

WORKING PAPER SERIES **GREENBELT FOUNDATION**

# **Re-envisioning the Into the Greenbelt Grant Program**

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Possibility grows here.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Approach for the Re-envisioning Process	3
2.1 Desk-based Review	3
2.2 Interviews	4
2.3 Online Survey	4
2.4 Preliminary Results Workshop	5
3.0 Insights for Re-envisioning the Grant Program	5
3.1 Field Trip Audiences	5
3.2 Field Trip Destinations	8
3.3 Budget and Administration	15
3.4 Marketing, Education, and Engagement	18
4.0 Program Goals and Objectives	19
4.1 Approach for Program Evaluation	21
5.0 Recommendations for Program Delivery	22
5.1 Administer the Program Internally with Greenbelt Foundation Staff	22
5.2 Deliver the Program under Two Funding Streams	23
6.0 Conclusion	25
Appendix A: Interviewees List	27
Appendix B: Workshop Agenda	29
Appendix C: Notes from Facilitated Discussion	30
Appendix D: Potential Program Delivery Pathways Explored	32
Appendix E: Overview of Programming and Delivery Requirements	35

# 1.0 Introduction

The Greenbelt Foundation's Into the Greenbelt grant program provided newcomers, underserved communities, and young people in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) with opportunities to explore Ontario's Greenbelt. Through travel bursaries and funding for educational and stewardship activities, the Into the Greenbelt grant program fostered learning about the importance of protecting the Greenbelt's two million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands, and rivers. By reducing economic barriers, the program provided much-needed opportunities for community service groups, especially those in urbanized areas such as youth service organizations, cultural groups, and newcomer agencies, to expand their service offerings and directly engage participants in outdoor recreation and nature-based learning experiences. The program supported the Foundation's efforts to engage all audiences and communicate the value and benefit of the Greenbelt, strengthen community relationships, and promote Greenbelt visits, access to local food, and tourism.

Past iterations of the grant program have provided eligible organizations with financial resources to organize day trips to select Greenbelt destinations. While the program has always featured a range of activities — including picnics, hikes, and farm visits — there has been some evolution in terms of its name and administrative leads.

- **2013–2018:** World Crop Learning Gardens
- **2018–2020:** Into the Greenbelt Grant Program
- **2018–2020:** Urban River Valley Connector Program

The grant program was on hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic while the Foundation paused its support of in-person experiential programming in the Greenbelt. With more recent high demand for nature-based experiences and access to greenspaces — in addition to farm visits and local food — the Foundation seeks to re-envision the Into the Greenbelt grant program. This report summarizes the outcomes of the re-envisioning process, including consideration of:

- audiences to engage;
- field trip destinations;
- budget and administration;
- marketing, education, and engagement opportunities;
- program goals and objectives (tied to performance indicators); and
- a recommended model for program delivery.

# 2.0 Approach for the Re-envisioning Process

The re-envisioning process took place from December 2023 to April 2024. The consulting team led three research activities and a workshop with Foundation staff to gather information about successes and challenges of past iterations of Into the Greenbelt grant program and prospects for building a successful future program.

## 2.1 Desk-based Review

A desk-based review supplemented the insights from engagement. The desk-based review included:

- a scan of destination and programming opportunities across the Greenbelt that are relevant to the Into the Greenbelt grant program;
- a review of potential trip destination and program delivery organizations;
- a review of the community groups and organizations who applied for a grant with the Foundation in 2022; and
- a scan of research related to opportunities to connect underserved communities with nature-based experiences.

The desk-based review provided supplementary information to inform the development of the interview guide and survey. Ultimately, the desk-based review helped identify possible gaps in programming and opportunities for the Into the Greenbelt grant program.

## 2.2 Interviews

Engagement with individuals was an essential part of the re-envisioning process. Interviews with 20 people from across the Greenbelt were conducted via video conferencing or telephone between January and April 2024. A list of prospective interviewees was developed collaboratively among the Foundation staff and the consulting team. Additional interviewees were identified through references from other individuals with whom we communicated. The composition of interviewees is provided in Table 1, and a full list of interviewees is available in Appendix A. External interviews were complemented with conversations with Foundation staff. Overall, the interviews were an extremely valuable means of learning about ways to reach community organizations (especially those who represent newcomers, underserved communities, and Indigenous peoples), discern potential barriers for those organizations, and gain insights into potential new ways to administer the program.

**Table 1:** Composition of interviewees.

	Number of Interviewees
Community organizations Potential trip participants	10
Destinations Representatives for potential field trip sites	6
Program delivery Potential program administrators	4

## 2.3 Online Survey

An online survey gathered information from a wider audience. The survey was hosted on SurveyMonkey.com and distributed via email to more than 300 people. In total, 41 people responded to the survey, most of whom were from potential destinations. As a result, the project team focused more of the remaining interviews on community organizations and potential trip participants (as reflected in Table 1). Overall, the survey was valuable for identifying potential trip

destinations and contacts as well as confirming general insights about the timing and logistics of trips.

## 2.4 Preliminary Results Workshop

The project team facilitated a workshop session with Greenbelt Foundation staff on April 11, 2024. The purpose of the workshop was three-fold:

- to present preliminary findings;
- to discuss programming opportunities; and
- to facilitate discussion about promising options (potential pathways) for the Greenbelt Foundation.

The workshop was instrumental in confirming relevant program recommendations in light of what we learned from the interviews and survey. Further information about the topics of discussion is available in Appendix B and discussion about potential program options is available in Appendix C.

## 3.0 Insights for Re-envisioning the Grant Program

The following section provides a synthesis of our engagement efforts and desktop review. The section is organized according to four main topics:

- field trip audiences;
- field trip destinations;
- budget and administration; and
- marketing, education, and engagement.

Each of these subsections reports on “what we heard,” while later sections present proposed program delivery options.

### 3.1 Field Trip Audiences

The Into the Greenbelt grant program seeks to help Ontarians connect with, experience, and understand the Greenbelt. Through nature-based, agri-food, and cultural and/or recreational experiences and activities, Ontarians can learn that the Greenbelt is an asset that benefits them all. Underserved and underrepresented groups may need support to access the Greenbelt, and it is helpful to understand the challenges and barriers that these communities face. Many of newcomer and racialized communities face similar challenges and barriers such as:

- lack of representation;
- safety concerns;
- accessibility issues;
- socioeconomic factors; and
- cultural barriers.

“Immigrant seniors need to understand how the Greenbelt works, especially for those who came from the country or city that has less opportunity to access nature and green space.”

— Survey respondent

While there are some commonalities, it is important to recognize the unique needs and challenges that each community faces (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Underserved and underrepresented communities in Ontario and the challenges and barriers they face for nature-based experiences in the Greenbelt.<sup>1</sup>

Underserved / underrepresented community	Challenges and barriers for nature-based experiences
New Canadians and immigrant communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language barriers</li> <li>• Cultural difference (e.g., perception of safety in the outdoors)</li> <li>• Limited access to resources and support networks</li> </ul>
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth's busy schedule (lack of time)</li> <li>• Digital distractions</li> <li>• Limited access to adult role models/mentors to introduce youth to outdoor activities</li> </ul>
Low-income urban neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of poverty and financial constraints</li> <li>• Limited access to green space/recreational facilities</li> </ul>
Remote and urban Indigenous communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical trauma and systemic barriers</li> <li>• Urbanization and displacement from traditional lands</li> <li>• Limited access to culturally appropriate services and resources</li> </ul>
LGBTQ2+ communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence</li> <li>• Lack of representation</li> </ul>
Persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical barriers</li> <li>• Lack of inclusive facilities and accommodations</li> <li>• Limited availability of adaptive equipment or support services</li> </ul>
Seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced mobility and physical limitations</li> <li>• Concerns about safety</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Downie, C. (2019). LGBTQ2+ Inclusiveness: Toolkit for Inclusive Municipalities in Canada and Beyond. Written for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO).

