Project; and

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Board of Directors of **Sacred Heart Community Service** hereby finds, determines, declares, and orders as follows:

- 1. Truth of Recitals.** That the forgoing recitations are true and correct.
- 2. Measure T Consistency.** That the Project is consistent with the Measure T Expenditure Plan.
- 3. Authorization.** Dalenna Ruelas Hughes, Associate Director of the **Sacred Heart Community Service** is hereby authorized to conduct all negotiations and submit and sign all documents, including but not limited to, grant agreement, conservation easement, amendments, reimbursement requests as may be necessary for completion of the project.
- 4. Matching Funds.** **Sacred Heart Community Service** has available **\$18,750** for matching funds as cash or in-kind and sufficient funds to complete the project.

5. Operation and Maintenance. Sacred Heart Community Service has available and sufficient funds necessary to operate and maintain the project.

6. Program Guidelines. Sacred Heart Community Service has reviewed, understands, and agrees to abide by the provisions contained in the Authority's Program Guidelines.

7. Legal Compliance. Sacred Heart Community Service acknowledges that it will comply with all federal, state and local laws applicable to the Project.

Passed and adopted through an authorizing resolution of the **Board of Directors of Sacred Heart Community Service** and hereby signed on **October 14, 2025**.

Authorized Original Signature: *Vu-Bang Nguyen*
Vu-Bang Nguyen (Oct 13, 2025 11:42:03 PDT)

Printed Name: **Vu-Bang Nguyen**

Title: **Board Chair**