Invites Proposals for the 2021 Environmental Education Program

Grant Application Deadlines

Online Application Opens: September 15, 2020
Application Due: November 13, 2020 by midnight
Grant Award Notification: By February 26, 2021

Statement of Purpose
Beginning with John and Betty Gray, the Gray family have long been supporters of environmental education in Oregon. Since 2012, the family’s legacy has continued through the Gray Family Foundation (Gray FF). Gray FF's Environmental Education program seeks to promote the inclusion of quality environmental education in formal and informal K-12 environments to increase opportunities for youth to connect with and learn in the outdoors. Through our investments in environmental education in Oregon, Gray FF seeks to support:

- Active youth stewardship of our natural and built environments;
- Systematic integration of environmental education in formal and informal K-12 education systems;
- High quality environmental education programming by schools, districts, and non-profits with and for their communities;
- Environmental education opportunities that include and reflect the experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of diverse populations across Oregon.

Eligibility
We will consider proposals submitted by schools, districts, colleges, tribal entities, government agencies or 501(c)3 non-profit organizations serving Oregon. Sponsored programs should align with the applying organization’s mission. For additional questions, please contact Gray FF staff.

Scope of Proposals Sought
The impact of COVID-19 has had wide-reaching effects on communities across the state of Oregon – and organizations that provide and support environmental education have been significantly impacted. We recognize the current uncertainty and that the various scenarios organizations and educators will face when connecting with youth during the next year are complex.

This year, Gray Family Foundation seeks proposals that stimulate or promote the teaching of environmental education in formal and informal K-12 educational environments to increase
outdoor experiences for youth – either during the school day, as part of distance or virtual learning, or as a service or opportunity offered to families and youth outside of the context of the school setting. Gray Family Foundation’s Environmental Education Grant Program is focused on projects/programs that benefit 3rd-8th grade youth. Gray FF will fund proposals that best demonstrate alignment with the below priorities and reflect our values towards equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Gray FF’s Environmental Education program priorities seek to increase:

- Diversity of youth and communities engaged in outdoor and environmental education learning experiences.
- Educators’ (K-12 teachers, administrators and informal educators) preparedness to integrate environmental education across subjects.
- Environmental educators’ preparedness to support K-12 needs utilizing best practices and rigor.
- K-12 professionals’ preparedness to use the natural and built environments and systems as a context for learning.
- K-12 youth’s ability to collaborate, problem solve and apply critical thinking to local and global environmental issues.
- K-12 youth’s preparedness for success in careers inside and outside of the environmental field through increased participation in environmental education.

Funds are typically used to support:

- Dedicated staff time.
- Training and professional development for educators (in person or virtual).
- Costs associated with developing and implementing in person or virtual curricula and programming (e.g. classroom materials, books, toolkits, virtual field trips, etc.).
- Costs associated with facilitating learning experiences outside the classroom either on or near school grounds or if possible away from school grounds.
- Administrative support.

Funding is not eligible to support:

- Recreational summer camp or day camps
- Student learning experiences outside the targeted 3rd-8th grades*
- Organizations that have received three consecutive years of Gray FF funding for Environmental Education
- Capital campaigns, site improvements, or acquisitions of land
- Purchases or activities that occur prior to grant decision
- Deficit funding or elimination of operating deficits
- Annual fund appeals or endowment funds
- Religious activities
- Grants or loans to individuals

*Programs or projects that benefit a broader age range than 3rd-8th grade are still eligible to apply, we just ask that your budget request reflects the proportion of your programming that serves 3rd-8th grade students.
Grant Type Overview
In 2021, we are offering three options through our Environmental Education grant program. Gray FF is interested in reviewing proposals for a range of funding levels that best serve the specific needs of your program. Gray FF will award funds to the strongest eligible projects regardless of project type and encourage organizations to apply for the type of funding that will best serve their efforts. During this grant cycle, we are also especially interested in supporting opportunities for organizations, schools, and/or school districts to use and integrate outdoor spaces (e.g. schoolyards, playgrounds, nearby parks or natural areas) into student learning as a method for both engaging students and reducing risk for students and educators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please note that applicants may apply for projects that include a combination of any of the areas below (capacity-building, field experiences and professional development), but may only apply for $25,000 max.

