

Our team is expanding!



We are thrilled to introduce Estefania Zavala (she/her) will join Gray Family Foundation as our new Program Associate on September 23rd.

Over the past few years, Estefania has been a valuable member of the Oregon Community Foundation finance team, focused on supporting organizations. She grew up in Puyallup, Washington before moving to Portland in 2012 and is currently studying Environmental Studies at Portland State, with a minor in Geography. She is also working on an additional certificate in Indigenous Traditional Ecological and Cultural Knowledge. She recently served as co-founder and community advocate for PDX through a Latinx Lens and as an Adventure Leader for Wild Diversity—one of our grantees.

We are excited to welcome Estefania to the Gray Family Foundation team!

2024 Summer Grant Recipients



In August, the Gray Family Foundation board supported grants totaling \$828,800 to 28 organizations. Grants will support Outdoor School and Camp Maintenance projects as well as work toward creating systemic change for our field. Our primary grantmaking this quarter were renewals for our Youth Leadership for the Environment cohort. This Initiative has a goal to support a healthy, thriving, and sustainable Oregon by empowering high-school age youth to use their leadership skills in the environmental sector. The longer-term goal is to provide sustainable, ongoing support for organizations and programs engaging

youth to influence surrounding policies, systems, and institutions, eventually leading to an increase in the number of places where youth see themselves, their backgrounds, and their life experiences reflected in environmental work.

The Youth Leadership for the Environment Initiative is intended to be a collaborative, specifically seeking to acknowledge and reflect the shared values and approaches of these youth-serving organizations and dispelling the common narratives of the urban/rural divide in environmental spaces.

Two examples include:

- [Beyond Toxics](#) engaging interns in topics related to city planning and the environmental and community impacts of large-scale planning projects. Youth were able to engage in a real-time example in the city of Eugene connected with local professors and city staff.
- Youth participating in the [Traditional Ecological Inquiry Program](#) (part of Long Tom Watershed Council) selecting a project to work on independently through the year with a connection to their cultural identity, career or academic interests, and relevance to place.



Grantee Highlight: Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council

The Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council teamed up with many area partners, including environmental nonprofits, tribal organizations, and state agencies to provide immersive outdoor education experiences for students in Lane County. “One of the strengths of a Regional Education approach is that we have committed staff for education and having us housed out of one location with regional connection has allowed us to build strong partnerships,” says MFWWC Education Program Manager, Emma Garner. Check out the full story [here](#).

Summer Learning Summit

On August 15th, Gray FF had the privilege of co-sponsoring a Summer and After School Learning Summit in collaboration with Oregon Community Foundation, Oregon Department of Education, and the Oregon Governor’s Office. Attendees included local elected officials and representatives from school districts, education service districts, advocacy organizations, community-based organizations, and sovereign tribal nations from across the state. The stakeholder input from the summit will help inform plans for future long-term funding for summer learning programs. We were grateful for the opportunity to share space with and learn from education leaders from across the state and look forward to the recommendations from the Summer Learning Workgroup. [You can learn more here.](#)

[Text Link](#)

Data to help Oregon's environmental education sector thrive

We are leading a national data collection effort for Oregon through [Gen:Thrive](#), a collaborative initiative that provides shared data and technology tools to accelerate sustainability education and advance health, equity and climate resilience in K-12 youth and schools. Currently, more than 30 states have been mapped providing our field with the tools, information, and insights needed to foster the next generation of resilient sustainability leaders. We are partnering with the Environmental Education Association of Oregon, the Oregon Farm to School, School Garden Network, Friends of Outdoor School, and OSU Outdoor School to create a comprehensive outreach list of more than 1,000 providers across the state. **Be on the lookout for a survey soon!**

Your input will help create an Oregon specific website with maps, field trends, environmental topics, and information on programs available, ages and schools served and more. This information will be valuable to schools, districts, and providers in building connections and identifying programming that serves your region.

Gray FF Learning and Networking Session

In September, we hosted a Geography Education Learning & Networking session which included Story Mapping 101 and Connections to Indigenous History & Social Justice. This session presented an overview of strategies for incorporating geography concepts into programs and classrooms, with a particular focus on using story maps as an engaging and interactive tool for youth learning on a variety different concepts related to physical, human, and environmental geography. Nancee Hunter, Director of the Center for Geography Education and Assistant Professor with the PSU Geography Department and Heather Gurko, Education Manager at Confluence shared examples of how they've leveraged geography themes, concepts, and storymaps as a method for engaging educators and students in learning related to Indigenous history, including Oregon's Tribal History/Shared History curricula (SB 13), and other social justice related topics. You can [check out the recording here](#), passcode: 90^1*HX

Calling All Presenters - Children Nature Network

Children & Nature Network is searching for presenters to speak at their 2025 [Nature Everywhere Conference](#), May 13-16 in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Call for proposals are open now until late October. Proposals for 75-minute presentations and workshops or 15-minute TED-style talks in the following focus areas:

- Proven, promising or emerging practices to advance equity and inclusion, honor traditional knowledge or support environmental justice
- Perspectives of youth, People of Color, Indigenous communities and/or other historically excluded voices
- Green schoolyards and outdoor learning
- Early childhood nature connection and nature-based learning
- Policies or civic engagement strategies driving systems change
- The importance of nature access for health and well-being, both for individuals and communities

For more information, visit <https://www.childrenandnature.org/conference/speakers/>

Blue and Green Career Opportunities

- National Geographic Society invites 13-18-year olds to rise to the [Slingshot Challenge](#), and submit a 1-minute video describing their idea for solving environmental issues for a chance to receive up to \$10,000 in funding.
- [Grosvenor Teacher Fellows](#) is offering a professional development opportunity for pre-K–12 educators in the United States. They select exemplary educators to host aboard Lindblad Expeditions' voyages for a life-changing, field-based experience.

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