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EPA Environmental Education Grant

Project Background

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Environmental Education (EE) Grants

Under the Environmental Education Grants Program, EPA seeks grant proposals from eligible applicants to support environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship and help provide people with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. This grant program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques.

For more information, see: <https://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>

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Work Plan

Project Summary (recommended 1 page)

Friends of Mt. Buford Park & Mt Pisgah propose a multi-day environmental education event for fourth graders in Eugene, Oregon, culminating in a ceremony honoring attendees. As part of the ceremony, all attendees will receive their Every Kid in a Park pass, granting fourth graders and their families waived entrance fees to federal public lands, including national parks, national monuments, and national forests.

This event, named “Eugene Kids in a Park,” will be an interagency and interorganizational collaboration among Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah (prime recipient), Mount Pisgah Arboretum, Willamette National Forest, Northwest Oregon Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and University of Oregon (UO) Outdoor Pursuits Program (OPP). Experts from these organizations will lead educational stations for fourth graders at the event, guiding activities about wildfire ecology, wildfire preparedness and air quality, navigation basics, wilderness survival skills, outdoor recreation (with a focus on multiple use land management), and tribal ecological knowledge.

The “Eugene Kids in a Park” event will provide several benefits to participants.

1. Fourth grade students will gain access to nature and the outdoors. Research shows that today’s children increasingly suffer from limited access to the outdoors and its benefits, spending more time indoors and in pursuit of solitary, sedentary activities.
2. Fourth grade students will learn about STEM topics that are in Oregon state standards for their grade level.
3. Fourth grade students will learn about Oregon’s indigenous peoples, its tribal peoples today, and a decolonized history of the state.
4. Fourth grade students will benefit from outdoor exercise and unstructured play time.
5. Fourth grade students will obtain their Every Kid in a Park passes, granting them and their families waived access to federal public lands.
6. Fourth grade students will learn about the importance of public lands, the outdoors, and conserving natural resources, creating future generations of environmental stewards.

7. Families of fourth graders will experience tangential benefits through their fourth graders, who will advocate for environmental stewardship, public land visitation, and outdoor experiences. which benefit everyone.
8. UO college students will gain experience leading groups, to contribute to their pursuit of UO's Outdoor Leadership Certificate, and to develop their outdoor leadership skills.
9. Participating organizations will collaborate, building partnerships that can benefit resource management in Eugene in the future.
10. Additional partner organizations will gain access to powerful established organizations such as the US Forest Service and the University of Oregon.
11. All participating organizations will benefit from community advertising and outreach.

Detailed Project Description

Friends of Mt. Buford Park & Mt Pisgah — in partnership with the Willamette National Forest of the US Forest Service, Mount Pisgah Arboretum, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Northwest Oregon District, and the University of Oregon (UO) Outdoor Pursuits Program (OPP) — will host a multi-day environmental education event for fourth graders, the “Eugene Kids in a Park” event. This event will occur at the White Oak Pavilion of Mount Pisgah Arboretum, including a campout, day of STEM-based curriculum at educational stations, and ceremony inducting fourth grade students into “Eugene Park Ranger” program.

The Eugene Kids in a Park program will provide value to participants in three key ways:

- educational value to students through grade-appropriate STEM curriculum
- economic value through the provision of Every Kid in a Park passes for waived entrance to federally managed public lands
- value to the community through collaboration and consensus-building among partners

The event will begin on Friday, with students arriving in the late afternoon. The students will spend Friday night at Mt. Pisgah, camping in the pavilion, giving them an opportunity to bond and experience nature before their day of learning. Friday activities will include physical activities through games and unstructured play, as well as learning songs and hearing stories around a campfire.

Due to the overnight nature of the program and complexity of the logistics, extra assistance will be provided by UO college students from the Outdoor Pursuits Program (OPP) Leadership Training Program. The UO OPP students will serve as student leaders to fourth grade participants, with responsibilities similar to those of camp counselors. The UO OPP student leaders are enrolled in a voluntary enrichment program “to develop their teaching and leadership skills” in the arena of “safe and responsible leadership of outdoor pursuits activities.” They are invested in outdoor leadership and will both 1) be capable leaders of young students participating in a program of this type, and 2) benefit from the experience of leading fourth graders in camping and environmental educational activities.