Humphrey, N. (2020). Breaking Down the Lack of Diversity in Outdoor Spaces. National Health Foundation.

Scott, J.L., & Tenneti, A. (2021). Race and Nature in the City Engaging Youth of Colour in Nature-Based Activities — A Community-based Needs Assessment for Nature Canada's NatureHood.

Whittingham, E., & Vabi, V. (2022). Canada's Urban Forests: Bringing the Canopy to All. Nature Canada.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, curbs, trails, crosswalks)</li> </ul>
Racialized communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical and systemic barriers (e.g., racism, discrimination, lack of representation)</li> <li>• Fear of racial profiling, harassment, or discrimination</li> <li>• Cultural and social-economic factors (e.g., knowledge about the outdoors, financial constraints, competing priorities)</li> </ul>

### 3.1.1 Engaging Underserved and Underrepresented Groups

To help with field trip audience engagement, it is important to focus on engagement through a variety of strategies. As we heard during interviews with community organizations, it is important to work with community organizations that cater to different outreach and inclusion strategies such as:

- culturally relevant programming;
- accessible and inclusive event planning;
- engagement through education and stewardship;
- youth and family engagement; and
- celebrating diversity.

Utilizing partnerships with community organizations is essential for increasing participation as these organizations often have deep-rooted trust and relationships with newcomers and racialized communities. This helps bridge gaps and ensure outreach efforts are culturally sensitive and effective. Partners are able to focus on the universal and unique challenges and barriers of underserved/underrepresented groups outlined in Table 2. They are able to develop alternative engagement methods that resonate with diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Insight:** Through interviews with community organizations, we heard that newcomers to Canada sometimes have a hard time trusting the safety of going out into the natural areas of the Greenbelt. Therefore, focusing on sharing valuable knowledge about outdoor safety in nature, providing guided tours with translators, and empowering individuals to confidently explore the natural beauty of the Greenbelt is beneficial for getting newcomers out into the Greenbelt.

Through the interview process, we heard about the importance of relationship building and community engagement. Relationship building can be realized with community leaders and their community organizations through building authentic, long-term relationships from the ground up. Several of the community group members and past grant administrators who we interviewed mentioned the importance of building meaningful relationships with community leaders and participants to gain a better understanding of their needs and barriers to participation. It became apparent that the Into the Greenbelt grant program should provide opportunities for ongoing communication and feedback from community leaders and participants. Several community organizers that we spoke to, such as Demeisha Brown from Brown Girl Outdoor World, have had great success in connecting community groups with nature for outdoor experiences and attribute much of their success to the ability to foster trust and meaningful, long-term relationships with

participants and strategic partnerships and collaborations with community organizations and program delivery partners.

**Insight:** After conducting interviews with various participant groups, it became apparent that there is a wide range of interests and abilities among community groups that may participate in the program. As a result, it is recommended that the Foundation look to include a range of field trip options with different levels of support. The program should also provide a more open option for experienced community groups to propose and design their own field trip experiences in the Greenbelt.

Engaging with youth groups in Ontario brings its own challenges. During an interview, it was highlighted that gaining the confidence of parents to send their children on a nature-based experience can be particularly challenging. There is a delicate balance between providing sufficient information for those who need the additional reassurance while avoiding overwhelming parents who might not need as much detail. This demonstrated the importance of leveraging the existing knowledge and trust of local community organizations as they tailor their communication strategies to be clear and transparent to fit the diverse needs of parents within these communities.

## 3.2 Field Trip Destinations

Field trips allow for hands-on learning and exploration. As one of the most biologically rich areas in Canada, the Greenbelt is a captivating destination for exploration and learning about natural and agricultural diversity. From the tall cliffs of the Niagara escarpment to the wetlands of Rouge National Urban Park, each destination within the Greenbelt offers its own natural beauty, cultural heritage, and recreational opportunities.

We have grouped potential into the Greenbelt field trip destinations into four themes. Each of these themes provide unique benefits for the participants involved (Table 3). Survey respondents indicated that they would be very likely to engage their organization with the following Greenbelt field trip activities, which could all be achieved at the four field trip destinations:

- cultural education activities (e.g., heritage tour/Indigenous cultural experience) (100% selected very likely);
- environmental stewardship (e.g., tree planting) (83%);
- farming/agriculture education activities (e.g., farm visit/tour/pick your own) (83%);
- environmental education activities (e.g., visiting a nature centre) (83%); and
- sports and recreation (e.g., hiking/walking, canoeing, skiing, biking) (83%).

**Table 3:** Field trip destination themes and benefits with examples of field trip destinations in the Greenbelt.

Field trip destination theme	Benefits
<p><b>Nature-based experience</b> Nature-based field trips provide an immersive educational outing that connects individuals with the natural environment. These field trips focus on fostering learning, appreciation, and understanding of the natural world.</p>	<p>Environmental awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hands-on experiences to deepen understanding of ecosystems, biodiversity, and conservation</li> </ul> <p>Experiential learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn through direct experiences and reflection while observing, exploring, and interacting with the natural world</li> </ul> <p>Physical and mental health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical activity in combination with being in nature helps improve fitness, reduces stress, and promotes feelings of calmness</li> </ul> <p>Personal growth and empowerment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overcome challenges, build resilience, and develop stewardship to provide an opportunity for personal growth, self-discovery, and empowerment</li> </ul>
<p>Stewardship</p> <p>Stewardship field trips work towards bringing together individuals to address issues and create positive change. These field trips focus on teaching participants how to respect and care for the environment in sustainable ways.</p>	<p>Personal growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop new skills, gain knowledge, and enhance problem-solving skills</li> </ul> <p>Sense of purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help the well-being of the community and the environment, to feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment</li> </ul> <p>Community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feel connected with others in the community who are trying to achieve a common goal while building new relationships with like-minded people</li> </ul> <p>Environmental impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation and restoration efforts help preserve the ecosystem and improve the overall health of the environment</li> </ul>
<p>Indigenous-based experience</p> <p>Indigenous-based field trips immerse individuals in Indigenous heritage and customs. These field trips provide a unique opportunity to deepen an understanding and appreciation for Indigenous cultures and their deep connection with the natural world.</p>	<p>Cultural understanding and respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct engagement with Indigenous communities and their cultural practices helps individuals gain a deeper appreciation and respect for Indigenous cultures, traditions, and ways of life</li> </ul> <p>Environmental knowledge and stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn about traditional ecological knowledge (sustainable land management practices, biodiversity conservation, human-nature interconnectedness)</li> </ul> <p>Interpersonal connections and community building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through meaningful connections with Indigenous elders, community members, and youth, a sense of belonging and cross-cultural understanding is fostered</li> </ul>

<p>Agriculture and agri-food experience</p> <p>Agriculture and agri-food field trips provide insights into local food production, focusing on farming practices and the journey from farm to table.</p>	<p><b>Hands-on learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn from hands-on activities with farm visits and workshops to deepen understanding of agricultural practices</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education on sustainable farming practices helps highlight and foster an appreciation for a good working relationship between agriculture and the environment</li> </ul> <p><b>Food education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn about the local farm-to-table journey while gaining insights into food production, distribution, and nutrition.</li> </ul>
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Through conversations with Indigenous Tourism Ontario and Moccasin Identifier, we gained additional insights and resources for engaging with Indigenous communities and destinations. Indigenous Tourism Ontario has a broad membership base (700+ members), and the organization supports and promotes Indigenous outdoor experiences across the Greenbelt that could be incorporated into the program. For example, Foraging Adventure near Owen Sound is led by Chef Zach Keeshig who takes groups on walking tours along a local river and shares his expertise on responsible, safe, and sustainable foraging as participants taste wild edibles. Moccasin Identifier noted that the Foundation helped them prepare a StoryMap, where all the existing and proposed installations, aligned with significant archaeological sites, are identified. They feel this map would be a great starting place for identifying areas to visit in the Greenbelt. They also mentioned the potential for Moccasin Identifier kits to be incorporated into the program. Both organizations expressed an interest in continuing these conversations and exploring options for collaboration with the Foundation. (See contact information in Appendix A.)