Option 1: Equity-Focused Capacity-Building
We will consider equity and inclusion focused capacity-building grant requests from $5,000-$20,000. This includes capacity-building support for multi-cultural or culturally-specific organizations seeking to integrate best practices in environmental education into their youth programming AND/OR organizations seeking to build their staff and organizational capacity to effectively engage with and support communities where they are implementing programming (i.e. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings, Trauma-Informed training and/or curriculum development, community engagement and partnership work, etc.). Eligible organizations should have or be planning for programming that engages 3rd–8th grade youth. Capacity-building grants are typically one-year grants with the opportunity to apply for programmatic grants in future years, however you may combine a capacity-building grant with a program grant if that makes the most sense for your request. See page 5 for additional details on submission requirements.

Option 2: Youth Field Experiences
We will consider programmatic grant requests from $5,000-$25,000 per year to support in-person, virtual, or self-directed field experiences for 3rd through 8th grade youth. Program applicants may request multi-year funding (up to three years) pending annual grant renewals through the 2022–2023 school year. Please note that program grants may also support work done in collaboration with or in parallel to schools/school districts in leveraging outdoor spaces (e.g. playgrounds, gardens, nearby natural areas) to support student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs requesting multi-year funding will be responsible for securing increasing matching funds in years two and three of the program as Gray FF will reduce its funding from year to year by 20% (e.g., $10,000 year one, $8,000 year two, $6,400 year three). See page 7 for additional details on submission requirements.

Option 3: Educator Training and Professional Development
We will consider programmatic grant requests from $5,000-$25,000 per year to support educator professional development. Program applicants may request multi-year funding (up to three years) pending annual grant renewals through the 2022–2023 school year. Programs requesting multi-year funding will be responsible for securing increasing matching funds in years two and three of the program as Gray FF will reduce its funding.
from year to year by 20% (e.g., $10,000 year one, $8,000 year two, $6,400 year three). See page 7 for additional details on submission requirements.

**Timeline**

**Proposal Due:** November 13, 2020  
**Proposals Reviewed:** November 2020 - December 2020  
**Award Notification:** By February 26, 2021  
**Grant Implementation Timeline:**  
Single Year: March 1, 2021 - February 28, 2022  
Multi-Year: March 1, 2021 - February 28, 2024  
**Report Due Dates:**  
Single Year: Final report, March 30, 2022  
Multi-year progress check-in / renewal request: Dec 1, 2022  
Multi-year progress check-in / renewal request: Dec 1, 2023  
Final check-in/site visit: March 30, 2024

**Reporting Requirements**

Gray FF appreciates the opportunity to connect with organizations about their successes and lessons learned. For single year grants, you will be expected to complete a grant report as a final report. This report will be brief and include the progress you made in your program’s identified goals.

For multi-year grantees, our Program Officer will schedule an annual check-in/site visit with your organization in lieu of a written report. We will request basic data about your program and provide questions to cover during the conversation. If you have questions about this format or would prefer to provide a written report, you may request this from your Program Officer.

**Questions?**

More information about Gray FF grants programs can be found on our website [www.grayff.org](http://www.grayff.org).

If you have other questions, you may contact the Gray Family Foundation at 503-552-3500 or [grants@grayff.org](mailto:grants@grayff.org).

We will also be offering **office hours** during the month of October when our Program Officer will be available to answer questions, although you are welcome to call or email anytime. Visit our website here for more details.

