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Metro  
Parks and Nature  
**2018 Nature Education and Outdoor Experiences Grant**  
3/6/2018 deadline

Verde  
**Living Cully Youth Nature Education Program**

**\$ 100,000.00** Requested  
\$ 311,145 Estimated Match

Submitted: 3/3/2018 1:24:32 PM (Pacific)

**Project Contact**

[Redacted]

**Additional Contacts**

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**Verde**

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**Application Questions**

**1. Program summary (one paragraph, 255 characters)**

*Provide a brief summary that describes your program.*

Verde requests \$100,000 for 3 years of support to develop a cohesive youth nature education program, which will benefit low-income youth and youth of color in Portland's NE Cully neighborhood and establish a replicable model of service delivery.

**2. Fiscal agent**

*If different than the lead organization. If no fiscal agent, please write "not applicable".*

Not applicable

**3. Program partners**

*Committed partner organizations.*

Hacienda CDC's Expresiones after school program, Native American Youth & Family Center's Early College Academy, Portland Youth and Elders Council, Scott Elementary School, Rigler Elementary School, Portland State University

**4. Potential partners**

*Potential partner organizations.*

Metro, US Fish and Wildlife, Audubon Society of Portland, City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services

**5. Program length**

*(Select only one)*

- One year
- Two years
- Three years

**6. Program narrative (up to one page, 4000 characters)**

*Provide a narrative that describes the program. Explain why the program is important for your community and organization, such as how it fits your organization's strategic plan or mission.*

With support from Metro, Verde will work with a variety of partners over the next three years to establish and grow a cohesive youth nature education program to serve low-income youth and youth of color in the Cully neighborhood. The Living Cully

Youth Nature Education Program will encompass projects and programs that are already established and those that will be developed; it will also establish a replicable model for connecting low-income youth and youth of color to environmental programs and activities.

Home to roughly 13,000 people, Cully is the most diverse neighborhood in the state of Oregon, and it is significantly more diverse than Portland as a whole. Latino residents account for almost a quarter of Cully's population, followed by Black (16%) and Native American (9%) residents. Nearly one-fifth of residents are foreign-born, and the primary language for 31% of the population is non-English. Almost 9 in 10 students qualify for free/reduced lunch; 26% of residents live in poverty.

Verde serves communities by building environmental wealth through social enterprise, outreach, and advocacy. Our theory of change is that sustainability can be reinterpreted as an anti-poverty strategy. Since 2005, Verde has brought environmental infrastructure to low-income neighborhoods, engaged residents to design and implement these projects, and ensured that environmental investments contribute to community well-being.

In 2010, Verde joined with Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East, Hacienda CDC, and the Native American Youth & Family Center, to establish the Living Cully coalition—a long-term, community-based strategy to address multiple disparities in the Cully neighborhood by concentrating environmental investments at neighborhood scale and braiding those investments with traditional community development resources. Verde serves as the backbone organization for the coalition, managing the finances and employing the coalition's three-person staff.

Verde establishes social enterprises to employ and train low-income adults, create contracting opportunities for minority- and women-owned firms, and bring environmental investments to low-income neighborhoods. Through the Living Cully partnership, we develop property to meet community-defined needs, including our current work to develop Cully Park—a former 25-acre landfill that will become Portland's first non-profit-built park—and to redevelop a former adult entertainment complex into a mixed-use property that will include affordable housing, commercial space, and community amenities.

Verde has a long history of engaging Cully neighborhood youth in environmental education projects through the Living Cully initiative. Projects have ranged from working with middle school youth at Scott Elementary School to design and implement a community garden at Cully Park, to Club Aves, a neighborhood birding group connecting neighborhood youth to natural areas to learn about birds and grow their interest in the natural world. In response to community feedback indicating the need for increased youth engagement in building this vision, we are committed to developing a comprehensive nature education program and dedicating staff to create more opportunities for low-income youth and youth of color in Cully to connect with the natural world and learn about the environment. In order to do that, we will bring together our broad scope of environmental education programming into one cohesive program area and increase staffing to 1 FTE to increase our capacity to provide programming which will increase youth participation and impact.

Verde will work with Hacienda CDC's Expresiones after school program, NAYA's Early College Academy, Portland Youth and Elders Council, Scott Elementary School, Rigler Elementary School, and Portland State University to implement a series of nature education opportunities. The target audience for this work are Cully neighborhood youth 5th grade through high school.

