

## Project Description \*

Please provide a description of your project. Please include information on the need your project fills and how it does so. Include objectives, an anticipated timeline, and expected impact(s). Responses are limited to 3,000 characters including spaces.

The Cooper Center for Environmental Learning (Cooper Center), an outreach program of the College of Education, provides memorable experiences in the Sonoran Desert to learners of all ages. It focuses on key ecological understandings through immersive programs that build strong positive emotional connections between participants and the natural world, with a goal of inspiring each person to live more lightly and sustainably on our planet. More than 140,000 people have participated in its programs since 1964, and more than 5,000 people visit Cooper each year.

Cooper Center has the potential to be a key component of UArizona Campus Sustainability as the University moves forward with strategic initiatives to engage students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community at large. While some elements of improving sustainability on campus are physical in nature, such as changes to infrastructure, winning over the hearts and minds of the University's many constituencies and changing environmentally related attitudes and behaviors is what will ultimately allow us to reach our ambitious goals. Cooper Center can be a hub for educational programming related to sustainability across discipline areas, through experiences specifically crafted to University audiences. It has successfully hosted undergraduate and graduate student interns and would like to expand these opportunities throughout campus. Cooper Center also hopes to continue to serve as a valuable component of educational research related to environmental learning.

In order for Cooper Center to become a more widely used resource at UArizona, we propose to host an Open House during the Spring 2022 semester. This event will be promoted widely across campus, knowing that sustainability is an interdisciplinary topic that can be found in courses and programs in almost every college and department on campus. While Cooper Center staff and volunteers would coordinate the event, there would be significant involvement from UArizona leadership, the Office of Sustainability, and other campus units interested in being part of the festivities.

In addition to providing the opportunity for guests to experience Cooper Center, the other main attraction of the event would be well-renowned guest speakers, live music, and food. Logistically, Cooper Center would provide transportation to and from campus for students, faculty, and staff.

The desired outcomes from this event will be to see a significant increase in the use of Cooper Center as a University resource. This would include student internships and volunteer experiences, facility use for special events, meetings, retreats, workshops, and classes, educationally focused research, and more. Cooper Center will be able to measure this usage increase and gauge the success of the event.

The Campus Sustainability Fund award would be used for costs related to the event – speaker fees, live music, shuttle transportation, food, and event-related materials.

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### Project Summary Snapshot \*

Please provide a short summary of your project. This summary will be used on our new website and other Office of Sustainability materials, if approved. Think of this as a hyper-concentrated summary limited to just a few sentences. Responses are limited to 800 characters (~60-100 words).

The Cooper Center for Environmental Learning will host a University of Arizona Open House during the Spring 2022 semester. This event will be promoted across disciplines throughout the University and include students, faculty, and staff, with a goal of providing better connections between our campus community and the wonders of the Sonoran Desert.

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### Project Feasibility & Logistics \*

Please provide a description of the work that has been completed so far to make this project feasible. Have all relevant partners been contacted/coordinated with? Please identify them in your response. Have you received reasonable quotes for supplies? What research has been completed to lay the foundation for this project? Proposals that have not thoroughly pre-planned may be rejected outright. Responses are limited to 3,000 characters including spaces.

Please provide a brief description of the work that has been completed so far to make this project feasible. Have all relevant partners been contacted/coordinated with? Have you gotten reasonable quotes for supplies? Proposals that have not done their homework are likely to be rejected outright. Responses are limited to 1000 characters (~140-250 words).

Cooper Center has a consistent history of promoting and managing successful special events. Our annual Teacher Appreciation and Donor Recognition events regularly attract more than 100 guests, as have Preschool Nature Days, Desert Foods Fiestas, and other public events. Cooper Center has well established success in utilizing UArizona's many communication methods to promote this event and distribute information broadly across campus.

Cost estimates for speakers, music, transportation, food, and event materials are based on actual costs from previous events.

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### Environmental Sustainability Outcomes \*

Please provide a brief description of how you expect your project to advance environmental sustainability on campus. Responses are limited to 3,000 characters including spaces. A definition of environmental sustainability is provided in our Spring 2022 Information.

The education of all University constituencies is key to the success of sustainability initiatives on campus and in our local community. If we want to see more environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviors, we must share the wonders of the natural world and inspire each person to live more lightly on our planet. Cooper Center is perfectly placed to carry out these efforts. People who care for our world will take better care of it, and this can only happen if they have a personal emotional connection to where they live.

Cooper Center is also organizationally prepared to see an increase in use from the University. We are financially stable and have shown regular philanthropic growth over the past 6 years. We are adding educators to our staff on an annual basis and have also seen growth in our volunteer pool, from advisory board and committee members to educational program support. Cooper Center can support an influx of interest from University constituencies.

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### Social Sustainability Outcomes \*

Please provide a brief description of how you expect your project to advance social sustainability on campus. Responses are limited to 3,000 characters including spaces. A definition of social sustainability is provided in our Spring 2022 Information.

A key element of our mission at the Cooper Center for Environmental Learning is to provide an inclusive space for all to learn about and care for our environment. We work to foster supportive relationships throughout our community, honoring and valuing the heritage and diverse perspectives of the students, teachers, and families we serve.

Cooper Center's proposed event will increase access to educational opportunities that are connected to the outdoors and our Sonoran Desert. It will promote a sense of community around the shared goal of a more sustainable campus, and strong mental health through connections with nature. The event will lead to new usage of Cooper Center by University students, faculty, and staff, extending its benefits beyond the event itself.

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### Student Leadership & Involvement \*

Please provide a brief description of how you expect your project to benefit students on campus regarding the creation of leadership opportunities or student engagement. What leadership opportunities exist within your proposal? If you plan to hire/ or involve students, please describe in what capacity. For example, if you plan to hire students, create an internship, or seek student involvement, please describe relevant details thoroughly (wages, responsibilities, duration of job, extent of involvement, how you will solicit/ market these opportunities etc.). Responses are limited to 3,000 characters including spaces.

Cooper Center’s proposed event will provide an opportunity for students across disciplines to connect and network around sustainability. The social nature of the event in a desert setting will also improve mental health among students and inspire them to take a more active role in campus sustainability. The event will lead to an increase in student experiences at the Center through retreats, workshops, class experiences, internships, and volunteer opportunities.

In the planning and facilitation of the event itself, Cooper Center staff will coordinate with students across programs and departments. This will include student interns from the College of Education, student workers with the Office of Sustainability, and students from other areas. Students will help to plan the event’s activities and logistics and will coordinate follow-up communications with event guests.

### Education, Outreach, & Behavior Change \*

Please provide a brief description of how you expect your project will communicate its impacts to the campus community. How will your project educate the campus community and/or incorporate outreach and behavior change? How are you reaching beyond the "sustainability choir?". Responses are limited to 3,000 characters including spaces.

Cooper Center is an outreach program of the College of Education and works closely with the College’s Marketing and Communications office and also has its own Marketing and Communications Coordinator. The Center regularly has stories featured through UA News and also leverages communication through internal University emails and newsletters, as well as social media. The event will be promoted as widely as possible to ensure that a broad audience of students, faculty, and staff are in attendance, and the event’s success will be shared once it has been completed. Cooper Center will also step up its efforts in advertising opportunities for the use of its facilities by organizations and programs across campus.

### Timeline

We understand that for some Mini Grant projects, having a deadline of June 30th, 2022 is not enough time. Should you feel that your project cannot be completed and closed out by this date, please provide a thorough explanation as to why your project requires a project timeline extension. Timeline extensions will be granted on a case-by-case and limited basis. Responses are limited to 3,000 characters including spaces.