

Memo



Metro

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Date: May 16, 2019
To: Metro Council
From: Crista Gardner, Grants Coordinator, Nature in Neighborhoods grants
Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chú, Business Services Manager
Subject: 2019 Nature in Neighborhood restoration and community stewardship 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 2019 Nature in Neighborhood restoration and community stewardship grants. The Metro Council makes all final grant decisions and is scheduled to decide final grant awards on Thursday, June 13, 2019.

If desired, we are happy to schedule individual briefings before then. Please contact Val Galstad at Val.Galstad@oregonmetro.gov or 503-813-7532 for scheduling.

The 2019 Nature in Neighborhood restoration and community stewardship grants review committee met March 5, 2019 and again on May 14, 2019. They reviewed 33 pre-applications, totaling \$1.9M in funding requests, and 19 full applications, totaling \$1.09M in funding requests. The review committee selected **15 of the most compelling programs** to recommend for funding a total of approximately **\$795,000** 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 restoration and community stewardship 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: Restoration grants support and create partnerships in local communities that improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature.

Goal 1: Improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat. These grants will preserve and restore fish and wildlife habitat in local communities and support larger conservation initiatives such as the Oregon State Conservation Strategy, Regional Conservation Strategy, Watershed Action Plans or local community plans.

Goal 2: Community partnerships. These grants support and create partnerships in local communities and connect people to nature and respond to community needs; increase people's awareness of the need for – and benefits of – protecting and managing natural areas; and improve the ability of all communities (especially communities of color and other historically marginalized groups) to learn about, help restore, experience and connect with nature and the region's natural areas.

Goal 3: Economic and environmental equity. The restoration and community stewardship grants help diversify the conservation movement. The grants provide outdoor, environmental, and natural resources; economic opportunities; direct access to protected natural areas; and the positive impacts of clean land, air and water to communities of color and other historically marginalized groups 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 habitat restoration, natural area land management, conservation planning, mentorship and job skill development, diversity equity and inclusion, community partnership development, philanthropy, and grant management.

The members of the 2019 Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration and Community Stewardship Grants review committee are: Charlotte Trowbridge, Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District; Danielle Jones, KairosPDX; Gabrielle Haber, Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center; Jeff Merrill, Metro; Jennifer Wilson, Metro; Jihane Nami, Institute for Sustainable Solutions, Portland State University; Patty Lyons, The Wetlands Conservancy; Ruby Bucholtz, Tualatin Riverkeepers; Shannah Anderson, Bureau of Environmental Services, City of Portland; and Valerie Oster, Anchor QEA, LLC.

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. Perceived conflicts were also noted and recorded in meeting minutes.

2019 Nature in Neighborhoods restoration and community stewardship grants review discussion

Due to the large number of applications, Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods restoration and community stewardship grant program follows a two-step process including a pre-application phase and a full application phase. The review committee evaluated pre-applications and full applications based on the information submitted by applicants, the stated evaluation criteria, and the review committee's professional and collective judgment.

In the second 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. The received project proposals came from smaller, volunteer-led or neighborhood-based groups all the way to large, well-established organizations. The applicants shared their own interpretation and meaning of restoration, from the neighborhood to the regional scale. Proposals emanated from a mix of culturally specific organizations and conservation focused organizations.

The review committee found a number of place-based, community-sourced projects compelling. Small scale projects with community support in their own neighborhoods are important for engaging community and building stewardship.

The review committee identified compelling projects that address workforce development and career pathways in the environmental field, and remove barriers for marginalized communities to enter that field by offering supports like stipends and mentorship. The review committee emphasized the importance of on-the-ground restoration projects and good worksites for hands-on experiential learning. In addition, they appreciated projects that reach youth and connect the grant-supported work to the broader conservation field, especially through college studies, in order to help transform and diversify the green workforce.

The review committee valued projects which aligned with the Nature in Neighborhood grant program goals, individual organizations' plans or priorities, and state, regional or local conservation strategies. They found proposals stronger when they demonstrated progress according to their priorities, plans or strategies. They also found it compelling when applicants used relevant data that is not typical in restoration projects and have plans to share data with others locally, nationally or internationally.