## **7. Goals (up to one page, 4000 characters)**

*Describe how the program addresses the Nature in Neighborhood nature education and outdoor experiences grant's purpose and goals.*

The Living Cully Youth Nature Education Program addresses Metro's purpose and goals by providing opportunities for low-income youth and youth of color to connect with nature through activities. Projects are designed with community input and feedback and address issues of racial and cultural equity and inclusion. Metro's investment in this program will develop the capacity of organizations that serve people of color to lead nature education and cultural programs in parks and natural areas, build relationships and partnerships that promote nature education and outdoor experiences by and for people of color, and increase the number of visitors and staff at parks and natural areas who represent diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.

The Living Cully Youth Nature Education Program will serve youth in grades 5–12 through the following opportunities:

Club Aves (ah-VES) is a group of passionate birders ages 8–12, the majority of whom live in Hacienda CDC's affordable housing communities. All of the participants of Club Aves are youth of color who explore 5+ natural areas each season and learn about birding with the help of community partners like Audubon Society of Portland, Metro and USFWS.

The Cully Critter Cruise began in 2015 as a way to bring biodiversity education to the Cully neighborhood through a day of neighborhood nature walks and biodiversity monitoring. It includes a series of in-class visits and a final field trip to a neighborhood park, engaging close to 100 youth. Topics include brownfields, insect and plant biodiversity, how habitats change over time, stormwater education, and Native plants.

We are developing our Cully Youth Rain Garden Project by partnering with three youth groups from Hacienda's Expresiones culturally specific after-school program. Our Education Coordinator will teach three workshops per youth group, for a total of nine workshops, about rain gardens, stormwater management, and the positive benefits of triple-bottom-line solutions for sustainability in low-income neighborhoods. Youth will participate in field work by helping with the maintenance of two existing rain gardens; they will then help design and develop a new rain garden in a commercial or private space.

The "Promoting Active Transportation and Health" (PATH) curriculum was created by Verde and OMSI in 2015. It was adapted to be culturally responsive and has been delivered to Hacienda CDC's Expresiones middle school students in 2016, NAYA's high school students in 2017, and over 70 5th grade students at Scott School in fall 2017. We will implement the curriculum in spring 2018 at Rigler Elementary School. The curriculum is interactive and includes lots fieldwork, as well as a focus on the environmental and lifestyle impacts of active transportation, neighborhood mapping, wayfinding, and advocacy.

Renewable Energy Youth Education: In 2018, Living Cully will develop a youth-focused solar energy curriculum organized around the Plan's pilot energy investments at St. Charles Church and the Oak Leaf Mobile Home Park, two great opportunities to educate youth about solar energy. Building off a 2014 youth solar energy curriculum created by Verde and Hacienda CDC, the updated curriculum will be presented at Hacienda's Expresiones program and NAYA's Early College Academy.

Columbia Slough Nature education: In 2017, Verde worked with community members to create a vision for a walking and biking trail along the Columbia Slough in Cully. Through this work, Verde will collaborate with Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Metro, and Parks to increase access for youth to the Slough, including but not limited to field trips to the Colwood Natural area, Whitaker Ponds, and environmental monitoring and planning along the future site of the trail.

Cully Park: Verde has engaged families in the design of Cully Park, opening June 2018. Verde will continue to partner Portland Parks to provide hands-on environmental education projects.

### **8. Partnerships (up to one page, 4000 characters)**

*Show how partnerships and collaboration with other individuals, organizations and groups in your community will be formed, strengthened and extended through this program.*

Living Cully is a coalition that serves as a unified voice for low-income people and people of color in the Cully neighborhood. Verde serves as the backbone organization for the coalition, managing the finances and employing the coalition's three-person staff. The coalition's policy advocacy drives anti-poverty investments, mitigates gentrification impacts, and reforms public agency practices toward explicit equity outcomes. Living Cully spearheads capital improvements in the Cully Neighborhood, thus far valued at over \$40 million. We have prevented the displacement of hundreds of residents, acquired properties to develop 250 new affordable homes, and led citywide campaigns resulting in affordable housing and anti-displacement policies.