**Detailed Proposal Submission Guidance**

**Capacity-Building Grant Proposal Guidance**

It is a priority for the Gray FF Environmental Education Program to support efforts that ensure environmental education programming reflects and elevates the perspectives, traditions, and knowledge of all communities across Oregon. We are pleased to invite environmental education providers, multi-cultural and culturally-specific organizations,
schools, and other institutions to apply for a capacity-building grant to help advance this vision.

Gray FF Capacity-Building Grants may be used to support diversity, equity, and inclusion related training, partnership development, program planning, needs assessment or strengths mapping, as well as other work needed to lay the foundation for implementing environmental education programs that effectively engage and reflect the perspectives, traditions, and knowledge of diverse populations across Oregon.

Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Identify the unique need or opportunity for the organization(s) related to equity in environmental education.
- Support the development of partnerships or collaborations that leverage collective strengths and share resources to increase potential impact.
- Aligns with Gray Family Foundation’s statement on equity, diversity, and inclusion, including projects that are:
  - Engaging and benefiting rural communities across Oregon and/or;
  - Led by, informed by, and directly benefiting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or other racial and ethnic communities facing current and historical policies and practices that have resulted in disparities.

Projects and programs may also combine a capacity-building request with a program request. If you have questions about the different grant type combinations, please contact the Program Officer at ntessman@grayff.org.

Field Experience and Professional Development Grant Proposal Guidance

The Gray Family Foundation seeks proposals that stimulate or promote the teaching of environmental education in K-12 formal and informal environments to increase opportunities for youth to learn in and experience the outdoors.

Gray Family Foundation recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on how schools, organizations, and districts prepare educators and offer environmental education opportunities to youth. Our field experience and professional development grant opportunities will support professional development and/or field experiences for youth that take place during the school day, as part of distance or virtual learning, or as a service or opportunity offered to families and youth outside of the context of the school setting.

Program funding can support one to three years of support for youth field experiences for 3rd through 8th grade youth and/or educator professional development. Gray FF will select programs that most closely align with Gray FF’s Environmental Education program priorities (see ‘Scope of Proposals Sought’).

Preference will be given to proposals that include:

- Dedicated staff time.
• Demonstrated expertise in environmental education, K-12 instruction, and/or community engagement.
• K-12 administrative and/or partner buy-in via a letter of support.
• Additional contributed or earned support documented in the program budget (i.e. grants, business or individual donations, in-kind, program revenue, etc.).
• Alignment with Gray Family Foundation’s statement on equity, diversity, and inclusion, including projects that are:
  ○ Engaging and benefiting rural communities across Oregon and/or;
  ○ Led by, informed by, and directly benefiting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or other racial and ethnic communities facing current and historical policies and practices that have resulted in disparities.

Programmatic grant expectations:

• Timely and complete annual reporting.
• Participation in a Gray FF Environmental Education Convening in 2021 for multi-year grantees, date TBD (support will be provided by the Foundation to cover participation).
• Potential participation in one grant review cycle as a Gray FF grant review committee member for multi-year grantees at the request of Gray FF staff (commitment 8-16 hours).

Grant Application Procedures

Environmental Education applicants may submit a proposal through the Oregon Community Foundation’s MyOCF online system which will be available via a link on our website on September 15, 2020. Applicants for our Environmental Education Grant that have not previously applied for an Oregon Community Foundation grant will need to create an account.

The online application will require submitting a brief organizational background, organizational financials, a project/program description, and to upload a single or multi-year project budget (template provided), and responses to our narrative questions (included below for your reference). You will also be required to upload a brief project timeline and organization financials (most recent audited financials if available or end-of-year financial statements from the prior year). There will also be the opportunity to upload letters of support.

Specific questions to address in your project description are written below and will be posted in the MyOCF system. (Note: There are no character limits, however we recommend keeping the total length of narrative to no more than 3-4 single-spaced pages in 12 pt. font).