### 3.2.1 Criteria for Selecting Destinations

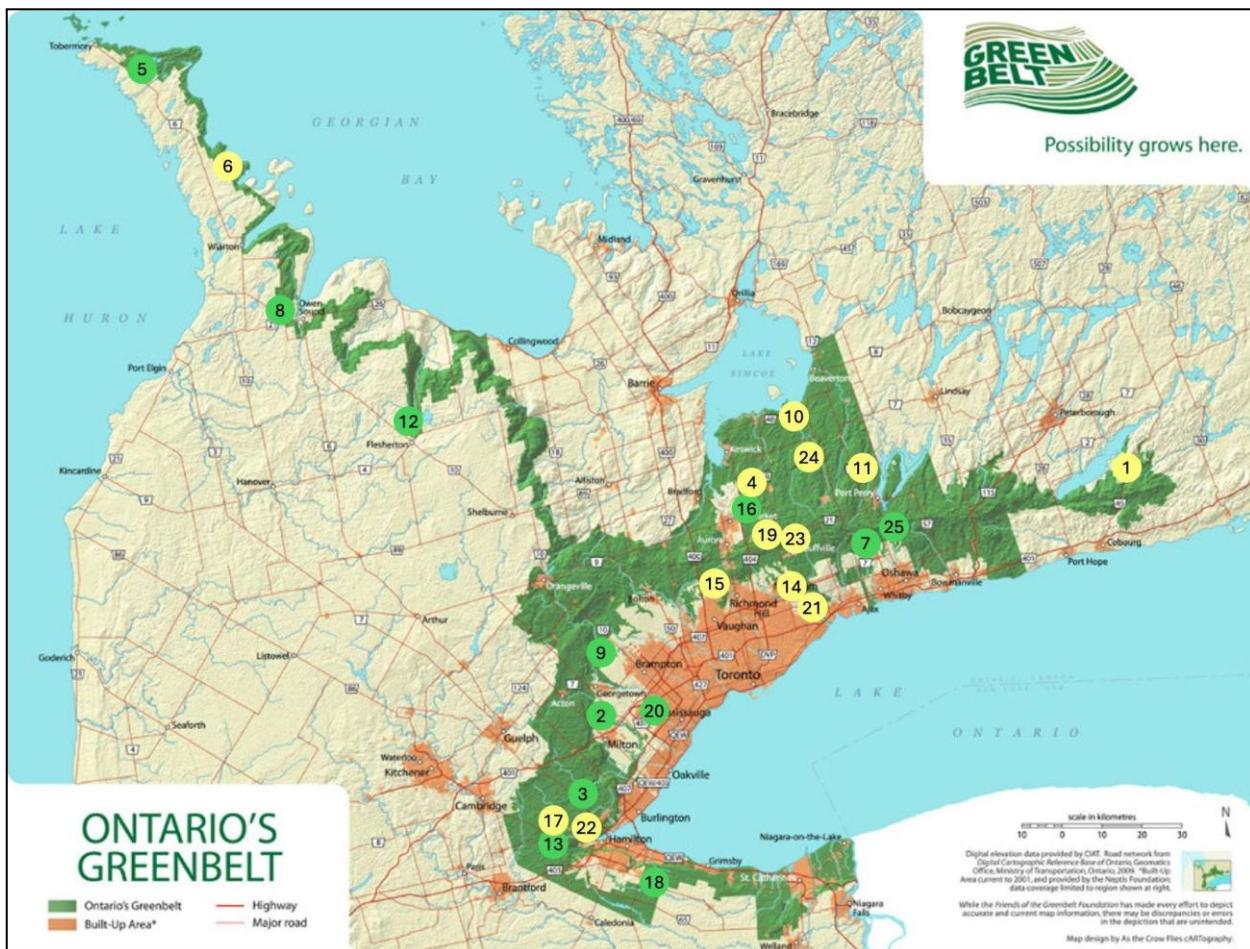
The Foundation sought a list of criteria for locations to be listed as part of the program. There are two issues at play here. The first is how the Foundation can select appropriate sites. Our survey confirmed that experiences with natural features (e.g., viewing waterfalls), accessible facilities, educational resources and opportunities, and variety of recreational options (e.g., hiking, boating, swimming, sightseeing) are all desirable characteristics for destinations. Interviews further clarified that meeting areas where groups can either purchase meals or organize picnics are very desirable. Table 4 provides a list of potential field trip destinations, including an indication of whether they have been a destination in the program in the past and if there is confirmed interest in future into the Greenbelt field trips. Figure 1 offers an indication of the geographical distribution of destinations that have confirmed their interest.

**Table 4:** Contact information for past and potential trip destinations. Organizations with confirmed interest were self-identified through the survey and/or interviews. Further vetting will be required to confirm which destinations are included as an Into the Greenbelt destination.

Organization	Contact	Past Program Involvement	Confirmed Interest in Future Trips
1 Alderville Black Oak Savanna, Alderville First Nations	Gillian Di Petta gdipetta@alderville.ca	y	
2 Andrews Farm Market & Winery	Matt Setzkorn farm@andrewsscenicacres.com 905-878-5807 ext100		y
3 Baba Link Farm	Patricia Kozowyk & Ernst von der Kall babalinkfarm@gmail.com 905-690-7070		y
4 Brooks Farms	info@brooksfarms.com 905-473-3246	y	
5 Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association	Mike Warkentin m_warkentin@rogers.com 416-837-2959 Mike Sehl (EcoAdventures) Mike.sehl@icloud.ca 519-588-5371	y	y
6 Cape Croker Park, Wiarton	Caley Doran, Anishinaabe Cultural Experiences	y	
7 Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (e.g., Heber Down CA)	Cara Gregory cgregory@cloca.ca 289-385-3561		y
8 Conservation Halton (includes Mountsberg Conservation Area)	Brenna Bartley <a href="mailto:bbartley@hrca.on.ca">bbartley@hrca.on.ca</a> 905-854-2276 AJ Leeming <a href="mailto:ajleeming@hrca.on.ca">ajleeming@hrca.on.ca</a>	y	y

9	Credit Valley Conservation (e.g., Terra Cotta CA)	Phil James phil.james@cvc.ca 416-562-8051  Jesse de Jager <a href="mailto:jesse.dejager@cvc.ca">jesse.dejager@cvc.ca</a> 416-277-9314  Ashoo Anand ashoo.anand@cvc.ca 905-670-1615	y	y
10	First Nation Cultural Tours	Sutton <a href="https://firstnationculturaltours.com/">https://firstnationculturaltours.com/</a>	y	
11	Forsythe Family Farms	Jim Forsythe forsythewfamilyfarms@gmail.com	y	
12	Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (e.g., Eugenia Falls CA)	Gloria Dangerfield g.dangerfield@greysauble.on.ca 519-376-3076		y
13	Hamilton Conservation Authority (e.g., Christie Lake CA)	Gord Costie gord.costie@conservationhamilton.ca 905-525-2181 x 168	y	y
14	Hoptree-Misty Hills	Scarborough <a href="https://torontonaturestewards.org/sites/hoptree-misty-hills/">https://torontonaturestewards.org/sites/hoptree-misty-hills/</a>	y	
15	Kortright Centre for Conservation	<a href="mailto:vservices@trca.ca">vservices@trca.ca</a> 905-832-2289	y	
16	Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (e.g., Beaver River Wetland CA)	Nicole Hamley <a href="mailto:n.hamley@LSRCA.on.ca">n.hamley@LSRCA.on.ca</a> 905-806-6935		y
17	Liberty Way Farm	<a href="https://libertywayfarm.ca/">https://libertywayfarm.ca/</a>	y	
18	Murphy's Country Produce	Megan Murphy murphysproduce@rogers.com <a href="mailto:mmurphy3-cc@hotmail.com">mmurphy3-cc@hotmail.com</a> 905-928-1351	y	y
19	Reesor's Farm Market	John and Emma Reesor farmmarketinfo@reesors.ca	y	
20	Riverwood Conservancy	Sara Wilbur-Collins Sara.WilburCollins@theriverwoodconservancy.org	y	y