Through our Living Cully partnership, we partner with Hacienda CDC and NAYA by developing programming that is culturally responsive to the students in Hacienda's Expresiones program and NAYA's Early College Academy high school. Verde has a long history of providing environmental education to youth living in Hacienda CDC's affordable housing and to youth attending NAYA's programs, including the Early College Academy. We will build on these strong partnership with our cohesive nature education program. In addition, Verde will expand its's partnership to the Portland Youth and Elders Council, held at NAYA, co-creating opportunities for neighborhood nature education along the Columbia Slough and through Club Aves.

Verde also has strong partnerships with the neighborhood schools, providing curricula and afterschool enrichment activities for low-income students and students of color. Through this program, we commit to working directly with Scott and Rigler elementary schools by continuing to build strong relationships with school administrators, teachers, SUN Program staff, and students. Verde has worked with both Scott and Rigler on the design of Cully Park and Khunamokwst Park, as well as the Cully Critter Cruise and rain garden education.

Portland State University (PSU) will support Verde's environmental education programs by developing a community-based program to collect data on observations of biodiversity (e.g., plants, lepidoptera, spiders, bees, birds, reptiles) in Cully Park and the Colwood/Columbia Slough area that could augment more systematic surveys and habitat assessments. This work will be performed by 2-3 graduate students in PSU's Environmental Science & Management program.

### **9. Organizational preparedness (up to one page, 4000 characters)**

*Explain why your organization and your partners have the experience and capacity to conduct the program, including identification of key personnel, their roles in the program and their qualifications.*

Since 2005, Verde has brought environmental investments to low-income communities, designed community engagement strategies around these new investments, and ensured assets provided direct benefits to low-income people and people of color. Verde has grown every year (FY06 budget: \$177K; FY18 budget: \$7M), from an idea to a start-up to a recognized participant in—and bridge between—Portland's equity and sustainability communities.

Since its inception, Verde has intentionally and persistently tailored programming to meet the needs of low-income and people-of-color communities (in a recent fiscal year, Verde involved 324 community members in the design of new environmental investments in Cully, including 126 youth, 143 low-income people and 231 people of color). Furthermore, Verde has one of the most diverse boards of any Portland-based environmental organization. Our 10-member board includes 7 people of color: 2 graduates from our Lideres Verdes training program, an educator who serves low-income students of color, public sector equity staff, farmworker housing advocates, and a service provider. Board meetings and materials are fully bilingual (English—Spanish). Furthermore, 80%+ of Verde's staff are people of color, and a majority of our staff of color are

both bicultural and bilingual.

Our outreach programs have driven environmental investments into low-income neighborhoods since 2010, through which Verde has brought new communities into environmental policymaking, added equity goals to high-profile environmental initiatives, and attracted national funding. Grant income grew from \$272,778 in FY10 to \$4,433,420 in FY17. We have built the capacities needed to serve as Living Cully's backbone organization and to implement new programs, like the Living Cully Youth Nature Education Program.

Since 2012, Verde has invested in Living Cully's financial, data, and enterprise management capacities in order to serve as its backbone organization, leading through staffing, coordinated financial management, fundraising strategy development, data collection and reporting, continuous communication, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the cross-organizational initiative to function smoothly.

The development of the Living Cully Youth Nature Education Program will be overseen by Anna Gordon, and components of the program will fall under Carolina Iraheta, Energy Advocate; Pedro Moreno, Outreach Coordinator; Nestor Campos, Education Coordinator; and Malin Jimenez, Community Organizer. Each of the program team members is multilingual and multicultural.

Anna has over eight years of experience working in environmental and community education, both in the U.S. and Mexico, with a focus on community empowerment through sustainability. She joined Living Cully in January 2015 and currently manages Verde's outreach programs.

Nestor, a recent Spirit of Portland award recipient, has worked for Verde since 2006 and has played key roles in a wide range of Verde activities. Mr. Campos earned a degree in Agricultural Engineering from the Central University of Venezuela and holds an Oregon Landscape Contractors License and an Oregon Commercial Pesticide Applicator License.

Carolina's experience includes over 15 years' of community organizing, and she has led the development of the Living Cully Energy Plan. She is the co-founder of Portland's Mujeres en Movimiento, an all-female cycling group whose aim is to making biking more accessible to Latinas.

Pedro has worked with Verde since 2006 and has managed Verde's Leadership Program, Lideres Verdes, for the past 6 years. Pedro has over 10 years' experience working closely with the Latino community in Portland.