1. Does the majority of your staff, board, and volunteers reflect the population(s) that you serve?
   a. If answer is yes, please elaborate
   b. If the answer is no, please describe how your organization works to ensure it is offering culturally relevant or culturally responsive programming for the populations you serve.
2. Describe your project proposal including how it meets Gray FF’s priorities for funding. We recognize that the uncertainty of COVID-19 pandemic has made program planning challenging and organizations may be uncertain about how their work will evolve. Please use this question to share different plans or scenarios you are considering (if applicable).

3. If you are partnering with other organizations or stakeholders to plan or implement this project, how will leadership be shared during your capacity-building or program implementation process? Describe the process you will use.

4. Describe the unique need or opportunity for your organization(s) related to environmental education, especially in terms of equity and inclusion. How would you differentiate this project from other similar projects in your community? For example, do you provide access where there is none? Do you reach a unique set of youth or educators? Do you engage community in facilitating, guiding, or improving your programming?

5. How does this program support your organization’s goals and build upon your staff, organization, and the community’s strengths?

6. What was your process for researching and designing your approach?

7. How will you know the project has been successful?

8. Other than financial resources, what other types of technical assistance would be helpful from foundation staff or other grantees during this process?

*Please contact Gray FF* for assistance or clarification on any part of the application process or if you require submitting your request in an alternative format than described.

**Proposal Scoring Criteria**

Proposals are reviewed by a volunteer committee that makes recommendations for funding which staff present to the Gray FF Board of Directors for approval. [More details on our review process can be found here](#). Programs will be reviewed and scored based on the following categories and criteria:

**Overall Proposal Strength (10 Points)**

The strongest proposals for **youth field experiences**:

1. Provide direct experiences for youth (in person or online) addressing local and global environmental issues.
2. Are academically and emotionally appropriate for the intended audience.
3. Align to education standards and/or best practices in youth development.
4. Foster youth’s knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors towards environmental systems and issues.
5. Integrate learning from the field into the classroom and the classroom to the field.
7. Employ culturally-appropriate strategies.

The strongest proposals for **educator professional development** prepare educators to:
1. Integrate environmental education across subject areas.
2. Utilize the natural and built community and systems as a context for learning.
3. Use best practices such as project-based learning, cooperative learning strategies, service learning and inquiry-based instruction.
4. Articulate the benefits of environmental education to K-12 environments.

The strongest proposals for **capacity-building projects**:

1. Identify a unique opportunity or need in supporting equity and inclusion in environmental education that could be supported through capacity-building funding.
2. Demonstrate a plan for engagement of partners, stakeholders and/or community in informing and guiding program planning.
3. Acknowledge the assumptions and practices that reinforce inequities amongst community and youth experiences.
4. Support the equitable distribution of grant funds to partners (if applicable).

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (15 Points)**

In evaluating all proposals related to our diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities, we prioritize proposals that:

1. Engage and benefit rural communities across Oregon and/or proposals that are;
2. Led by, informed by, and directly benefiting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or other racial and ethnic communities facing current and historical policies and practices that have resulted in disparities.

In addition to the above items, we also seek proposals that:

1. Demonstrate a willingness to examine, challenge, and change assumptions and practice that reinforce inequities amongst communities and student experiences.
2. Respect and amplify the perspectives, traditions, and knowledge of diverse populations across Oregon.
3. Support creative partnerships (e.g. public/private/cross-sector) to address disparities amongst communities (if applicable).
4. Provide for shared leadership between partners, stakeholders, and community.
5. Offer equitable distribution of funds to project partners (if applicable).

**Project Feasibility and Fit (10 Points)**

In evaluating proposals related to project feasibility and fit, we seek proposals from organizations that demonstrate the capacity to carry out the project including:

1. Clarity of project goals, design, and project timeline.
2. Appropriate qualifications of the project’s personnel and/or using partners through new and existing networks to carry out the work.
3. Alignment of budget with requested funds.
4. Support from the community, organization, school, or district leadership demonstrated via at least one letter of support.