



Invites Applications for the 2025 Environmental Education New and Innovative Grants

Important Dates

- Schedule an initial conversation with Gray Family Foundation's Program Officer **beginning: January 17, 2025***
- After Senior Program Officer approval, applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed quarterly: April 4, July 11, and September 19
- Grant award notification: End of May, End of August, Mid November

**Please contact our Program Officer at ntessman@grayff.org to discuss your application before you apply. Please be prepared to verbally share general information about your proposed project.*

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.

New and Innovative Grant Funding Available

In 2025, we have \$90,000 available to support **new** and **innovative** grants to environmental education organizations serving Oregon youth and educators. **Only organizations who have not received Gray FF funding since 2017 or any organization seeking funds for a one-time educator professional development opportunity are eligible to apply.** We anticipate awarding 4-5 grants of between \$5,000-\$20,000 each or 4-5 smaller grants and two larger grants depending on the types of applications. We anticipate distributing approximately \$30,000 of funds each quarter.

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 and will need to have documentation of their fiscal sponsorship agreement in order to be eligible for a grant. For additional questions, [please contact Gray FF staff](#).

Scope of Proposals Sought

In 2025, Gray Family Foundation seeks applications from organizations and programs that have not received Gray Family Foundation funds in the past OR organizations proposing to develop or implement a one-time educator professional development opportunity.

Organizations or projects must inspire and promote outdoor, environmental, land-based, and/or climate education in formal and/or informal K-8 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 DO NOT fund recreation-focused programs (i.e. summer camps) or mentorship programs, unless they also clearly meet the guidelines outlined below.

Gray FF's Environmental Education Grant Program seeks requests that demonstrate how they 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.

Proposal Overview

We are interested in reviewing proposals for a range of funding levels that best serve the needs of your organization, program, or region. Applications will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by our community-based, environmental education advisory committee. 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–\$20,000 per organization. Organizations applying through this grant program in 2025 are not eligible to submit multi-year requests, however if awarded, organizations will be eligible to be considered for funding in 2026 and/or may be eligible for the invitation process in 2026.
- 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.
- We encourage organizations to consider costs associated with staff development, wellness, and rest as elements of budgets. 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 2025, we are accepting applications that include:

Operating support for mission-aligned organizations, programs, or projects that are new to Gray Family Foundation: We will consider general operating support requests from organizations or for programs 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 be proportional to the amount of programming, or services aligned with this grant program. Organizations can use granted funds to support staffing, training, administrative costs, as well as materials and other needs associated with program implementation in providing youth field experiences related to the environment.

and/or;

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.

Grant Application Procedures

Environmental Education applicants may submit a PDF proposal via email to grants@grayff.org after the organization has an initial conversation with Gray FF Senior Program Officer (ntessman@grayff.org). The first round of proposals will be reviewed after April 4th, with decisions made by end of May 2025.

We recommend keeping the total length of narrative to no more than 3-4 single-spaced pages in 12 pt. font (excluding the cover page)

Please include in your request:

- 1) **A cover sheet that includes:**
 - Organization Name:
 - Organization Address:
 - Fiscally Sponsoring Organization Name (if applicable)
 - Address of Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable):
 - Primary Contact Person:
 - Phone:
 - Email Address:
 - Tax ID (of organization or fiscal sponsor):
 - Note: If you have a fiscal sponsor, please include a letter from the fiscal sponsor acknowledging they are willing and able to manage funds for this project. The letter should reflect agreement of responsibility from both the organization and fiscal sponsor.
- 2) **A request summary that includes responses to the questions below:**
- 3) **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.
- 4) **Proposed use of funds:** Please describe how the funds will be used to support your organization, program, or project activities and goals (aligned with this grant

- program). Please summarize the activities you plan to accomplish in the next year, including a brief timeline for the work.
- 5) **Impact:** 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, types of number of classes or field trips provided, grade levels served, 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.
 - 6) **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?
 - 7) **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, Latine, or racial and ethnic communities facing current and historical policies and practices that have resulted in disparities.**
 - 8) **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).
 - 3) **Program or Project Budget** (i.e. for your environmental education program or aligned project). We are open to aligned requests up to approximately \$20,000. If your request exceeds \$20,000, please feel free to include that information as depending on our available budget we may be able to offer additional support. If you need a budget template [you can feel free to use this template.](#)
 - 4) **Organizational budget** (last finalized budget year is acceptable) and a copy of the most recent audited financials if available.

[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. Applications will be reviewed on a quarterly basis. [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.
- 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 requests 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).

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.

Gray Family Foundation Environmental Education Grant Program Strategy – 2025:

The Gray Family Foundation total budget in 2025 for environmental education grants is \$705,000. We anticipate maintaining this funding level for the foreseeable future, which will include multi-year commitments, new grant funding, and grants distributed to intermediary organizations to support individual schools. The goal of our 2025 strategy is to effectively support the ecosystem of organizations, schools, educators, and youth-serving organizations essential to ensuring that youth have the opportunity to connect with and learn in the outdoors.

- ***New and Innovative Grants*** – Summarized above.
- ***Multi-Year Commitments***: \$230,000 is dedicated in 2025 for grants to multi-year commitments for environmental education projects from previously submitted applications.
- ***Core Environmental Education Organization Grants***: \$330,000 will be awarded through an invitation only process to core organizations focused on delivering environmental education programming in regions across the state. Invited organizations have established partnerships with schools or other programs that directly engage K-8 in experiential, outdoor learning opportunities and can demonstrate ongoing demand for programming and strong reputation and responsiveness to the communities they serve. These grants will be renewable for up to two additional years. Invited applicants will be notified by January 31, 2025.
- ***Individual School Grants***: Remaining funds will be distributed to organizations for re-granting out to individual schools for outdoor learning, including field trips, school gardens, etc.

Questions

If you have questions about completing your application, eligibility, or require any additional support, please feel free to contact Nell Tessman, Senior Program Officer, at ntessman@grayff.org or at 503-552-3500.