21	Rouge National Park	Omar McDadi omar.mcdadi@pc.gc.ca	y	
22	Royal Botanical Gardens (e.g., Indigenous Plant Medicines Trail)	Catherine Arlein carlein@rbg.ca	y	
23	Treetop Trekking	Stouffville or Hamilton <a href="https://treetoptrekking.com/">https://treetoptrekking.com/</a>	y	
24	Wheelbarrow Farm	<a href="https://wheelbarrowfarm.com">https://wheelbarrowfarm.com</a> 647-335-3190	y	
25	White Feather Farms Inc.	Hubert Schillings chschillings@hotmail.ca 905-260-0951		y

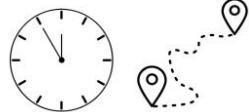


**Figure 1:** Map showing distribution of past and potential field trip destinations. Numbers correspond to organizations in Table 4 (locations are not precise).

The second issue is how the Foundation can support trip organizers with selecting appropriate sites for their groups. A valuable insight from interviews with community organizers was that there are wide discrepancies in terms of what groups may be interested in for trip destinations. Groups that

may include adults who are restricted by the hours of shift work are less likely to want to travel far from city centres and may prefer half-day trips. A preference for shorter trips may also be true for groups that include seniors or small children. On the other hand, group members who seek more natural settings or are attracted by scenic attractions can be more motivated to travel several hours for full-day trips. With this in mind, it may be less important to have minimum criteria for sites. It is likely more important to provide clear information about what to expect on a specific field trip. People generally understand that they are going into natural areas or agricultural lands, however, many people in the target community organizations will need information about what to expect and how to prepare for trips (e.g., hats, sunscreen, footwear, and bug spray as appropriate; information about what facilities will be available). To illustrate, Table 5 summarizes the basis of a potential visual information system that can be applied to each destination.

**Table 5:** Visual information system that could be applied to each destination.

Category	Descriptors	Potential Icons
Destination themes	Food and agriculture, recreation, nature stewardship	 <p>Note: Add labels pointing to food and agriculture, etc.</p>
Distance from urban centres	Less than 1 hour, 1–3 hours, 3+ hours	 <p>Note: include a clock accompanied by a time estimate (e.g., Less than 1 hour, 1–3 hours, 3+ hours). Could also include distance from the urban centre.</p>
Level of physical demand	Easy/everyone, Moderate, Difficult	 <p>Note: Label could include Easy/everyone, Moderate, Difficult. Some sites may include multiple labels if there is more than one activity offered (e.g., fully accessible trails and canoeing).</p>

Types of activities available	Fruit/vegetable picking, walking/hiking, bicycling, sightseeing	  Note: There would be an icon for each activity that is available at the specific destination site.
Costs	Low, Moderate, High	$\$$ = low $\$\$$ = medium $\$\$\$$ = high Note: Alternatively, could use a half circle meter with an arrow pointing to labels (similar to the ones above).
Equipment required	Hiking boots, bicycles, snowshoes, skis, beach gear	 Note: There would be an icon for each piece of equipment needed at the specific destination site.

**Insight:** It will be helpful to distinguish between how the Foundation selects sites for inclusion versus how to help people pick the right site for their trip. As we discuss in the options for program delivery below, the Foundation should also consider the possibility for community groups to propose their own destinations (provided that they confirm that sites are within the Greenbelt, using the Foundation's ["Are You In The Greenbelt?" online tool](#)).

### 3.3 Budget and Administration

Several key considerations stood out as important for the future Into the Greenbelt grant program. We have organized these program considerations in terms of eligible expenses, trip budgets, and the application process.

#### 3.3.1 Eligible Expenses

Interviewees with experience in Into the Greenbelt shared that the budget was restrictive in terms of the amount of funding available and how it could be spent. In particular, these sentiments were shared with respect to the current costs for transportation. Among all of the community organizers we spoke with, there was general agreement that it would be desirable for Into the Greenbelt to cover a variety of types of expenses as summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Summary of potential expenses to be covered by program grants.

Expense	Description
Travel	<p>Interviewees identified travel expenses and logistics as the top barrier for underserved communities to experience the Greenbelt. Ensuring that travel expense eligibility is flexible will help accommodate a variety of trip planning options. For example, some interviewees discussed incorporating public transit options into field trips as an added opportunity to educate attendees about getting around in the GTA. Other interviewees suggested that a variety of travel modes should be considered as eligible expenses (e.g., mileage for carpooling, parking fees).</p>
Expertise	<p>Some interviewees emphasized the desire to bring experts on field trips. Not all destinations will have dedicated staff to share knowledge with attendees. Enabling applicants to request budget for experts may allow field trips to include further information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stewardship and conservation;</li> <li>• Indigenous culture and important sites;</li> <li>• local agriculture and food production; and</li> <li>• guidance for recreational activities (e.g., hiking and trail etiquette, birdwatching, plant identification)</li> </ul>
Overhead	<p>Many organizations that apply for Into the Greenbelt grants are under-staffed and often overburdened. As such, interviewees expressed interest in being able to use a portion of funding to help cover administrative costs of organizing experiences for their respective communities. These costs can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time required for planning the trip (e.g., booking/transportation, coordinating with destinations, identifying and securing relevant expertise);</li> <li>• time that organizers spend on the trip; and</li> <li>• time spent on program reporting requirements.</li> </ul>
Insurance	<p>Several interviewees noted that insurance costs for hosting events and trips have risen in recent years. Insurance costs will vary by different types of organizations, whether they have existing insurance coverage, and the specific activities that they will participate in. As such, it would be desirable if Into the Greenbelt can provide funds for the necessary insurance.</p>

Stewardship materials	As stewardship can encompass a wide variety of activities, expenses can vary greatly. Further contributing to this variability is the potential for trip organizers to secure in-kind support from partner organizations (e.g., Conservation Authorities or municipalities). For these reasons, it is ideal for the proposal process to allow organizers to incorporate funding all required stewardship materials (e.g., gloves and shovels). As some equipment is expensive but also re-usable (shovels, watering cans), trip applicants should be encouraged to work with partners who may have access to this equipment. The cost for purchasing plants, mulch, and other on-site materials can be high, but there is also potential for partners to access these materials through other funding programs.
Entry fees	During the planning process, organizers will be able to anticipate entry costs based on the number of participants on their trips. Entry fees are typically not a large barrier, but interviewees indicated a preference for Into the Greenbelt to continue to cover the costs associated with destination entry fees where appropriate.

### 3.3.1.1 Trip Budget

Interviewees expressed interest in flexibility to accommodate trips with both larger and smaller budgets. For example, groups that prefer to experience the Greenbelt trails close to urban areas may be able to use public transit systems and can organize relatively low-budget trips. On the other hand, organizations that prefer to incorporate multiple stops and full-day activities and education may require a larger budget. Rather than specifying total funding available per trip, it would be preferable to enable trip organizers to provide a total trip budget and then request relevant funding.