On Saturday, participants will participate in a half-day of environmental education, following STEM-based curriculum appropriate for the fourth grade level. The educational portion will employ a rural outdoor school format, with students rotating through several educational stations. The stations will be led by local experts from partner organizations (Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah, Mount Pisgah Arboretum, Willamette National Forest, Northwest Oregon BLM, and UO OPP).

Educational station topics will include wildfire ecology, wildfire preparedness and air quality, navigation basics, wilderness survival skills, outdoor recreation (with a focus on multiple use land management), and tribal ecological knowledge. The subjects have been selected to align with Oregon’s fourth-grade STEM curriculum. They have also been carefully chosen to provide students with an overview and broad understanding of public lands. The goal of providing students with an introduction to public lands includes teaching students how they can responsibly and safely experience federal public lands; ecology and a general understanding of environmental science; current issues stemming from wildfires; and some context to human involvement in land and different peoples’ approach to ecology.

Following the education stations, the event will culminate in an induction ceremony to the new “Eugene Park Rangers” program. Similar to the popular Junior Ranger concept, this program will both honor students for their investment in learning about public lands and ecology, while helping students to gain a sense of shared responsibility for care of lands and the shared environment. Students will be recognized as new “Eugene Park Rangers” with badges and personalized certificates.

In addition, students will also each receive an Every Kid in a Park pass. These passes grant fourth graders and their families waived entrance fees to federally-managed public lands, including areas managed by the National Park Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Reclamation.

Students’ families are invited and encouraged to attend the induction ceremony, which will occur in the late afternoon. The ceremony will begin with a brief presentation by Willamette National

Forest public affairs specialist, Jocelyn Moon, about the Every Kid in a Park pass. This presentation will help students and their families understand how to use their new passes, so that they may take full advantage of the benefits offered by their passes. Students will also receive a brochure with additional information and guidance about how to use the Every Kid in a Park Pass.

By honoring students with a formal public ceremony, the intent is to 1) invest participants with an interest and sense of investment in public lands, and 2) raise awareness around the Every Kid in a Park program, to promote its use in the community at large.

The Eugene 4J Natives Program has been identified as the sub-grantee to fulfill the subgrant requirement of this grant. This partner has been identified due to the nature of public lands and the US history of colonization and removal of tribes from their ancestral lands. The project partners intend to embed attitudes and messages promoting decolonization and tribal knowledge as a cornerstone of the program. This process entails many pieces, including “discovering, naming and transmitting indigenous knowledge, values and ways of knowing,” as well as “applying and adapting both indigenous and Western knowledge, values and ways of knowing,” and “reclaiming and building on cultural strengths” of indigenous peoples and cultures (Mussell, 2008).

Thus, the sub-grantee selected will help to bridge the knowledge gap by representing the interests and cultural viewpoint of tribal-affiliated students in the Eugene area. The Eugene 4J Natives Program seeks to “encourage... children’s growth by using cultural teachings in a nurturing environment.” In particular, the program serves students in the Eugene 4J School District who are members of a tribe, Eskimo or other Alaska Native, or considered by the Department of the Interior to be Indian. To serve these students, the program provides tutoring, incentivizes students’ academic achievements, and provides culturally related events, activities, and other support. For more information about the sub-grantee, visit <http://www.4j.lane.edu/instruction/nativesprogram/>.

Project Evaluation Plan

1.

Evaluation metric: Program attendance

Goal: 500 program participants in 2019-20 school year

Evaluation method: Count of program participants based on program enrollment

Background: The Eugene Kids in a Park program aims to reach as many fourth graders as possible in the Eugene area. There are approximately 1500 fourth graders in the Eugene area. This

encompasses approximately 1200 fourth grade students in Eugene 4J School District, and approximately 315 fourth graders in Bethel School District. As 2019-20 school year will be the first year of this program, a target of enrolling one-third of Eugene area fourth graders seems sufficiently ambitious and achievable, with multiple program dates.

