



Metro



Join the team and
amplify the voice of
your community!

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Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants:

Community design advocate program

April 2025 to June 2026

Since 2008, Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods grants have supported community projects and programs across the region, from local park improvements to stream restoration to hands-on nature education for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Its newest program, the **Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants**, gives community members a direct voice in **imagining, developing and choosing parks and nature projects in their neighborhoods**. This year, the Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants program is being held in the Clackamas County cities and unincorporated urban areas from Milwaukie south to Oregon City. \$2 to \$3 million in grants will be awarded to projects voted on by community members.

Stipend, resources and support

Community design advocates will receive a \$250 to \$3,000 stipend depending on capacity and level of participation. At the highest level of commitment, we anticipate having community design advocates commit 4 to 6 hours of time per week. We will work with each interested community member to create an agreement that works for you!

An additional \$2,000 allowance will be available for three advocate-focused events, that is one event for each phase of the project. This funding can cover things like gift cards, take-home prizes, activity supplies, etc. Outside of this allowance, Metro is also providing funding and support for translation, venues, and food catered by a local restaurant.

We often create materials to support our efforts, such as paper surveys, poster newspapers, fliers, surveys etc. We will develop them with the community design advocate and provide them when produced.



What is a community design advocate?

Working alongside Metro staff and consultant team members from Colloqate Design, Knot Studio, and MultiCultural Collaborative, community design advocates are paid team members. They are knowledgeable of Clackamas County, its people, and have connections to historically marginalized communities who are most often not able to participate in parks and nature projects. Does that sound like you? We hope so!

A community design advocate will share information and invite their networks to participate in the Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants program in order to develop projects that benefit historically marginalized communities, protect and improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, support climate resilience, and increase people's experience of nature at the community scale.

Based on their capacity, community design advocates will have the opportunity to collaborate with the project team to create and implement a process that is culturally responsive and accessible, facilitate at events, and host focus group workshops.

Through the community design advocate program, we aim to build long-term knowledge within our communities on how our cities are planned, designed and built. We want to build long-term capacity for organizing and advocating for our communities' aspirations in built space. We hope that you will find yourself better equipped to take part in development and design processes that have so often left community voices out.

How the Community Choice Grants work

Step 1: Information Sharing and Idea Generating April to May 2025

Get the word out and allow community members to share their experiences, needs, and ideas for parks and natural areas for their communities. Methods include tabling, in-person workshops, surveys, and online idea submissions.

Community design advocates minimum role: Let your communities know, distribute informational materials, invite your community to events and workshops! You could also organize community engagement actions or support events. facilitation.

Step 2: Project Vetting June to July 2025

Project Team works with Metro partners to coordinate ideas with district logistics. The project team will put together clear project idea summaries to use in following development workshops.

Step 3: Project Development Round One Aug. to Sept. 2025

Work with community members to develop ideas into project concepts that have clear goals and parameters. The project team will support in making images that reflect the community idea, to be used for voting.

Community design advocates minimum role: Same as Step 1.

Step 4: First Community Vote Oct. 2025

Community members cast their votes for the projects that they most want to see and think best meets community and ecosystem needs.

Community design advocates role: Let your communities know, distribute voting materials, invite your community to events.

Step 5: Partner Development Nov. to Dec. 2025

The project team will work with Metro district partners to pair project ideas who received the highest votes with site opportunities and their associated logistics.

Step 6: Project Development Round Two Jan. 2026

Work with community members on developing ideas into projects with a defined scope, budget and design layout.

Community design advocates role: Similar to step 3.

Step 7: Secondary Partner Development Feb. 2025 to March 2026

The project team will synthesize all the great community work into realistic schematic plans, budgets, and coordinate logistics with district partners to produce ballots for the final community vote.

Step 8: Final Community Voting April to May 2026

A project expo will be a fun opportunity for community members to see the final selection of projects and start the voting phase. Voting opportunities will also be available via tabling at local events and online.

Community design advocates role: Let your communities know, distribute voting materials, invite your community to voting events.

Step 9: Metro Council Vote June or July 2026

The projects with the most votes will be formally presented to the Metro Council, and the council will vote on whether to fund the projects or not. In the Community Choice Grants pilot round, all the projects presented to the Metro Council were approved.

If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we've already crossed paths.

So, hello. We're Metro – nice to meet you.

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we can do a lot of things better together. Join us to help the region prepare for a happy, healthy future.

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What are the program's goals?

Community voice is an integral part of the design of every city and neighborhood. The community design advocate program is created to deepen this project's connection and responsiveness to the communities that rely on our area's outdoor spaces in Clackamas County neighborhoods.

The program aims to efficiently and respectfully assure that communities who are least likely to participate and/or most historically unrepresented in governmental processes are able to participate. Because community design advocates are trusted members of their communities who share the lived experience of the people the projects are for:

- Community design advocates know the best methods for reaching their community, are able to spread the word and encourage people to participate who might otherwise not, and are able to share with the project team on how to make the process more accessible for their community.
- Community design advocates are valuable project team experts in how relationships between residents, natural resources, and neighborhood conditions, and politics impact the project. They inform and collaborate with the project team on how to adjust the process if needed.

Your voice can make a difference!

Community design advocates played a vital role in the Community Choice Grants pilot round.

The community design advocates were the reason certain community groups – such as the Indigenous population and the Black community – felt safe to participate in a space where they would be heard. There were multiple project ideas submitted by these groups that made it to the final (and Council approved!) vote. Thanks to our community design advocates, the process was made more accessible for folks with various abilities - we had screen readers, accessible locations, interpreters, and activities with various ways to engage and share ideas. The community design advocates even had an opportunity to speak at the Metro Council meeting in support of approving the projects.