



Metro

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Memo

Date: October 05, 2022
To: Metro Council
From: Karissa Lowe, Program Manager, Nature in Neighborhoods Community Grants
Mychal Tetteh, Parks + Nature Community Services Program Director
Subject: 2022 Nature in Neighborhood nature education and outdoor experiences grants –
Review Committee Summary and Recommendation for Funding

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the recommendation for funding from the grant review committee for the 2022 Nature in Neighborhood nature education and outdoor experiences grants. The Metro Council makes all final grant decisions and is scheduled to decide final grant awards on Thursday, October 20, 2022.

If desired, we are happy to schedule individual briefings before then. Please contact Susanne Raymond at susanne.raymond@oregonmetro.gov for scheduling.

The 2022 Nature in Neighborhood nature education and outdoor experiences grants review committee met June 14, 2022, and again on September 13, 2022. They reviewed 41 pre-applications, totaling \$2.45 million in funding requests, and 19 full applications, totaling \$1.24 million in funding requests. The review committee selected **10 of the most compelling programs** to recommend for funding a total of **\$700,000** to the Metro Council.

Background

Metro Council provided the framework for the Nature in Neighborhood community grants in the legislation for the parks and natural areas levy and its renewal and the adoption of the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which directs the agency to incorporate racial equity into all aspects of its work. Staff used the Metro Council direction to develop an outreach plan, application materials, review committee and evaluation criteria for these community grants, referred to as Nature in Neighborhoods nature education and outdoor experiences grants. Staff aligned Metro's grant criteria with state, regional and community initiatives in order to achieve multiple benefits.

Grant evaluation criteria

The following are the purpose and three goal categories for funding:

Purpose: Nature education grants support and create partnerships in local communities that improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature.

Goal 1: Cultural equity.

People of all cultures, races and traditions connect with nature and with one another in the region's parks and natural areas.

Goal 2: Environmental equity.

Communities of color in greater Portland enjoy the benefits of conserving land, air and water and equitable access to safe and welcoming parks, trails and natural areas; communities enjoy learning about, helping restore, experiencing and connecting with nature and the region's natural areas.

These grants help address inequities in the conservation movement by providing access to nature and the positive impacts of clean land, air and water to Black communities, Indigenous communities, communities of color and other historically and continually marginalized groups in greater Portland.

Goal 3: Economic equity.

Communities of color prosper economically from the business of Parks and Nature in greater Portland.

Review committee

Jonathan Blasher, Parks and Nature Director, selected this year's review committee from a pool of applicants. Participation on the grant review committee is by application, open and advertised to all community members. The review committee included local experts in environmental education, mentorship and job skill development, diversity equity and inclusion, community partnership development, philanthropy, and grant management.

The members of the 2022 Nature in Neighborhoods nature education and outdoor experiences review committee are:

- Gwen Amsbury, *Records Management Analyst*, Oregon State Archives
- Faith Cathcart, *On Call Grants Coordinator*, Zenger Farm
- Ridhi D'Cruz, *Member*, Atabey BIPOC Medicine Council; *Program Instructor*, Your Street Your Voice, Camp ELSO; *Core Artist Resident*, Stelo Arts
- Kolini Fusitua, *Program Coordinator*, Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
- Isaiah Jackman, *Housing Specialist*, Urban League of Portland
- Aisha McCoy, *Project Developer*, Homes for Good
- Lucy Ohlsen, *Associate Attorney*, Buchanan Angeli Altschul & Sullivan

- Jen Shih, *Grants and Enrollment Specialist*, Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District
- Wilson Yee, *Project Manager (CERCLA and Navajo Nation sites, Stafford Act)*, Weston Solutions, Inc. and Board Member, Friends of Tryon Creek

Committee members declared any direct conflict of interest in the proposals and did not score or participate directly in the discussion or ranking of an application where there was a conflict.

2022 Nature in Neighborhoods nature education and outdoor experiences review discussion

This funding opportunity was extremely competitive, as Metro received many very strong grant proposals. The review committee determined which proposals were the closest match to the grant program's purpose and goals based on the information submitted, the stated evaluation criteria, and the review committee's professional and collective judgment. The review committee included local experts in environmental education, habitat restoration, natural area land management, conservation planning, mentorship and job skill development, diversity equity and inclusion, community partnership development, philanthropy, and grant management.

