



Regional Refresh Fund grant program

Low-barrier, flexible funding to support community-led cleanup efforts that advance garbage and recycling service equity in underserved communities of the Metro region.

Regional Refresh Fund was launched as a pilot program in the fall of 2021 to increase access to low-barrier funding for community-led cleanup projects in greater Portland in a way that centers equity. Regional Refresh Fund completed a successful pilot period at the end of 2022 and became a permanent WPES program late spring of 2023. Since its launch, the program has grown in popularity and impact, mobilizing people across the region to care for shared spaces and strengthen community stewardship.

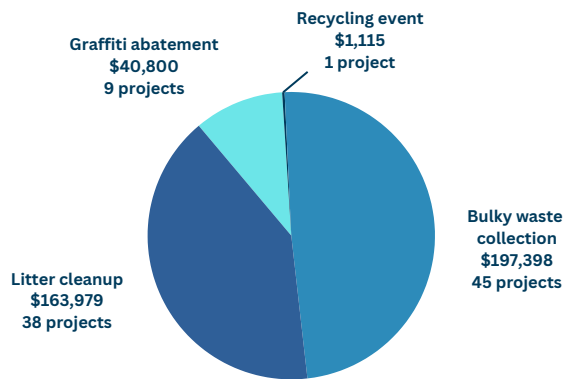
Over the life of the program, Regional Refresh Fund has provided over \$1.3M in funding across the six Metro Council districts, collectively removing or diverting 2,362 tons of trash and dumped garbage from underserved communities and environmentally sensitive areas like parks, trails and waterways.

This report offers a look back at the program's growth and achievements over the past year, highlighting the diverse and impactful projects completed in 2024. Through these stories we celebrate the individuals and organizations working to create cleaner, healthier, and more equitable communities across the region.

Program objectives

- Grants advance cleanup efforts in greater Portland through community-powered events
- Grants advance garbage and recycling service equity in the Metro region
- Grants enhance Metro's relationship with the community

Total grants awarded



52%
of grantees are BIPOC or women-led organizations.

89%
of applicants were successful

91%
of projects served an equity focus area or another underserved community

9%
of projects were focused on environmentally sensitive areas.

Funding requests and grants awarded

In 2024, Regional Refresh Fund received 105 proposals totaling \$448,988 in requests. Of those 105 applications, 89% (or 93 applications) were successful bringing the total of approved cleanup grants to \$398,292.

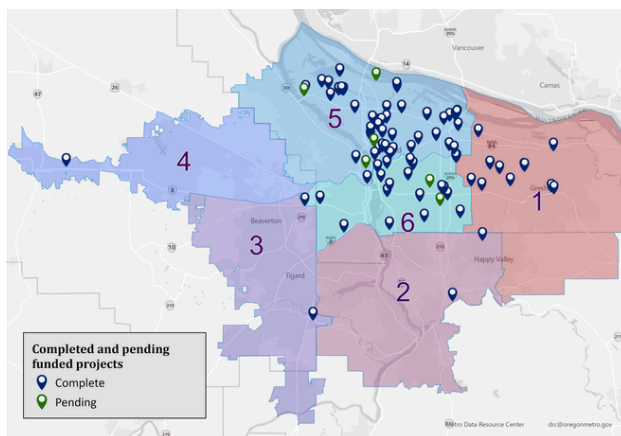
The most notable shift in calendar year 2024 was the growth of bulky waste collection events which made up nearly 50% of all funded projects for the year. Projects focused on cleaning up litter or dumped garbage represented about 40% of grants. Due to programmatic shifts in 2024, graffiti-only projects fell to 10% of total programming expenses (down from 20% in 2023) and the program funded one recycling-only event during the year as well.

Project funding and completion status

As of December 2024, 91% of all approved projects in 2024 had been completed. 8 projects were active at the end of the year. The pins on the map below show 2024 projects in the region (due to size of the image, some pins represent more than one project).

79 completed

9 in progress



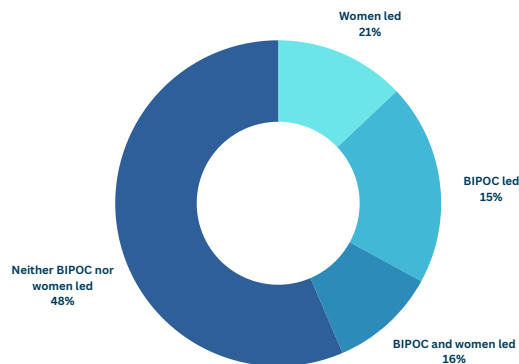
Types of cleanup projects

-  38 litter/dumped trash
-  45 bulky waste collection
-  9 graffiti abatement
-  1 recycling event

Equity benefits

By organization funded

In the past year, the program continued to see a significant increase in applications from organizations led by BIPOC communities and women. Notably, nearly 52% of funding recipients were organizations led by people of color, women, or both. This marks a substantial increase from the previous year's figure of 44%, and more than doubles the 2022 total of 20%. This increase can be partly attributed to BIPOC and women-led organizations being some of our most consistent repeat applicants, often applying and receiving the full \$20,000 annual limit per year.