**Insight:** To align with the goal of supporting underrepresented groups with accessing the Greenbelt, we heard that the program's model of microgrants was sufficient for the needs of many organizations. However, it is important to ensure budgetary flexibility (i.e., covering different types of expenses) in order to continue to support low-budget opportunities.

### 3.3.1.2 Application Process

Interviewees with previous experience applying for the Into the Greenbelt program grants expressed gratitude over the relatively simple and straightforward application process. Characteristics of the application process that are valuable include:

- a “save as you go” application platform;
- a contact with the Foundation for support if questions arise during the application process;
- plain language instructions;
- a budget template to support organizations with trip planning/project budgeting; and
- a webinar or instructional video on the application process.

In general, it is ideal to incorporate as little administrative reporting requirements for grantees as possible. Organizations that support underserved communities are often short-staffed and overburdened. The Foundation should strive to strike a balance between ensuring enough information

about the trip is received to track key performance indicators without over-burdening grantees with reporting requirements.

### 3.4 Marketing, Education, and Engagement

The consulting team met with members of the Foundation to consider the types of communication support needed to promote and support the Into the Greenbelt grant program.

**Insight:** Promotions for the program should reach specific communities and be tailored to how target audiences want to receive information.

The most significant factors for marketing, education, and engagement activities are **time** and **budget**. The consulting team presented a range of potential activities (Table 7) and the Foundation should consider which can be coordinated internally within annual communication plans or require further support.

**Table 7:** Overview of essential communications activities related to Into the Greenbelt.

	<b>Program Development</b>	<b>During and After Trips</b>
Marketing Raising awareness about Into the Greenbelt grant program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Program branding</li><li>• Promotions (press releases, newsletters, social media)</li><li>• Program launch (announcements about grants, sharing videos produced with Park People)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Photo and video documentation (e.g., communications team participate in several trips per year)</li><li>• Use of monthly blogs and weekly social media posts</li><li>• Sharing photos and stories</li><li>• Targeted social media hashtags (e.g., #IntoGreenbelt)</li></ul>
Education Developing connection so that people want to protect the Greenbelt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education packages tailored for different audiences (e.g., multiple languages, youth)</li><li>• Sharing of Greenbelt key messaging tools for program participants</li><li>• Presentation deck</li><li>• Develop content to be shared with trip participants (e.g., 1-page handouts, PDFs for email, brochures)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Documents for planning a trip (e.g., checklist for packing)</li><li>• Survey—program evaluation and pre-post Greenbelt awareness</li><li>• Testimonials</li></ul>

<p><b>Engagement</b> Encouraging future engagement and incentivizing future visits</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share examples of ways to get involved with the Greenbelt (e.g., stewardship activities — tree planting, invasive pulls, litter clean ups)</li> <li>• Encourage future visits by sharing Foundation resources about the Greenbelt</li> </ul>
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Program communications should include materials for specific audiences, in the appropriate format—for example, a 1-pager or a brochure may not be appropriate formats for all outreach activities. Translation into other languages may be appropriate. Further, the communications plan should consider content creation during trips (e.g., photos, videos, quotes) that tell the stories about trip participants and/or destinations. The use of QR codes on promotional and educational materials can direct trip participants towards Greenbelt content or suggestions for social media channels. The use of a common hashtag on social media (e.g., #IntoGreenbelt) can make it possible for the communications team to search and collate materials.

## 4.0 Program Goals and Objectives

In order to re-envision the goals and objectives of the Into the Greenbelt grant program, our process started with a review of the past program goals. The past goal was stated as “the Into the Greenbelt program engages newcomers and urban residents in underserved community neighbourhoods to enjoy and learn about the benefits of local agriculture and food and experience nearby natural systems and protected spaces. The program curates experiences to build personal connections and stories about the Greenbelt and promote understanding, public awareness, and support.”

This broad goal was complemented with a series of objectives:

- reach new audiences and build new relationships;
- form new program delivery partnerships with Conservation Authorities and other organizations;
- increase awareness and understanding of the Greenbelt; and
- form a working group with key stakeholders to ensure success of the program.

Building on these past program goals and incorporating what we heard through our interviews and research, we have identified four focus areas for re-envisioned program goals and objectives. We then followed the process shown in Figure 2 to develop a high-level goal for each focus area with an achievable outcome that is broad and long-term. The proposed goals are then supported by a set of objectives that outline specific, measurable actions that can be taken in the short-term to help achieve the overall goal. To support a method for program evaluation, a set of key performance indicators were then identified for each focus area goal to measure program success and monitor for improvements over time.

Focus Areas	Goals	Objectives	KPIs/Metrics
Building on past program goals and incorporating what we heard through our interviews and research, we are proposing four <b>focus areas</b> for the new and expanded program goals and objectives.	Each focus area is accompanied by a high-level <b>goal</b> with an achievable outcome that is broad and long-term.	Each of the proposed goals will be supported by a set of <b>objectives</b> that outline measurable actions that can be taken in the short-term to help achieve the overall goal.	There will be a proposed method for program evaluation provided with suggested <b>key performance indicators or metrics</b> for each focus area to help measure program success and monitor for improvements over time.

**Figure 2:** Process for the re-envisioned goals, objectives, and key performance indicators.

Through a synthesis of key findings discussed in the previous section, we propose the following four focus areas as a useful guide to defining the goals and objectives of the program:

- Relationship building;
- Community engagement;
- Trip destinations and experiences; and
- Education and stewardship.

We then developed SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals and objectives that can be used to guide the development and delivery of the program. These goals and objectives were then accompanied with suggested metrics and targets to help measure program success and monitor for improvements.

Table 8 expands on the four focus areas and includes a high-level goal for each area, followed by suggested objectives to help guide the design and delivery of the re-envisioned Into the Greenbelt grant program.

**Table 8:** Re-envisioned program goals and objectives organized by focus area.

Focus area	Goal	Objectives
Relationship building	Cultivate existing relationships and expand the network of community leaders and organizations engaged in the program	1. Identify and connect with community and network leaders and incorporate their feedback into the program on a regular basis

Community engagement	Foster participation and inclusion among newcomers and underserved communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Devise feedback mechanisms to learn more about the needs of community organizations and determine whether they will return to the Greenbelt</li> <li>2. Provide accessible resources with information about the Greenbelt (e.g., include language translation, visuals)</li> <li>3. Use a tailored approach to address challenges faced by newcomers and underserved communities (e.g., scheduling around shift work, options for closer field trips, half-day experiences)</li> </ol>
Trip destinations and experiences	Provide a wide range of destination/trip experiences across the Greenbelt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prior to the trip provide clear and detailed information about the accessibility features of each trip destination and activities available, including accommodations (e.g., wheelchair ramps and mobility aids), transportation, and facilities (e.g., availability of washrooms, indoor space)</li> <li>2. Ensure inclusivity in trip destinations and activities to accommodate individuals of all ages and abilities</li> </ol>
Education and stewardship	Promote greater awareness and knowledge about the Greenbelt that is aligned with the Foundation's vision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share educational materials and resources that highlight the ecological importance, biodiversity, recreational opportunities, and benefits provided by the Greenbelt</li> <li>2. Incorporate stewardship activities into field trip experiences designed to connect people to the land</li> </ol>

## 4.1 Approach for Program Evaluation

The proposed approach for program evaluation includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for gaining feedback and understanding the participant experience. The data and insights for program evaluation should be obtained through a combination of methods, including but not limited to demographic and geographic information gathered through the grant application process, participant input, and feedback on field trip experiences and destinations gathered through post-trip surveys.

