



Invites Proposals for the 2024 Environmental Education Program

Grant Application Deadline

*An application will be made available after a conversation with Gray Family Foundation's Program Officer beginning: January 15, 2024

Invited applications due: March 22, 2024 by midnight

Grant award notification: By end of May 2024

** Please contact our Program Officer at ntessman@grayff.org to receive access to the application. You do not need to have a formal proposal or LOI prepared, just general information about your proposed project. She will provide you input and a link to access to the application if your request is aligned with our grant program.*

Funds Available

In 2024, we have \$278,000 available to support new grants to environmental education organizations serving Oregon youth and educators. We anticipate awarding 8-10 grants of between \$10,000-\$25,000 each or 4-5 smaller grants and two larger grants depending on the number and alignment of regional applications submitted (see details below).

Please note: we currently have \$347,000 in multi-year commitments to environmental education projects from previously submitted applications that will also be granted out in 2023.

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 outdoor, environmental, climate education and land-based 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; and
- Environmental education opportunities that include and reflect the experiences, perspectives, and knowledge of diverse populations across Oregon.

Eligibility

Schools (public, independent/charter), districts, colleges, tribal entities, government agencies or 501(c)3 non-profit organizations serving Oregon are all eligible to apply. Fiscally sponsored programs should align with the applying organization's mission. For additional questions, [please contact Gray FF staff](#).

Scope of Proposals Sought

In 2024, Gray Family Foundation continues to seek applications from organizations that will inspire and promote outdoor, environmental, land-based, and/or climate education in formal and informal K-12 educational environments and increase outdoor experiences for youth. These experiences can take place during the school day, after school, during the summer, and/or as a service or opportunity offered to families and youth outside of the context of the school setting. Please note that we typically DO NOT fund recreation-focused programs (i.e. summer camps) or mentorship type programs, unless they clearly meet our guidelines outlined below.

This year, we are also providing an option for organizations to apply collaboratively if they are leveraging their expertise and resources across the same region to provide youth quality, environmental or outdoor learning experiences. *Applicants must be serving or benefiting primarily K-8 youth.**

Gray FF's Environmental Education Grant Program seeks requests that will increase and/or deepen:

- The diversity of youth, educators, and communities engaged in outdoor, environmental, land-based, and climate education learning experiences.
- K-8 youth's ability to collaborate, problem solve and apply critical thinking to local and global environmental issues.
- K-8 youth's preparedness for success in careers inside and outside of the environmental field through increased participation in environmental education.
- Educators' (K-8 teachers, administrators, and informal educators) preparedness to integrate environmental, outdoor, and climate education across subjects.
- Educators' preparedness to support K-8 student needs utilizing promising practices and rigor.
- K-8 professionals' preparedness to use the natural and built environments and systems as a context for learning.

Funds can be used to support:

- Dedicated staff time (of both program staff and administrative/support staff).
- 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 away from school grounds.
- Scholarships and/or stipends for participants, interns, and partners to support participation in learning experiences and/or professional development opportunities.

- Costs associated with providing staff leadership development opportunities, wellness support, sabbaticals, or other strategies that build staff capacity and support rest, healing, and recovery.
- Administrative costs or overhead support required to successfully support the program/project (please contact us at ntessman@grayff.org for guidance if you are a university/education institution on our administrative cost cap for universities).

Funding is **not** eligible to support:

- Capital campaigns, site improvements (such as permanent structures for outdoor classrooms), 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 K-8th grade (i.e., K-12) are still eligible to apply, we just ask that your budget request reflects the proportion of your programming that serves K-8th grade students.

Grant Type Overview

We are interested in reviewing proposals for a range of funding levels that best serve the specific needs of your organization, program, or region. We will award funds to the strongest eligible requests regardless of proposal type and encourage organizations to apply for the type of funding that will best serve youth and their community. A few notes on overall requests:

- All requests should be between \$5,000-\$35,000 per organization, per year for up to three years. For a collaboration of up to four organizations the maximum request is \$100,000, per year, for up to three years.
 - *Please note that if you have not received funding from Gray Family Foundation in the past you are only eligible to apply for one year of funding. If you are a collaboration new to Gray Family Foundation funding, then you also are only eligible to apply for one year.*
- Requests should support programming directly benefiting **K-8 youth in Oregon** or offer professional development to educators that will directly benefit K-8 youth in Oregon.
- If you are requesting funding over multiple years, please include a budget covering your anticipated costs over each year included in the request. If approved, the second and/or third year of renewal funding will be pending annual approval by our Board of Directors and based on site visit/renewal conversations with your Program Officer.
- We encourage organizations to consider including staff leadership development, wellness, and rest as potential elements of your budget requests. Similar to our support for budgets that include coinciding administrative or overhead costs, Gray Family Foundation is supportive of budgets that reflect support for staff retention, health, and wellness.