The review committee welcomed how applicants addressed their diversity, equity and inclusion experience at any level with honesty. Returning committee members noted an overall improvement in response to the diversity, equity and inclusion question from previous grant cycles. They valued proposals by organizations led by and for people of color and that nature-based organizations proposed projects which advanced their core missions while being more inclusive. They appreciated the openness of groups that are new to diversity, equity and inclusion to learning more, and projects in less diverse geographic areas applying different methods to be more inclusive. They noted the healing potential for both the land and people in these projects. They also found compelling projects that made clear connections between conservation, restoration and Traditional Ecological Knowledge and food, plants and wildlife significant to First Peoples.

The review committee valued intentional, goal-oriented community engagement. They appreciated projects that engage intentionally with particular subsets of a community such as seniors, the houseless or veterans, in collaboration with a knowledgeable partner with roots in that community.

Finally, the review committee valued authentic, long-established or newer mutually-beneficial partnerships that bring together the individual strengths and successes of each organization. They noted partnerships that included a thoughtful approach with clear plans to connect regularly and

evaluate their work together. The committee appreciated the time needed to build relationships and greater organizational capacity. They also acknowledged the difficulty involved in authentic partnership-building and appreciated the effort of applicants to establish true, long-term partnerships, especially with larger, complex organizations.

Recommended for funding

The 2019 Nature in Neighborhood restoration and community stewardship grants review committee recommends the following fifteen (15) proposals for funding to the Metro Council. The Metro Council makes all final grant decisions and is scheduled to decide final grant awards on June 13, 2019.

Backyard Habitat Certification Program – Washington County Expansion and Equity Project

Recipient: Audubon Society of Portland

Grant amount: \$64,658 (partial grant award)

Project Partners: Tualatin Soil & Water Conservation District, Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation, Clean Water Services and the Cities of Tigard, Tualatin and Beaverton

Program summary: Expansion of the Backyard Habitat Certification Program to provide technical assistance, incentives, resources, and recognition to Washington County residents as they enhance native wildlife habitat, control invasive weeds, reduce pesticides, and manage stormwater at home while deepening the diversity, equity and inclusion training for program staff.

Young Black Environmentalists Internship Program

Recipient: Camp E.L.S.O. Inc.

Grant amount: \$100,000

Project Partners: BEAM Village (Black Educational Achievement Movement), Friends of Tryon Creek, The Blueprint Foundation, Crag Environmental Law Center, Portland Harbor Community Coalition and Reed College

Program summary: Internships, education, and exposure to all levels of environmental careers for Black students to increase leadership, engagement, and representation for people of color in the broader environmental movement.

Seiben Creek Landowner Stewardship Engagement Project

Recipient: Clackamas River Basin Council

Grant amount: \$22,000

Project Partners: Clackamas River Basin Council, Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District and the Clackamas River Community Cooperative

Program summary: A riparian zone restoration and residential stewardship education project on the property of the Clackamas River Community Cooperative, a nonprofit, resident-owned manufactured home community with riverfront property along the Clackamas River.

Depave the Centennial School District

Recipient: Depave

Grant amount: \$42,000

Project Partners: Centennial School District: Powell Butte, Patrick Lynch, and Oliver-Parklane elementary schools, Mercy Corps Northwest, Portland Bureau of Environmental Services Clean Rivers Education and Johnson Creek Watershed Council

Program summary: This project will develop, plan and implement two to three re-greening projects at Title 1 Centennial School District elementary schools. Depave will conduct a community design process, and create ~10,000 sf of new greenspaces with 800 native plants, nature play and on-site stormwater elements.

Collaborative Community Stewardship: Restoring Public Land through Traditional Knowledge

Recipient: Ecology in Classrooms and Outdoors

Grant amount: \$75,452

Project Partners: Wisdom of the Elders, Portland Parks and Recreation and Portland Public Schools: Lent, Kelly, and Marysville

Program summary: Project Partners will create a collaborative approach to improving local habitats, whereby members of Indigenous groups mentor students in Traditional Ecological Knowledge while meeting the restoration needs of public lands.

Gladstone Nature Park Butterfly Hill

Recipient: Friends of Gladstone Nature Park

Grant amount: \$11,600

Project Partners: Gladstone School District, Boskey Dell Nursery, City of Gladstone and Exceed Enterprises

Program summary: This project will rehabilitate a 25-foot tall hill located in the Gladstone Nature Park using park and city volunteers, along with middle and high school students and their families, to restore it with native plants that will attract pollinators including butterflies.