Building on the proposed new or expanded goals and objectives of the program, Table 9 was developed to propose a framework for measuring program success and monitoring for improvements. Tracking the activities occurring within the four focus areas proposed and creating targets will help ensure the success of the Into the Greenbelt grant program.

**Table 9:** Framework for measuring program success with possible metrics to track.

Focus Area	Possible KPIs/Metrics to Track
Relationship building	1. Number of community leaders engaged during the pilot 2. Community organizations involved in repeat, long-term participation in the program
Community engagement	1. Percentage of community organizations that receive funding under each equity-deserving group (see Table 2) 2. Number of field trip participants and percentage from newcomer and underserved communities 3. Percentage of trips that provide translation and other specific support for newcomer and underserved communities
Trip destinations and experiences	1. Number of trips completed at each destination through the program 2. Percentage of trip destinations and experiences categorized by features (e.g., themes and activities offered, geographic location) (see Table 4) 3. Participant ratings and descriptions of their experience; participants rate their experiences (e.g., scale 1–5) and provide feedback in post-trip surveys
Education and stewardship	1. Assess effectiveness of the educational materials through pre- and post-activity surveys to gauge participants' understanding and retention of key concepts 2. Number of participants involved in stewardship activities during field trips

## 5.0 Recommendations for Program Delivery

Through the synthesis of research findings, we propose two key recommendations:

- administer the program internally with Greenbelt Foundation staff; and
- deliver the program under two funding streams.

The recommendations for program delivery are described below with notes about their main advantages for the Foundation.

### 5.1 Administer the Program Internally with Greenbelt Foundation Staff

A broader set of three potential program administration options were discussed during the April 11th workshop (the alternative options are summarized in Appendix D). Based on discussions at the workshop in combination with our research, we recommend that the Foundation administer the Into the Greenbelt grant program internally. To this end, we explain the main advantages of this approach and provide suggestions for how to enable this approach.

The benefits of administering the program internally include:

- ensures the Greenbelt messaging is consistent throughout the delivery of the program;
- ensures the quality of the program and reputation of the Greenbelt is maintained (i.e., good line-of-sight into the applicant experience);
- enables opportunities to discover new partnerships;
- facilitates longer-term impacts (e.g., the Greenbelt Foundation has influence across Ontario to encourage the appreciation of the Greenbelt); and
- offers better opportunities to build long-term relationships with community organizations that represent newcomers, underserved communities, and youth.

It is likely that the Greenbelt Foundation will need to explore hiring a staff person to deliver the program internally. A staff position to administer the program internally may be positioned as a broader Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Accessibility (IDEA) role for the Foundation. For example, this staff position could dedicate a portion of their work duties to delivering the Into the Greenbelt grant program and a portion of their work to supporting the Foundation's research and policy efforts related to IDEA and the Greenbelt. It is notable that several interviewees explained how the Greenbelt Foundation is their source for information about potential field trip and programming opportunities. As such, if a third party delivers the Into the Greenbelt grant program, it may undermine the Foundation's reach.

**Insight:** We understand the Greenbelt Foundation may have limited staff capacity to deliver the program internally. The Foundation may, as a result, explore the opportunity to engage consultants to support the early stages of program development. For instance, consultants can help to select destinations and summarize their information in ways that can be presented for prospective trip participants. This would allow the Foundation staff to spend more time working on Greenbelt educational materials and setting up the application process.

Key factors for success:

- human capital (i.e., staff position) to support grant program delivery;
- engagement with other Foundation departments (e.g., communications team to support the website interface); and
- opportunities to align programming with staff capacity at different times of the year (e.g., explore opportunities to explore off-peak trips).

## 5.2 Deliver the Program under Two Funding Streams

The re-envisioned Into the Greenbelt grant program can be delivered through multiple streams to make effective use of third-party networks while also building the Foundation's relationships with underrepresented communities. Operating with more than one funding stream will enable the Foundation to administer funding efficiently and effectively (e.g., reducing the total number of microgrants to be administered). We have tentatively named the recommended funding streams *Connectors* and *Explorers*.

### Stream 1: Into the Greenbelt *Connectors*

The *Connectors* stream enables organizations that have existing tourism or field trip experience with underserved communities to receive larger grants that can be used for organizing multiple trips. The main advantages of this stream are that it removes some administrative burden from the Foundation staff, and it can include multiple organizations/businesses that already have relationships and know-how for organizing trips for target communities. Examples of such

organizations include Parkbus and Brown Girl Outdoor World. Other examples include 4H Ontario or Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (BGC Canada), both of which have several local associations across the Greenbelt. These organizations support similar goals as the Into the Greenbelt grant program, including youth education, agricultural education, and general life skills building.

Although organizations applying for *Connectors* grants may choose to select a pre-identified Into the Greenbelt site, they may be more likely to propose different destinations that were not on the original program list. As such, it would be advantageous if the application process for *Connectors* grants included an ability for organizations to propose their own destinations, where they confirm its location within the Greenbelt and provide details about planned activities and costs for entry fees and other expenses.

There can be an option to include stewardship within the *Connectors* stream. As stewardship-oriented trips may require more time for planning, it may be advantageous for organizations to apply for a larger grant. For example, a group such as Oakville Green Conservation Association would be able to plan and organize multiple dates for preparing a site, planting trees and shrubs, and providing instruction for site maintenance (e.g., watering, weeding). As another example, a community group may be interested in invasive species pulls on multiple dates or in multiple locations. The *Connectors* stream would be ideal for larger effort initiatives but at the same time, this type of granting may also enable community groups to have more time to bring in matching funding (for costs for planting materials) and in-kind support (e.g., shovels), thus increasing their impact.

The *Connectors* stream will enable the Greenbelt Foundation to:

- reach a broader audience by supporting organizations that already have networks and relationships with racialized and underserved communities;
- deliver the Into the Greenbelt grant program efficiently by tapping into organizations that are resourced to support delivery of the program requirements amongst their local associations/groups; and
- streamline the program reporting process.

## Stream 2: Into the Greenbelt *Explorers*

The *Explorers* stream essentially mirrors past iterations of Into the Greenbelt by supporting organizations that are looking to organize field trips but may not have experience or knowledge about the region (e.g., Indigenous Friendship Centres, South Asian Women's Centre). Whereas organizations applying for *Connectors* funding may have an interest in proposing their own ideas for destinations, it is anticipated that organizations applying for *Explorers* grants will select from a predetermined list of potential destinations.

Interviewees shared that opportunities to educate newcomers about ways to explore the Greenbelt can be relatively cost-effective. For some newcomer groups, experiencing the Canadian outdoors can involve the fear of the unknown. Trips to a nearby park can provide a first opportunity to explore a greenspace and help remove the initial barrier of getting to or into the Greenbelt. Subsequent group trips can be more involved and incorporate other educational aspects.

Stewardship options for *Explorers* grantees are likely to be relatively smaller and simpler than those in the *Connectors* stream. Stewardship examples may include garbage clean ups, pollinator garden maintenance, weed pulls, or education (e.g., recycling, water conservation, wildlife conservation). However, it may be possible to also offer more financially intensive planting activities if third-party

funding is already in place (e.g., where a community organization is only applying for a grant to cover transportation costs).

The *Explorers* stream will enable the Greenbelt Foundation to:

- alleviate low-cost barriers to experiencing the Greenbelt;
- support organizations that work with underserved communities in accessing funding with minimal administrative requirements;
- take the lead on the program and the ways that the Greenbelt is promoted to grantees; and
- enable the Foundation to build long-term relationships with participant community leaders.

**Insight:** Stewardship-oriented field trips may be possible within either the *Connector* or *Explorer* streams. Stewardship trips can be accomplished on small or large budgets. In some cases, relatively elaborate trips that involve tree planting can be carried out on a small grant if there is matching or in-kind support from other organizations (e.g., Conservation Authorities or municipalities). Since the two streams reflect the size of the grant and who looks after administration, it will be possible to support stewardship under either stream.

