



TEXAS
Botanical Gardens
& Native American
Interpretive Center

February 3, 2013

Texas Rural Communities, Inc.
Attn: Sandra Tenorio
168 Cimarron Park Loop
Buda, Texas 78610

Dear Ms. Tenorio,

The Texas Botanical Gardens and Native American Interpretive Center was established in 2004 to create and operate a model "green" community cultural and educational facility in Goldthwaite that highlights the native plants and waterways of a six county region in Central Texas. We will be breaking ground at the end of March for our botanical gardens. These gardens represent a ridge line along the Colorado river showcasing the native plants, trees, forbs and grasses of this area.

Even though we have not had an official site, we've been working on our educational programs offsite for the last three years. We hold nature-based classes and workshops for both children and adults. These have been generously funded by local individuals and board members. We do not charge for our programs. We are in the process of increasing our outreach and programming. We are applying for a recognition grant in the amount of \$5,000 to cover our increasing costs over a three year period. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jan Fischer
Executive Director
Texas Botanical Gardens & Native American Interpretive Center, Inc.
Box 513
Goldthwaite, Texas 76844
325-642-7527

Program Summary: The Texas Botanical Gardens address an urgent need for accessible outdoor educational and cultural enrichment activities in underserved rural Central Texas. Children today are allowed less time for creative outdoor play and learning than ever before. A 2010 Kaiser Family Fund survey found that children ages 8-18 spend an average of 7.5 hours a day connected to a television, computer or other electronic media and that a child is six times more likely to play a video game than ride a bike. This trend is detrimental to children's health and well-being. The disparity of time spent indoors is also thought to influence mental health, classroom performance and behavior, and a connection to nature later in life. The benefits of nature-based learning and unstructured play have been documented to improve learning and academic achievement among children.

We have offered classes to children and adults over the last three years. Our focus is on the importance of sustainable and renewable resources and the need for responsible land stewardship to manage and restore our grasslands, wildlife habitats, and ecosystems. In our programs we demonstrate how prairie grasslands have contributed to water purification and recharge, erosion control and nutrient cycling. Interactive activities demonstrate and help develop knowledge of native plant usage, drought awareness, water conservation, and the importance of wildlife habitats. Fostering collaboration between formal education networks and informal education providers is essential to facilitate access to experiential learning opportunities for school children.

There are several Foster Care facilities in Central Texas (over 20 not including private homes). Often these children are not able to access opportunities for learning in the larger cities. One of our goals is to provide 4 interactive learning experiences a year for foster children including those from New Horizons Ranch, the Cherokee Children's Home, and The Methodist Children's Home of Waco. These activities will focus on: conservation, water, native plants, and Native American lifestyles. A second goal is to provide activities for 25% of the middle school public school children in a six county area (Mills, Brown, San Saba, Comanche, Hamilton, Lampasas) as to the use of native plants in yards and landscape and how it affects water use quantity. Additional goals include hosting 4 children's activities off-site on ranches with an environmental theme, environmental-related education programs and/ or workshops.

We are in the process of breaking ground for our Botanical Gardens and our fundraising has been directed toward that objective. Our educational programming takes place off-site and happens because of the generosity of local donors and in-kind donations. We do not charge for our classes; however, the cost of fuel, lunches, classroom supplies and print material has made it impossible to rely on our limited resources. We are requesting a Recognition grant in the amount of \$5,000 to help defray our costs over a three year period. This grant will help children gain access to nature-based activities.

Section I: Contact Information

TEXAS BOTANICAL GARDENS & NATIVE AMERICAN INTERPRETIVE CENTER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Janice K. Fischer, 2251 FM 574W, Mullin, Texas 76864: 325-642-7527;
lhtngwmn@centex.net

ADDRESS: Texas Botanical Gardens & Native American Interpretive Center, Inc. ; Box 513,
Goldthwaite, Texas 76844