2.

Evaluation metric: Increased visitation of public lands among participants

Goal: 25% of program participants report that they used their Every Kid in a Park passes to visit a federally managed public land site during the 2019-20 program year

Evaluation method: Survey of previous program participants in fall 2020

Background: The ultimate goal of Eugene Kids in a Park is not only to expose participants to information about public lands and outdoor recreation, but also to facilitate visitation of said lands through the distribution of federal Every Kid in a Park passes to qualifying fourth graders. To evaluate this metric, program coordinators will poll program participants (fourth graders) and their families in the fall following their participation in the Eugene Kids in a Park program. The poll will be administered via take-home handouts, asking the program participants' families if they used the Every Kid in a Park pass over the summer/previous school year, and if so, how many times they used the pass.

3.

Evaluation metric: Future outdoor leaders' experience

Goal: More than 50% of UO Outdoor Leaders students feel that their participation was valuable

Evaluation method: Survey of UO Outdoor Leaders students at end of each program

Background: The Eugene Kids in a Park event intends to grow future leaders in conservation, both by introducing fourth graders to public lands and outdoor recreation, but also by connecting young adults who intend to work in outdoor leadership positions with younger generations.

4.

Evaluation metric: Partner satisfaction with program execution

Goal: 75% of partners feel positively about their participation in Eugene Kids in a Park

Goal: Gather valuable feedback, and meaningfully integrate this into planning the next program year

Evaluation method: Google Forms surveys of all participating staff at partner organizations

Background: To ensure growth and improvement, the program will integrate partner surveys into the evaluation of the program itself. A survey will be created in Google Forms and issued each spring, when some program weekends have been administered; and each fall, after survey responses from program participants have been gathered and distributed to partners. This survey will ask respondents to rate their experience on a Likert scale, describe their experience in an open-ended format, and give feedback and constructive comments. Planning of the next program year will include review of survey responses and integration into program administration for the year.

Detailed Budget Showing Match and Sub-grants

Personnel	Number of hours	Cost	In-kind contributions	Funds requested
Friends of Buford Park K-12 Education Coordinator	300	10,500	5,000	5,500
Eugene 4J Natives Program Mentor *Subgrant	300	10,500	5,500	5,000
Instructors from partner organizations	600	24,000	20,000	4,000
Other expenses		Cost	In-kind contributions	Funds requested
Supplies		600		600
Venue		2,000	2,000	
Printing		250		
		Subtotal:	32,500	15,100
		Program cost:		47,600

Appendix A: Timeline

May 2019

- First meeting of project partners
- Project leads (Friends of Buford Park K-12 Education Coordinator and Eugene 4J Natives Program Mentor) research relevant contacts for program advertisement (fourth grade teachers, elementary school principals, school board, clubs and organizations such as Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, etc)

June 2019

- Project partner meeting, refine project plan
- Project leads prepare for school year and begin outreach to contact list
- UO OPP begins advertisement for program involvement among UO Outdoor Leaders students

August 2019

- Project leads secure designated list of instructors from partner organizations
- UO secures list of potential UO Outdoor Leaders participants

September 2019

- Partners advertise the program to secure participants and outline program dates
- Potential for 1 program weekend

October 2019

- 1-2 program weekends

May 2020

- 1-3 additional program weekends

June 2020

- 1-3 additional program weekends
- Administer first round of short surveys to partners
- Begin planning process for next program year, including updating contact lists and beginning outreach
- UO OPP begins advertisement for program involvement among UO Outdoor Leaders students

August 2020

- Project leads secure designated list of instructors from partner organizations
- UO secures list of potential UO Outdoor Leaders participants

September 2020

- Administer program poll to incoming fifth graders (previous year's fourth graders)
- Partners advertise the program to secure participants and outline program dates
- Potential for 1 program weekend

October 2020

- Partner review of participant poll responses
- Administer second round of short surveys to partners
- Partner evaluation of poll and survey responses
- 1-2 program weekends