## 6.0 Conclusion

We found all interviewees to be interested and enthusiastic about the potential for Into the Greenbelt to offer meaningful experiences for all Ontarians, including newcomers, underserved communities, and youth. At the same time, there were some insights into the Foundation’s challenges in connecting with underserved target communities. Overcoming these challenges will require some changes in how the Foundation builds relationships with community organizations.

For this reason, we strongly recommend that the Foundation administers the Into the Greenbelt grant program internally. As outlined in Appendix C, we did explore the potential to bring in a third-party administrator (via a granting process), considering the benefits and drawbacks of this approach. However, the potential add-on benefits of internal administration outweighed the other options. We suggest several creative strategies that can support this approach.

- By offering two granting streams — where *Explorers* are microgrants and *Connectors* are medium-sized grants — the Foundation can create a hybrid between fully internal or external administration.
- Hiring consultants to help build the program can take some workload pressure off Foundation staff. For example, as the communications team creates an updated educational package about the Greenbelt, a consulting team can do the work of vetting and selecting a final set of destinations. The consulting team could then work with each selected destination to create site descriptions and sample itineraries.
- The Into the Greenbelt grant program re-launch should begin with a pilot year, and it would be ideal to host a one-day field trip and workshop with leaders from community organizations. The field trip portion could include a visit to a destination that is close to the Toronto area so that community leaders gain a sense of what to expect on an Into the Greenbelt trip. The latter portion of the day can be devoted to a workshop where further information is presented about the program, including instructions for submitting applications. The workshop can also be a valuable time for gathering further feedback about the program.

To support the Foundation in actualizing this re-envisioned version of the Into the Greenbelt grant program, the table in Appendix E offers a closer look at program components of relationship building, field trip planning, and education and stewardship that align with the Foundation's aims and the new goals and objectives proposed for the program.

These components can help the Foundation determine next steps for program development and consider who may be in an ideal position to carry out each task.

## Appendix A: Interviewees List

Organization	Interviewee(s) and Contact Details	Program Category (Community Organization, Destination, Program Delivery)
4-H Ontario	Andy Halse programming@4-hontario.ca	Community Organization
Brown Girl Outdoor World	Demiesha Dennis info@browngirloutdoorworld.com	Community Organization
Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association	Elizabeth Thorn and Mike Sehl ethorn124@gmail.com mike.sehl@icloud.com	Destination
caterToronto	Vanessa Ling Yu vanessa@catertoronto.ca	Community Organization
Conservation Halton	Brenna Bartley and AJ Leeming bbartley@hrca.on.ca ajleeming@hrca.on.ca	Destination
Diverse Nature Collective	Patricia Wilson diversenaturecollective@gmail.com	Community Organization
Faith and the Common Good	Michelle Singh msingh@faithcommongood.org	Community Organization
Indigenous Tourism Ontario	Cassidy Phillips and Steven Debassige cphillips@indigenoustourismontario.ca sdebassige@indigenoustourismontario.ca	Destination
Moccasin Identifier	Susan Robertson and Lauren Samuel susan@peopleplancommunity.com lauren.samuel@mncfn.ca	Destination
Murphy's Country Produce	Megan and Brian Murphy mmurphy3-cc@hotmail.com murphysproduce@rogers.com	Destination
Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and EarthHelpers	Paul Richard paulerato@yahoo.com	Community Organization

Oakvillegreen Conservation Association	Karen Brock <a href="mailto:bkaren.brock@gmail.com">bkaren.brock@gmail.com</a> ,	Community Organization
Parkbus	Alex Berlyand <a href="mailto:alex@parkbus.ca">alex@parkbus.ca</a>	Program Delivery
Park People	Natalie Brown <a href="mailto:nbrown@parkpeople.ca">nbrown@parkpeople.ca</a> Cynthia Hashie <a href="mailto:chashie@parkpeople.ca">chashie@parkpeople.ca</a>	Program Delivery
South Asian Women's Centre	Kripa Sekhar <a href="mailto:ksekhar@sawc.org">ksekhar@sawc.org</a>	Community Organization
The Riverwood Conservancy	Sara Wilbur-Collins <a href="mailto:Sara.WilburCollins@theriverwoodconservancy.org">Sara.WilburCollins@theriverwoodconservancy.org</a>	Destination
Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee	Sabina Ali <a href="mailto:sali@tpwomenscomm.org">sali@tpwomenscomm.org</a>	Community Organization
University of Guelph	Peter Mitchell <a href="mailto:mitchelp@uoguelph.ca">mitchelp@uoguelph.ca</a>	Program Delivery
York Region Food Network	Kate Greavette <a href="mailto:kateg@yrfn.ca">kateg@yrfn.ca</a>	Community Organization

## Appendix B: Workshop Agenda

Activity	Time	Notes
Welcome	1:00 pm	
Summary of main findings Presentation	1:15 pm	<p>“What we heard” presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engagement summary</li> <li>• audience</li> <li>• destination</li> <li>• budget and administration</li> <li>• marketing and communications</li> </ul>
Re-envisioned program goals and objectives Presentation and facilitated discussion	1:40 pm	<p>Overview slide: Focus Area &gt; Goal &gt; Objectives &gt; KPIs (with metrics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Five program focus areas; one slide per focus area — could include examples of recommendations as callouts (e.g., “what could it look like”)</li> </ul>
Potential pathways Presentation and facilitated discussion	2:15 pm	<p>1–2 slides per pathway (pathway description and what it would look like; e.g., put out RFP to engage third party)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathway 1: Greenbelt Foundation Administration</li> <li>• Pathway 2: Third Party Delivery</li> <li>• Pathway 3: Foundation Administration with two Streams</li> </ul>
Any additional feedback Discussion	2:45 pm	
Adjourn	3:00 pm	

## Appendix C: Notes from Facilitated Discussion

Feedback on the potential pathways discussed on April 11, 2024

Pathway	What excites you about this pathway?	What brings you caution?	What resources are needed to make this pathway a success?
Pathway 1: Contract an external partner to administer the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing responsibility for administering the program</li> <li>Takes the administrative burden off the Greenbelt staff to deliver/administer</li> <li>Someone else responsible for ensuring details of delivery are taken care of</li> <li>Benefit to finding "the right fit"; especially for orgs that align with program goals</li> <li>Firm expertise and experience — those who are familiar with similar programs; can help Greenbelt staff ensure it is a success</li> <li>Complements the expertise for the other work done by the Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost</li> <li>Only mechanism through the grants program — logistics of running an RFP; this is a change in grants program (would need to be explored further)</li> <li>May have to replace RFP process with some kind of stakeholder engagement; would take time, but time is limited</li> <li>Granting process is LOI — but making it competitive may be a challenge under current structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cast a wide net on possible delivery partners</li> <li>Determine a process to select a delivery partner; RFP process preferred, but needs to be explored from the perspective of the Greenbelt's process</li> </ul>
Pathway 2: The Foundation fully administers the program with a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership — can ensure Greenbelt messaging is consistent and key messages/vision are driving the program</li> <li>Assuming Greenbelt staff has</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human capital/resource needed to deliver</li> <li>Destination information and how this information is communicated/appears on Greenbelt website — work to be done here;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time dedicated may be 2 days/week workload</li> <li>Would need to engage other departments within the Foundation for</li> </ul>

dedicated staff person	<p>capacity — helps streamline the application process; ensures the quality of the program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to discover new partnerships through this model that Greenbelt staff might not otherwise tap into; from beginning to end</li> <li>• Key messages left with participants would have a lot more influence/weight with participants — impact is longer term</li> <li>• Avoids diluting impact if arms length approach</li> </ul>	<p>results in work demands on comms team as well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certain times of year resources/capacity will vary — want to encourage off-peak trips</li> </ul>	<p>success (e.g., the website interface)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the cost/benefit of administering large amounts of microgrants internally</li> </ul>
Pathway 3: The program is delivered in three streams ( <i>Connectors</i> , <i>Explorers</i> , <i>Stewards</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solution to capacity challenge</li> <li>• Stewardship aspect is exciting</li> <li>• Three tiers make sense</li> <li>• Can work within the granting program structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be more complicated from an applicant's standpoint; language needs to be clear, so people know where they fit as an applicant</li> <li>• Is <i>Stewards</i> separate? Can it be incorporated into the <i>Connectors</i> and <i>Explorers</i> streams?</li> </ul>	

## Appendix D: Potential Program Delivery Pathways Explored

The Greenbelt Foundation expressed an interest in exploring multiple options for how the re-envisioned Into the Greenbelt grant program could be administered. Through the research and engagement for this study, two potential pathways were identified. This section provides an overview of the two administrative potential pathways that were explored.