Malin has joined Verde in 2013 and since then, she has participated in many projects encompassing Landscape, Outreach, and community engagement and organizing at Cully Park.

#### **10. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (up to one page, 4000 characters)**

*Describe how your program involves communities of color and the demographics of the community served in identifying the need for, designing, and delivering this programming. How does your organization's vision or mission address diversity and equity?*

Standing on the original site of a Chinook village called Neerchokikoo, the Cully neighborhood is NE Portland's largest neighborhood by land area and population. Cully is a highly diverse, majority low-income neighborhood—a place with clear economic, racial, and environmental disparities. This urban area is home to over 13,000 people, about half of whom are people of color, and nine in ten children are on free or reduced-price lunch. Cully is located in a food desert, and over a quarter of the community lives below the federal poverty line.

The Cully neighborhood is the most diverse neighborhood in the state of Oregon and is significantly more diverse than Portland as a whole. Latino residents account for almost a quarter of Cully's population, followed by Black (16%) and Native American (9%) residents. Nearly one-fifth of residents are foreign-born, and the primary language for 31% of the population is non-English. About a quarter of the Cully population is under age 18; these children lack places to play and experience nature, which are key to health, well-being and academic achievement.

Cully is changing; a 2013 City of Portland study indicated that Cully was in the early stages of gentrification. As one of the last remaining inner-Portland neighborhoods offering affordable housing options, Cully has been subject to market pressures as housing prices rise nearby and new public and private investments make the neighborhood more desirable. As Cully transitions into a sustainable community, the Living Cully Partners are building a replicable anti-poverty model of environmental investment.

Nationally, many low-income people and people of color live in places like Cully, and we believe our work can have positive impact on their lives. We have a story to share about low-income people, immigrants and people of color creating their own environmentally sustainable future—one in which children and families are able to access and experience nature just outside their front doors.

Since outset, both Verde and Living Cully have been dedicated to ensuring that programs are responsive to the needs of the Cully community, engaging low-income and people-of-color residents in program design through surveys, focus groups, feedback sessions, and more. For example, the Cully community identified the need for a park in the neighborhood; Verde led

the development of Cully Park, a 25-acre park built on a former landfill. Cully Park is innovative in its community-led design, including features designed by the neighborhood's significant Native American community and over 100 children of diverse backgrounds. When city entities failed to raise the funds necessary for building the park, Verde led the Let Us Build Cully Park! campaign, which included a crowdfunding component that made the development of the park possible with the support of the community. Park development resulted in job training opportunities and wealth building for minority- and women-owned businesses that designed and built the park.

Verde's social enterprises also reflect this careful tailoring. The Verde Landscape enterprise—instrumental in the development of Cully Park—was designed to provide immediate workforce opportunities at higher-than-industry average wage levels, plus 80 hours of paid training per year, thereby removing barriers to participation in the green economy and providing meaningful wages and benefits. Almost all of our Verde Landscape employees are people of color, and its program coordinators are also people of color.

In December 2016, Verde, together with allied organizations (e.g., Latino Network, Coalition of Communities of Color, Unite Oregon) and local government, launched Portland United Against Hate (PUAH), a rapid-response system that combines reporting and tracking of hateful acts with support and protection to immigrant, refugee, and other targeted communities. Verde continues its PUAH leadership, connecting PUAH to similar efforts.

#### 11. Location and program reach (up to two pages)

*On next page, please upload a location/vicinity map that shows where the program and/or participating communities are located within the region, such as on Google Maps, MetroMap, Regional Equity Atlas, or the Regional Conservation Strategy viewer*

✓ I uploaded it!

#### 12. Demographic form (two pages)

*On next page, please upload the requested the 2018 Nature in Neighborhoods demographic form, which will not be used for the review of your grant application.*

✓ I uploaded it!

## Document Uploads

### Documents Requested \*

Provide a location/vicinity map that shows where the program and/or participating communities are located within the region, such as on Google Maps, MetroMap, Regional Equity Atlas, or the Regional Conservation Strategy viewer.

### Required? Attached Documents \*



[Map](#)

\* ZoomGrants™ is not responsible for the content of uploaded documents.

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# LIVING CULLY



## Cully Neighborhood Map

### Legend

-  Bike Routes
-  Sidewalks
-  Bus stops
-  Streets
-  Columbia Slough / Cenegal
-  Schools
-  Parks\_Metro