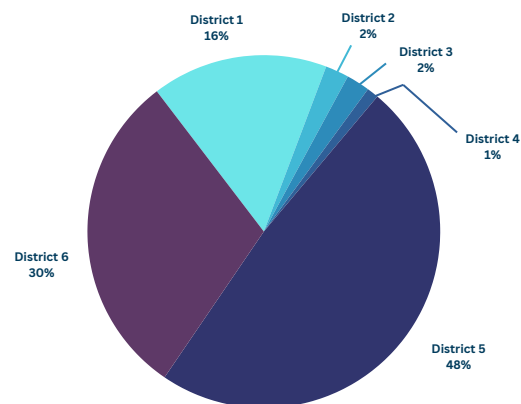
By audience served

In terms of the audience served by funded projects, 91% of projects served either a designated equity focus area or another underserved community such as people living outside or those living in low-income, multi-family housing. The remaining 9% were directly focused on an environmentally sensitive area like parks and rivers.



By district

As in previous years, Districts 5 and 6 continued to apply for cleanup projects at the highest rates. District 5 maintained the highest submission rate with 45 approved proposals. Although we were unable to establish a partnership with Councilors last year to promote the program in districts with historically fewer applications, we are now poised to launch this campaign in 2025. We are optimistic that these efforts will lead to increased participation from underrepresented districts in the coming year.



Project impacts

In total, 875 tons of material were cleaned up around the region in 2024.



875 tons of waste were cleaned up and disposed of in 2024.



79 tons of waste were diverted (recycled or reused) from the waste stream.

Grant project highlights

Litter & abandoned trash cleanups

Friends of Ours



In 2024, Friends of Ours, led by community champion, Terrance Moses received two grants completing cleanups that collected over 18 tons of trash and abandoned garbage.

Lloyd EcoDistrict



Lloyd EcoDistrict organized monthly volunteer-powered cleanups out of Peace Memorial Park in 2024. Together volunteers picked up 1.5 tons of litter off the streets.

Historic Downtown Gresham Assoc.



Volunteers with Historic Downtown Gresham Assoc. gathered to cleanup Downtown Gresham after the Dia De Los Muertos/Trick or Treating event, collecting 1,000 lbs of trash.

Johnson Creek Watershed Council



Volunteers with Johnson Creek Watershed Council zipped up their waders and fished out 4.9 tons of trash from the creek and neighboring riparian and natural areas.

Grant project highlights

Bulky waste collection events

Home Forward - Rockwood Station



Rockwood Station hosted a bulky waste collection event for their residents, collecting roughly 3 tons of materials, helping ensure residents pass inspections and stay housed.

Centro Cultural of Washington County



Centro Cultural hosted a collection event for a mobile home community in Rose Grove, providing service to 400 homes and collecting 2 tons of discarded material.

Arbor Lodge Neighborhood Assoc.



Arbor Lodge Neighborhood Assoc. hosted a bulky waste and recycling event for residents of Arbor Lodge, Kenton and Overlook. Nearly 7 tons of waste were collected and 4 tons of materials recycled.

Roseway Neighborhood Assoc.



Roseway Neighborhood Assoc. hosted a bulky waste collection event for their residents with options for recycling, repair and reuse. Over 10 tons of bulky waste were collected, and another 1.3 tons diverted.

Grant project highlights

Graffiti abatement

NE Broadway Business Assoc.



NE Broadway Business District Assoc. commissioned a mural to revitalize their business district. A nod to the historic Irvington movie theater, this mural deters graffiti and brings a sense of community pride to the area.

Greater Brooklyn Business Assoc.



The Heckmann Thiemann's building facing Powell Blvd., once tagged daily, now sports a vibrant mural that reflects iconic cultural symbols. The project garnered a lot of community interest and support.

Portland Street Art Alliance



Portland Street Art Alliance installed a large scale mural at the chronically tagged PacifiCorp Holladay Substation in summer of 2024.

Better Chances Inc.



Better Chances Inc., a small BIPOC led organization, used funds to help combat graffiti in NE Portland by painting over heavily tagged buildings in the area.

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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Photo courtesy of Richmond Neighborhood Association

What's next for the Regional Refresh Fund program?

In 2025, the program will seek to expand its reach to Council districts that submit fewer applications. The grant will phase out its funding of mural installations and graffiti abatement-focused projects due to changes in funding streams.

Contact information

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