

So, you have an idea for a new project?

Let's turn that dream into something tangible, achievable, and well-supported.

This guided planning document is designed to help Project Leaders *think through* a project before submitting it for review. Rather than just filling in boxes, you'll be prompted to reflect on purpose, alignment, workload, and impact—so everyone involved has clarity from the start.

Important reminder before you begin

You do **not** need to answer every question in this guide. Different projects require different levels of detail. Be thoughtful and strategic—focus on the sections that apply to your idea and skip what doesn't.

How to use this document:

1. **Open a blank Google Doc** and use this guide as your reference.
2. Work through the sections below, responding to the prompts that are relevant to your project idea.
3. When complete, **submit the Google Doc URL** using the SSMN New Project Proposal online form.

This is a planning tool, not a final report. The goal is shared understanding and realistic expectations.

Important baseline to know up front

All approved projects require a **minimum of 10 staff hours** for administration, coordination, communication, and internal tracking—even for volunteer-led or low-cost projects. Projects that cannot reasonably accommodate this baseline may need to be adjusted, delayed, or declined.

1. Ground the Idea

Start by clearly naming what you're proposing and who will champion it.

Project title

Give your project a short, working name.

Project Lead / Champion

Who will be responsible for moving this project forward and being the primary point of contact?

Backup or staff point of contact (optional)

Who can step in or support continuity if needed?

Contact email

Why this matters: Clear ownership helps prevent confusion and ensures momentum.

2. Connect to SSMN's Mission

Every project should clearly support SSMN's purpose and strategic focus.

Program alignment

Which SSMN program(s) does this project best fit within - Bird City, Community Leadership, Land Stewardship, Transportation, Valley Network? If you're unsure, note that.

House of Sustainability pillars

Which pillar(s) does this project support—Environment, Community, Economic?

Prompt: If alignment feels fuzzy, that's a signal the idea may need refinement or staff guidance.

3. Clarify the Big Picture

This section explains *why* the project exists.

Project goal

In 1–2 sentences, what is this project trying to accomplish at a high level?

Why this matters right now

What need, opportunity, or gap does this project address? Why is the timing important?

Target audience

Who is this project for? Be as specific as you reasonably can.

Why this matters: A clear “why” makes it easier to prioritize resources and measure success.

4. Describe How the Project Works

Now shift from vision to reality.

What will actually happen?

Describe the activities, format, or flow of the project. Bullet points are encouraged.

Project type

Is this a one-time event, a series, a seasonal or annual project, a pilot/test, a contest or creative engagement, or an internal effort?

Who will be involved?

Consider staff, volunteers, board members, community participants, partners, or vendors.

Expectation flag: More people and partners usually mean more coordination and staff support time.

5. Define Timeline and Scope

Help set realistic expectations around pace and duration.

Estimated timeline

When would this project start and end? Or what season does it live in?

Key milestones (if applicable)

Are there major planning moments, deadlines, or decision points?

Prompt: Longer timelines often require more staff check-ins and administrative tracking.

6. Think Through Capacity & Workload

This is one of the most important sections of the planning process.

Baseline staff support (required)

All approved projects include **a minimum of 10 staff hours** for:

- Administration and coordination
- Internal communication and documentation
- Basic operational support

Reflect on whether your project can reasonably accommodate this baseline.

Communications & promotion expectations

For **each SSMN-hosted, publicly promoted event**, plan for **approximately 4–6 staff hours** dedicated to communications, which typically includes:

- Promotional graphics and copy
- Website or RSVP setup
- Social media and newsletter promotion
- External event listings
- Post-event recap

Higher-visibility or multi-event projects may require additional communications time.

Estimated total staff time (including baseline)

Which range best fits your project: baseline only (10 hours), 10–20, 20–40, or 40+ hours?

Who will lead the day-to-day work?

Is this primarily staff-led, volunteer-led with staff support, or a shared responsibility?

Known capacity concerns

Are there timing conflicts, staffing limitations, or competing priorities to flag early?

Expectation flag: Staff time is a limited and shared resource—being realistic here helps projects succeed.

7. Consider Budget & Resources

Even low-cost projects require real resources.

Staff time as a cost

Staff time is typically budgeted at **\$35/hour** and should be treated as a real project expense, even if no cash is exchanged.

Estimated overall budget

- Under \$1,000
- \$1,000–\$5,000
- \$5,000+
- Unknown

Likely cost types

Materials, printing, advertising, staff time, equipment, vendor services, or other needs.

Funding status

Are funds already identified, partially identified, or not yet secured?

8. Identify Risks & Accessibility Needs

Thinking ahead helps avoid surprises.

Risks or special considerations

Safety, weather, accessibility, permits, reputational concerns, or public perception.

Accessibility considerations

How will this project be welcoming and inclusive for participants?

9. Advocacy & Policy Check

SSMN operates within clear advocacy boundaries.

Does this project involve advocacy or political considerations?

If yes or unsure, explain briefly so staff can review for policy alignment.

10. Define What Success Looks Like

Keep this simple and realistic.

How will we know this project was successful?

Consider participation, volunteer hours, engagement, community feedback, environmental impact, or visibility.

Prompt: Choose a few meaningful indicators rather than everything possible.

11. Final Notes

Share anything else that would help staff or the Board understand your idea—context, open questions, or early concerns.

Submitting Your Proposal

Once you've completed this planning document:

1. Confirm it is saved as a **Google Doc**.
2. Copy the document's URL.
3. Submit the URL using the **SSMN New Project Proposal online form**.

Staff will review proposals for mission alignment, capacity, timing, and resource needs. You may be asked to refine scope or adjust expectations before approval. The goal is not perfection—it's setting your project up for success.