- We also strongly encourage organizations applying for funds to request the necessary funds required to pay staff at all levels equitable and competitive wages that reflect the essential value of nonprofit staff and educators.

In 2024, we are continuing to offer three options through our Environmental Education grant program.

Option 1: General operating support for mission-aligned organizations

We will consider general operating support requests from organizations where the mission and the majority of programming or services provided by the organization is aligned with our Environmental Education grant program (i.e., your organization's core mission is providing environmental education programming to K-12 or preparing educators to use the outdoors/physical environment as an educational resource/tool for students). We recognize that many organizations serve a broader age range of youth than K-8 and general operating requests can include organizations serving a broader age range of youth and families – the request should just be proportional to the amount of programming or services aligned with this grant program.

Option 2: Program/project support

Similar to previous years, if you are interested in requesting support for a program within your organization or a project then we are accepting program or project requests as well. Please note that funds can be being used to provide general support for an aligned program within your organization (including any associated overhead/administrative costs) or project-specific requests. For program or project requests, we will consider requests that include any or all of the below components.

- **Equity-focused capacity building:** This includes capacity-building support for multi-cultural or culturally-specific/reflective organizations seeking to integrate promising practices in environmental education into 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 K- 8th grade youth.
- **Youth field experiences:** We will consider programmatic grant requests to support in-person, virtual, or self-directed field experiences related to the outdoors, environment, and/or climate for K – 8th grade youth. 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.
- **Educator training and professional development:** We will consider programmatic grant requests to support educator professional development that specifically prepares educators to deliver outdoor, environmental, and/or climate-based education programming to youth. This can include curriculum development, professional learning communities, trainings, networking, and other supports for educators.

Option 3: Regional support

To help reduce competition for the same resources among collaborating organizations in the same region, we offer the opportunity for multiple organizations from the same region to apply under the same application. Organizations will each receive their grant award, so the amounts requested by each organization needs to be reflected in the budget. Up to four organizations can apply under one application with the total request of up to \$100,000 per year, for up to three years. These requests should reflect the following priorities:

- Organizations listed on the application can demonstrate in the narrative how they collaborate regularly on providing programming to a variety of youth in that region and offer complementary expertise, resources, and/or experiences that mutually reinforce each other (i.e., a watershed education program providing opportunities for a culturally-specific youth serving organization to engage in restoration or education projects in a particular area).
- At least one organization in the application provides youth/educators who may not have easy or safe access to environmental or outdoor learning opportunities the ability to participate in a way that is responsive and reflective of their identities and life experience.
- At least one organization offers expertise and resources in natural resources, conservation and restoration, agriculture, climate, or other topic that enhance outdoor or environmental learning opportunities for youth, youth-serving organizations, and schools in that region.

Timeline

Applications Due: March 22, 2024

Applications Reviewed: April 2024

Award Notification: By end of May 2024

Grant Implementation: Single Year: June 3, 2024 – June 1, 2025
Multi-Year: June 3, 2024 – June 1, 2027

Reporting Requirements

Gray Family Foundation appreciates the work of our grantees and wants to ensure organization staff are able to dedicate time to projects versus meeting complex reporting requirements. In lieu of a formal written report, organizations will be asked to provide a verbal update at the end of the grant period using simple questions that can be found in the report template on our website here: <https://grayff.org/grants/grantee-reporting/>. Organizations and educators may also submit a written report if that is preferred. Award letters will include more details on reporting expectations.