Mitchell Creek Floodplain Restoration

Recipient: Johnson Creek Watershed Council

Grant amount: \$36,750

Project Partners: Centennial School District, The Nature Conservancy, Portland General Electric, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, Wisdom of the Elders, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Program summary: A 35-acre property in the Mitchell Creek Floodplain contains an artificially constructed and impounded in-line pond that is both a fish passage barrier and a cause of lethally high summer temperature for salmonids. This project will remove the barriers and add large wood for habitat.

Re-Indigenizing the Urban Landscapes

Recipient: National Indian Parent Information Center

Grant amount: \$49,819

Project Partners: City Repair, Portland Parks & Recreation, Indigenous Nations Studies at Portland State University

Program summary: An Indigenous multigenerational approach to restoration; healing the land and ourselves. Revitalizing cultural connections to Place by creating an inclusive community utilizing Traditional Ecological Knowledge to restore waterways and wildlife habitats.

Green Job Workforce Development for High School Aged Youth

Recipient: Northwest Youth Corps

Grant amount: \$86,751

Project Partners: Girls Inc., Friends of Trees, Forest Park Conservancy, City of Troutdale, Portland Workforce Alliance

Program summary: A collaboration with Girls Inc. to improve the ability of high school aged youth from historically marginalized groups to help restore the region's natural areas, as they earn money, and engage in green job workforce development.

Student Crew Leadership Training Program

Recipient: Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center Inc.

Grant amount: \$50,000

Project Partners: Friends of Trees, Portland Parks & Recreation, Gresham Parks and Recreation, Friends of Nadaka Nature Park, Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Friends of Columbia Children's Arboretum and Ecology in Classrooms & Outdoors

Program summary: Through the Student Crew Leadership Training Program, project partners provide low-income youth and youth of color with the opportunity to restore local habitats and receive career-track natural resource mentorship/education.

SW 25th Ave ROW Community Trail Restoration

Recipient: SW Trails PDX

Grant amount: \$12,500

Project Partners: Habitat Restoration NW, LLC, SW Watershed Resource Center, West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, SOLVE, Mittleman Jewish Community Center, Portland Jewish Academy, Hillsdale Neighborhood Association

Program summary: This project is located along a popular SW Portland community trail used by a diverse group of people. This project engages the community in a variety of restoration and educational programs to improve and maintain this neighborhood green space.

Balch Creek Restoration Partnership

Recipient: The Forest Park Conservancy

Grant amount: \$100,000

Project Partners: Portland Parks and Recreation, Rosario Franco Inc., Ash Creek Forest Management, City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, Portland State University

Program summary: The Balch Creek Restoration Partnership has three elements: 1) Habitat restoration, 2) Promotion of community stewardship, and 3) Improving economic and environmental equity. The project will directly benefit 200 acres of Forest Park in the Balch Creek Watershed

Westside Wildlife Corridor for People and Habitat

Recipient: West Willamette Restoration Partnership

Grant amount: \$63,000

Project Partners: Portland Parks & Recreation, Columbia Land Trust, Friends of Marquam Nature Park, Friends of Terwilliger, West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, Wisdom of the Elders, Community Engagement Liaison Services, Central City Concern and Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership

Program summary: The West Willamette Restoration Partnership will enhance 20 acres of forest habitat in SW Portland and implement a community engagement project with culturally-specific organizations to inform planning for trails and access to nature.

From Labor to Leadership: Advancing People of Color into Restoration Careers

Recipient: Verde

Grant amount: \$30,599

Project Partners: Columbia Slough Watershed Council, VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project, Hacienda CDC and City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services

Program summary: This project will provide a series of site-specific restoration trainings in the Columbia Slough Watershed designed by low-income people of color, taking Verde Landscape from labor to leadership in the local environmental sector.

Restoration Equity: Stewardship and Job Skills for Immigrant Workers

Recipient: Voz Workers' Rights Education Project

Grant amount: \$50,000

Project Partners: City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, People-Places-Things, Verde, Oregon State University Master Gardener Program and East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District

Program summary: Project partners will work together to provide restoration skills trainings and hands-on restoration experiences that improve economic outcomes for day laborers