In the sixth round of the renewed natural areas levy grants, the review committee valued the range of organizations, project types and project scales represented in the pre-applications submitted. There is solid geographic diversity in this slate of proposals, with five projects focused on Multnomah County, two projects focused on Clackamas County, two projects focused on Washington County, and one with a Metro-wide focus. Proposals came from a mix of culturally specific organizations and conservation focused organizations and included both organizations familiar to this program and many first-time applicants.

Proposals recommended for funding show strong evidence of involvement from BIPOC groups in proposal planning and development. This review committee was especially compelled by proposals from more grassroots and community led organizations, and several proposals recommended for funding are from smaller organizations that are earlier in their development, many of which are new to this funding opportunity. Overall, half of the organizations recommended for funding are larger organizations and half are small or medium-sized organizations.

The review committee members were happy to see strong evidence of BIPOC leadership's influence in proposals focused on work done by and with BIPOC communities, rather than for them.

The review committee was pleased that many of the proposals acknowledge the connection between nature and mental health, and the need to decolonize our relationship with nature. They appreciated proposals that centered the voices and perspectives of young people, and which aim to help youth build leadership skills and learn about STEM careers. Several proposals recommended for funding feature strong economic equity components, whether by paying stipends for participants, creating career pathways, or explicitly naming other steps that the organization will take to remove economic barriers to participation.

The review committee valued projects which aligned with the Nature in Neighborhood grant goals, individual organizations' plans or priorities, and state, regional or local conservation strategies. They found proposals stronger when they demonstrated longstanding and holistic partnerships with communities and community-specific organizations. Proposals which showed newer, less established relationships with community-specific organizations were less competitive.

The review committee felt that nearly all applicants had strong and thorough answers about their diversity, equity and inclusion experience, and this was especially true for organizations that advanced to the full application phase. The review committee was glad to see the applicant organizations being thoughtful and clear about where's they're currently at with their equity work and about their next steps.

The review committee was impressed by how well applicant organizations were able to pivot and evolve their programs in response to safety concerns around the pandemic. Applicants' resilience and determination in the face of these challenges has led to new ways of delivering programs and connecting with community, and the review committee was interested to see how the work will continue to evolve.

The review committee was compelled by proposals that projects that acknowledge that communities' relationship with and access to nature is complicated, and projects that incorporated innovative strategies to build program participants' connection with nature and their sense of safety and personal empowerment in outdoor spaces. They appreciated organizations that are building meaningful, holistic, transformative cross-community partnerships and using participants' feedback to guide their program development and implementation.

Recommended for funding

The 2022 Nature in Neighborhood nature education and outdoor experiences grants review committee recommends the following 10 proposals for funding to the Metro Council. The Metro Council makes all final grant decisions and is scheduled to decide final grant awards on October 20, 2022.

Atabey BIPOC Medicine

Recipient: Atabey Medicine

Grant amount: \$50,000

Project Partners: Atabey Medicine, POCA Tech, Alder Commons, Brown Girl Rise, Metro Stewardship Lead Jessica Rojas

Program summary: Atabey BIPOC Medicine program is a local apprenticeship rooted in investing in Black, Indigenous, and folks of color building meaningful relationships with plants, land, and their ancestral healing practices as a pathway to community healing and liberation.

Brown Girl Rise

Recipient: Brown Girl Rise

Grant amount: \$70,000

Project Partners: Brown Girl Rise, Feed'em Freedom Foundation, Atabey Medicine, Alder Commons

Program summary: Brown Girl Rise's mission is to cultivate a sisterhood of girls and non-binary femmes of color engaged in reclaiming their connection to body, community, land, health, and creativity; enabling them to create a just future where we can rise together.