Section II: Organizational Description

The Texas Botanical Gardens and Native American Interpretive Center was established as a nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization in 2004 to develop and operate a community cultural and educational facility. The mission of the Center is to provide a dynamic, interactive, lifelong learning experience while identifying, preserving and showcasing the rich prehistoric and environmental aspects of rural Central Texas. The Texas Botanical Gardens and Native American Interpretive Center is the anchor of Legacy Plaza, a planned downtown revitalization project that also includes a Welcome Center on one city block. We have made significant progress toward the development of Legacy Plaza since 2004. Board members, donors (local and out of area), foundations, the City of Goldthwaite, Goldthwaite Economic Development Corporation and project team members have committed or pledged a total of \$1,316,303 toward land acquisition, project design and development of the town green and ethno-botanic garden. We opened our Legacy Plaza Museum Annex (A Sears Craftsman House circa 1914 was donated to the project in 2009 located three blocks from our project site.) We use this as our annex and have set up displays in three of the rooms including a Native American room for children. We host meetings, workshops and classes for children at this site and on area ranches. We are breaking ground on March 26, 2013 made possible by a generous grant of \$250,000 from The Meadows Foundation.

Within the threats to Central Texas's natural resources lie opportunities for conservation that will also spur economic development in our rural region. Despite habitat losses, extensive grasslands and native plant communities can be found on farms and ranches throughout Mills and the surrounding five counties. Because most native plant community sites are on private property, the engagement and support of local landowners is necessary for teaching access. Our project will create a focal point for nature-based education that will allow the central Texas region to capitalize on and conserve its rich natural heritage, while providing and tapping resources within a wider rural region. Interactive activities (for all ages) and events will be a focus in our gardens (we are currently hosting these at our Annex). In addition, workshops and seminars pertaining to the environment and wildlife are in the planning stages.

Section III: Program Description

a. The Texas Botanical Gardens will benefit school children, adults, teachers and the community in the Central Texas region encompassing a six county area. This is an underserved population of children and adults. The poverty level is over 26%. Approximately 39% of the population is Hispanic, 45% Anglo, 5% Black, and, 10 % other. Participation in enrichment activities such as nature-based study for children is usually not an option for families in this rural part of Texas. We are identifying our students with the help of the schools and Foster programs.

b. Our goal is to offer interactive nature-based educational activities. This will be accomplished through classes at our site, off-site at ranches, and in school classrooms. Our primary goals are that children and adults will interact and connect with nature and that participants will demonstrate stewardship and an understanding of the critical issues relating to the environment and Texas and how one can get involved.

c. The program participants will be all school age groups from preschool through high school and to individuals at various cognitive levels including the developmentally disabled in the six counties of Central Texas: Mills, Brown, San Saba, Hamilton, Comanche, and Lampasas. Our program will serve: approximately 5,362.25 students.

d. We are requesting a Recognition grant.

e. Budget:

Traveling Trunks

Native Plants	4	\$150 each -	\$ 600.00
Native Grasses	4	\$150 each -	\$ 600.00
Water – Conservation	4	\$150 each -	\$ 600.00
Water – Harvesting	4	\$ 150 each -	\$ 600.00
Craft Supplies for Activities			\$4,500.00
School Supplies			\$2,200.00
Copy Paper			\$ 504.00
Miscellaneous			\$ 500.00
TOTAL			\$10,104.00

f. The expected outcomes are: 1. to develop an awareness of conservation practices of water and native plants, Measured by group attendance and products produced through activities such as drawings, stories, photos etc. 2. To provide activities to 25% of the middle school public school children in the six county area as to the use of native plants in yards and landscape and how it affects water use quantity within the first three years. Measured by attendance and products produced through activities. 3. We will host 4 children's activities off-site on ranches with an environmental theme by the end of year one. Measured by attendance. 4. We will host 6 environmental-related education programs and/ or workshops within the first year. Measured by attendance and surveys. 5. We will provide environmental-based activities into existing curricula for grades 1-12 by the end of year three. Measured by products produced. 6. We will host an annual green tour for educators by the end of year two. Measured by attendance.

g. The timeline for our educational program is 3 years. The expenditure of funds is over a 3 year period and will be augmented by the generosity of local donors and in-kind contributions.

h. Not applicable