**Note:** During the April 11th workshop, three pathways were presented, but there was some confusion about the overlap among the pathways. To simplify the options, we have focused on two pathways and separated out the idea of offering multiple streams, as discussed in section 5.

### Pathway 1: Contract an external partner to administer the program on behalf of the Foundation

In the past, the Into the Greenbelt grant program has been administered by Foundation staff or by third-party grant administrators. Most recently, a third party administered the Urban River Valley Connector Program. Their specific role was to:

- develop and disseminate promotional materials to Boys and Girls Clubs in the Greater Toronto Region;
- provide 25 bursaries to Boys and Girls Clubs across GGH for educational and fun day trips in the Greenbelt;
- develop four new Greenbelt itineraries specific to children and youth (farms and conservation areas within the Greenbelt) and add them to the project web page and brochure;
- develop a communications plan in partnership with the Foundation staff; and
- manage, track, and evaluate program performance.

There were concerns that the third-party administrator approach diluted the Greenbelt Foundation's brand identity. This dilution led to the challenge of building authentic relationships that could be linked to the Greenbelt Foundation for the long term, as opposed to being primarily linked through the third-party organization.

There was a similar theme mentioned in an interview with Peter Mitchell from the University of Guelph, one of the early grant administrators, who also highlighted the difficulty in building relationships and engaging with community groups in an authentic way. He felt somewhat removed from the communities the Foundation was hoping to engage and at first struggled to find ways to connect with them. One insight offered by Peter and included in our recommendations is to put a lot of time and effort into outreach, relationship building, and community engagement through in-person workshops and presentations with community leaders.

The research for this pathway also included a discussion with Parkbus, an organization founded in 2010 that connects city dwellers with nature through accessible transportation options. They also run a program called *NatureLink* that provides subsidized transportation to outdoor spaces and outdoor programming to newcomers to Canada. It has been funded by TD Bank, Mountain Equipment Company, Parks Canada, Georgian Bay Spirit Co., and Merrell. There is a clear link between this program and the aims of the Into the Greenbelt grant program. Parkbus expressed an enthusiastic interest and clear ideas around a potential partnership with the Greenbelt Foundation,

and it is suggested that the Foundation explore potential collaborations with this group — whether for this pathway or as a strategic partner for certain aspects of the program.

Benefits and drawbacks of contracting an external partner to administer the program on behalf of the Foundation

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to the networks and resources of the contracted organization</li><li>• Potential for the contracted organization to have built long-term relationships with the community leaders/members that the Greenbelt Foundation is hoping to reach</li><li>• Reduced workload for Greenbelt Foundation staff in terms of paperwork and staff time</li><li>• Contracted organization may offer complementary skill sets and/or specialize in operational aspects specific to the program that are outside of the scope of the Greenbelt Foundation staff</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contracted organization become closely aligned with the relationships they build for the program</li><li>• Lack of consistency and long-term relationship building (e.g., high turnover of staff in contracted organization or different organizations running it over the years)</li><li>• Difficult to brand the program as a Greenbelt Foundation program, may appear to be led by the contracted organization</li><li>• Hard to ensure quality of delivery and alignment with Greenbelt Foundation goals/objectives</li><li>• Risk of communication challenges between the Greenbelt staff and external organizations</li></ul>

## Pathway 2: Administer the program internally — Hire designated Greenbelt Foundation staff to administer the program

Pathway 2 addresses some of the drawbacks of Pathway 1 by incorporating some of the new ideas and feedback provided through the survey and interviews. The second pathway explores a model where the Foundation administers the grant program internally. This means there would be a designated Greenbelt Foundation staff person administering the Into the Greenbelt program. The benefits of this approach are many but to highlight a few, it would allow the Foundation to provide strong leadership of the program and maintain a clear and consistent presence in the program for all participants. It would also help address one of the key proposed goals of the re-envisioned program, which is to build meaningful relationships with communities that the program aims to reach.

This pathway is being suggested in response to input from multiple organizations representing diverse racialized communities such as Diverse Nature Collective, Brown Girl Outdoor World, and the South Asian Women's Centre. These groups feel that the Into the Greenbelt grant program's success will rely on the ability of the Foundation to build and hold relationships with communities; get to know their specific needs, interests, and barriers to participation; and provide continuity to the experience for the long term. A designated Foundation staff person could put in the time and effort needed to build these relationships from the ground up and ensure that these relationships are held and nurtured over time by the Foundation.

Benefits and drawbacks of administering the program internally

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge and understanding of the Greenbelt's mission and priorities to ensure the program is aligned</li> <li>An obvious interest in the success of the program</li> <li>Ability to build long-term relationships with participant community leaders/members</li> <li>Consistency in leadership and program delivery over multiple years</li> <li>Quality control in terms of program delivery</li> <li>Streamlined communication and coordination between internal and external actors and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires funding to cover the cost of Greenbelt staff time</li> <li>Hiring and onboarding a new staff person and potential for turnover of this role from year to year</li> <li>Includes more paperwork and administration of smaller and medium-sized grants to multiple organizations (instead of one)</li> <li>Foundation may not currently have relationships with the community leaders they are trying to reach; will need to build these relationships prior to re-launching the program</li> </ul>

## Appendix E: Overview of Programming and Delivery Requirements

Component	Program Development	Before Trip	After Trip
Relationship building	During the re-launch, offer a Community Leaders Field Experience; this experience should include a field trip to one of the program's destinations and a workshop to teach leaders more about the program	Program staff lead provides support/communication as needed by organizations applying for grants	Follow up with field trip organizers to ask about their experiences (e.g., post-trip survey that can be administered via phone)
Trip planning	Identify and confirm field trip destinations Coordinate with destinations to summarize information about each destination  Develop an Information Packet outlining how to plan a trip, along with information about logistics, safety, what to bring on the day with relevant contact information	Develop and distribute information packet about the many ways to experience the Greenbelt with trip destinations  Provide a range of support based on experience (from light touch to a more step-by-step hands-on approach)  Ensure trip organizers and destinations provide information to attendees about what to expect at their destination (e.g., whether there is an on-farm market, appropriate clothing/footwear to wear)	Post-trip survey and possibly conversations to get feedback about the trip experience
Education	Compile and share educational materials and resources that highlight the ecological importance, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities within the Greenbelt		Post trip survey

	Utilize the Foundation's existing videos and online resources and share them with community organizers and destinations		
Stewardship	<p>Create example field trips with destinations that would include stewardship activities</p> <p>Possibly allocate or reserve funds to support stewardship activities (e.g., for purchasing trees, mulch)</p>	<p>Work with destinations to learn more about potential for on-site stewardship options and opportunities</p>	<p>Post-trip survey</p> <p>Destinations can share ways to get involved with more stewardship activities</p>