Grant Application Procedures

Environmental Education applicants may submit a proposal through Oregon Community Foundation's MyOCF online system which will be available via a link provided by our Program Officer after an initial conversation on or after January 15, 2024. 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 completing several fields: providing organizational background information, organizational financials, an organization/project/program description, an upload of a single or multi-year project budget ([You can find a template](#)

[here](#)), and responses to our narrative questions (included below for your reference). You will also be required to upload your organization's financials (most recent audited financials, if available or most recent end-of-year financial statements). There will also be the opportunity to upload letters of support, which are recommended if your organization/project/program relies on partners to implement your work.

Please note for collaborative applications, one single organization should answer the questions in MyOCF related to their organization. The remaining organizations should be listed in the narrative/uploaded document and included primary contact, Tax ID, etc.

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. For applications from a collaboration, proposal length can be up to 6 single spaced pages).**

1. **For regional collaborations only:** Please list collaborating organization names, addresses, primary contact(s), and Tax ID numbers. Please also include the amount requested for each organization.
2. **Summary:** Please provide a summary of your organization(s)/project(s)/program(s) and how they align with the goals of the Environmental Education Grant Program outlined in this RFP. For collaborative applications, please identify a lead organization (who will submit the application in the MyOCF system) and include brief information about each other applying organization. If awarded, collaborative organizations will each receive a separate grant award – the lead organization is only responsible for submitting the application into the MyOCF system.
3. **Process:** Please describe your organization, program, or project activities (aligned with this grant program) that you plan to accomplish in the next year, including a brief timeline for the work. For collaborative applications, please describe your individual organization/program activities aligned with this funding request AND include a description of how your organizations collaborate.
4. **Goals:** Please describe what you hope to achieve by the end of the grant period. This includes who you anticipate will benefit from your programming or resources (i.e., number and types of students or educators potentially reached, grade levels, etc.), how those individuals have been involved in informing your project goals, and how this project/program supports the goals of your organization(s). Please also list any deliverables you plan to develop (i.e. updated curricula, enhanced field trip programs, outreach plans, etc), Share any plans for sharing your deliverables or activities with others.
5. **Opportunity:** Describe what makes your project or request unique and valuable for the communities where you work. What need or opportunity are you addressing through your project? How would you differentiate this project from others in your community or region? For example, are you increasing access where there is none? Are you reaching a unique set of youth or community members? Is your project building on previous work that will build the capacity of your organization?
6. **Qualifications/Experience:** Please briefly describe your qualifications as educators and/or organizations supporting environmental education, K-12 education, or other related work (experience and expertise as educators, lived experiences, knowledge of communities, etc.). *Please use this as an opportunity to describe expertise in identifying opportunities to support and serve your target communities as well as*

work internally and externally your organization is doing to support equity & inclusion. Please also describe any resources, consultants, or organizations that may help inform your work.

- Please note in your response to this question if you meet either of Gray Family Foundation's priorities related to being based in and serving rural parts of Oregon and/or being led by, informed by, and accountable to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or racial and ethnic communities facing current and historical policies and practices that have resulted in disparities.

7. **Partners:** If applicable, please describe any partners you plan to work with and your plan for engaging them. Please include how or if you plan to compensate them for their contributions (and please reflect this in your budget).

[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.

Review Process

Applications are reviewed using a participatory process including staff from environmental and education organizations, members of Gray Family Foundation's Board of Directors and advisory committees, and individuals with knowledge and experience with grantmaking in environmental education. [Details on our review process can be found here.](#) Preference will be given to proposals that:

- Increase environmental and/or climate literacy of K-8 youth and/or the ability of educators to build youth knowledge, skills, and engagement with the environment and/or the outdoors.
- Clearly identify a unique opportunity and related expertise, partnerships, and planning to advance equity & inclusion in outdoor, environmental, or climate-based education.
- Support the development of partnerships or collaborations that leverage collective strengths and share resources to increase impact on youth across Oregon.
- Aligns with Gray Family Foundation's equity priorities, 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.

In addition to the above items, we 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).

Questions

If you have questions about completing your application, eligibility, or require any additional support, please feel free to contact Nell Tessman, Program Officer, at ntessman@grayff.org or at 503-552-3500. We will also be offering office hours in January and February and those dates/times can be found on our website here: <https://grayff.org/grants/environmental-education/> – but feel free to contact us directly with any questions as well.