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Social Venture Partners & the Civic Garden Center

In June 2008, SVP Cincinnati awarded the Civic Garden Center a grant of \$25,000 and a leadership team of volunteers to assist it in planning and starting its Green Learning Station. To be built on the site of an old gas station next to the Civic Garden Center, the Green Learning Station will provide education and inspiration to builders, developers, home owners, and officials to incorporate green technology into their residences, businesses, and public spaces. The Station also will be used as a children's learning center.



Why the Civic Garden Center?

SVP Cincinnati selected the Civic Garden Center as its first Social Investment Partner because its needs for the Green Learning Center created the best match for SVP's peer-driven model of engaged giving. Of the 24 applicants for funding and partnership, SVP Cincinnati determined that this very timely project, which plans to open in 2009, had the best chance of making a significant and immediate impact on our community and the environment.

According to Glenn Bitzenhofer, chair of SVP Cincinnati's Investment Committee, "Even though the Civic Garden Center is an established organization, it is moving in an innovative new direction which will significantly impact the environment. Its bold step to create a Green Learning Station is an exciting risk and a great first endeavor for SVP Cincinnati."

Why "Social Investment Partner"?

We say "Social Investment Partner" as opposed to "grantee" because SVP invests the knowledge, skills, and talents of our partners in addition to funding. Our vision is to combine the power of business and life experience with the passion of philanthropy to make a significant impact on non-profit organizations, one at a time.

We offer expertise in several categories: business and strategic planning, project management, and marketing, to name a few. We are working with the Civic Garden Center to put together a team that best meets its needs. The engagement between the Civic Garden Center and SVP Cincinnati is expected to last 3-5 years.

In order to integrate our skills and guidance, our partners were seeking organizations open to change. From the first day, the Civic Garden Center was open to that change. Its proposal stated: "Our vision for this relationship [with SVPI] is that we gain expert guidance in areas that strengthen our organization's ability to expand our work to encompass this new project."

(over)

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How Did the Process Work?

SVP Cincinnati announced the investment process and timetable in November 2007. In February 2008, we embarked on a rigorous four-month process that started with an informational workshop at InterAct for Change.

We sent an invitation to submit a letter of intent to nearly 200 regional environmental organizations. After receiving and screening 24 letters of intent, we invited 6 semi-finalists to submit full proposals. SVP Cincinnati's partners participated fully, as the investment process is a fun and engaging opportunity for SVP partners to learn about the community and philanthropy. As one SVP partner noted, "As we examined the proposals, light bulbs were going off in the minds of every partner in the room."

Partners conducted site visits to each of six semi-finalist organizations and selected three as finalists. After the three finalists (Civic Garden Center, Gorman Heritage Farm, and Imago) made presentations at an all-partner meeting in June 2008, SVP Cincinnati's partners selected the Civic Garden Center as our first Social Investment Partner.

What Are the Next Steps?

SVP Cincinnati partners are aligned with the goals of the Civic Garden Center to help ensure the Green Learning Station is a success. We expect to complete a formal action plan outlining goals, objectives, strategies, and measurements in approximately 90 days. This plan will be updated annually. The Civic Garden Center will be eligible for additional SVP grants during the 3-5 year engagement, based on its progress in achieving the goals in the action plan.

Join Us!

For information about becoming an SVP Cincinnati partner, contact SVP Coordinator Lisa Davis Roberts at (513) 458-6715 or by e-mail at lisa@svpcincinnati.org. For information about the Green Learning Station or the Civic Garden Center, contact Vickie Ciotti at (513) 221-0981 or vciotti@civicgardencenter.org.

Social Venture Partners is an international network of accomplished individuals who combine the power of business and the passion of philanthropy. We bring our collective expertise and resources to promising nonprofits, collaborating with them to impact communities. Visit www.svpi.org or www.svpcincinnati.org for more information.

SVP Cincinnati is a program of InterAct for Change, a full-service philanthropic organization that works with individuals, families, nonprofits and private foundations with a strong desire to achieve measurable results through charitable giving and venture philanthropy. To learn more, call (513) 458-6680 or visit www.interactforchange.org.