Aves Compartidas Portland Expansion

Recipient: Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation & Development Area

Grant amount: \$70,000

Project Partners: Oregon partners: Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation & Development Area, East Metro STEAM Partnership, North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District, Friends of Trees, Candy Lane Elem, El Puente Elem, Davis Elem, OSU, UO, PSU – LSAMP. Mexico partners: University of Guanajuato, Salvemos al Rio Laja, Audubon de Mexico

Program summary: The Willamette River-Rio Laja, Mexico Twinning Partnership, which connects bi-national watershed communities using a platform of shared migratory bird species, intends to continue and expand its youth migratory bird education program into Portland-Metro.

STEM in Nature

Recipient: Center for African Immigrants and Refugees Organization (CAIRO)

Grant amount: \$50,000

Project Partners: CAIRO, Portland Metro STEM Partnership, Clean Water Services, Beaverton School District, Tualatin Hills Parks & Recreation District, Begona, Reynolds: Multilingual Department

Program summary: Students will learn and practice environmental science focused on water. High school students will also learn about related career paths and act as near-peer leaders for younger student outings.

Nature-Based Bike Camps For Low Income Youth Of Color

Recipient: Community Cycling Center

Grant amount: \$100,00

Project Partners: CCC, Latino Network, César Chávez School; IRCO; Menlo Park Elementary; Parkrose Middle; Hacienda CDC; Rose CDC; Self Enhancement Inc; KairosPDX; Urban Nature Partners PDX; Verde; Club Aves; Friends of Trees Village Gardens; Portland Fruit Tree Project

Program summary: CCC's annual Bike Camp teaches youth how to use a bicycle as a safe, healthy, and empowering transportation tool. Our Bike Camps, which include a special nature education focus, center low-income youth of color including immigrant and refugee populations.

Confluence Outdoors

Recipient: Confluence

Grant amount: \$30,000

Project Partners: Confluence, Sandy River Watershed Council, Beaverton School District's Title IV Indian Education Program, Hillsboro School District's Title IV Indian Education Program, Native American Youth and Families Center (NAYA), and the Cottonwood School for Civics and Science

Program summary: Confluence Outdoors will connect at least 200 students (a majority of whom identify as Native American) from Hillsboro, Beaverton and Portland with Indigenous educators at the Sandy River Delta to learn lessons in history, culture, ecology and art.

ELSO Culturally Relevant Programming

Recipient: ELSO

Grant amount: \$100,000

Project Partners: ELSO, The Blueprint Foundation, BEAM Village, Friends of Tryon Creek, Wild Diversity, Metro, US Fish and Wildlife, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, Tualatin Riverkeepers, Prescott Elementary School.

Program summary: Expanding and improving year-round, culturally relevant STEM education programs for BIPOC youth which are designed by and for BIPOC communities in collaboration with schools and community organizations, with a focus on expanding STEAM career pathways.

Cultural Ecology and Trauma Healing Project

Recipient: Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center Inc.

Recipient: Parrott Creek Child & Family Services

Grant amount: \$100,000

Project Partners: Parrott Creek Child & Family Services, Friends of Tryon Creek; Greater Oregon City Watershed Council; Red Lodge Transition Services; Oregon Food Bank; Ash Creek Forest Management; 16+ member organizations of the Safe Kids Coalition for Clackamas County

Program summary: The goal of the Cultural Ecology and Trauma Healing Project is to return our 80 acres of land to an ecologically and culturally functioning site through restoration practices, community stewardship, and meaningful long-term Indigenous partnerships.

East County Nature Education

Recipient: Play Grow Learn

Grant amount: \$30,000

Project Partners: Play Grow Learn, City of Gresham, Afro Village, East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District, Friends of Trees, Oasis Wellness Gardens

Program summary: Play, Grow, Learn will incorporate nature education into their existing young workforce development and farmer's market programming.

Wisdom Workforce Development Program

Recipient: Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.

Grant amount: \$100,000

Project Partners: Wisdom of the Elders, Inc., Confluence, Wombyn's Wellness Garden, Johnson Creek Watershed Council, PP&R Community Gardens, Zenger Farm, Friends of Trees, Oswego Lake Watershed Council, East/West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation and Leach Botanical Garden

Program summary: The Wisdom Workforce Development (WWD) Program educates and trains Native American adults in urban environmental restoration and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) through paid part-time opportunities and hands-on restoration techniques in the field.

Attachment A: List of all applicants and their status throughout the review committee recommendation process