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Introduction

The Oregon legislature appropriated $50 million in 2022 to community-based organizations (nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, tribal governments, public agencies including libraries and parks and recreation departments, churches, and colleges located in Oregon that provide community-based programming) across the state through Community Summer Grants administered by the Oregon Association of Education Service Districts (OAESD). Funding has not been approved in a timely manner for programs to use for summer of 2023, but we hope funding will be available for the summer of 2024.

The focus of these grant programs was to prioritize those students experiencing disabilities and other student communities who have been historically underserved. Recipients of these grant funds are encouraged to use these funds to reduce or remove barriers to student participation for these groups.

This document is a direct response to all of the amazing people and organizations whom we would like to help overcome challenges in order to find the solutions needed to provide quality summer experiences for as many students as possible, with or without state funding.

Scheduling Time to Plan Summer Programs

Planning for summer programs should start as early in the year as possible. Starting with a survey of your target population is a good idea if you can reach them - having a better understanding of parents' wishes, needs, schedules and availability can be helpful in making decisions about programs.

Making time for staff to plan well can be challenging when everyone already has full-time jobs. Try to find time during the regular workday to meet and plan regularly, or assign different individuals different aspects of planning. If staff need to put in some extra time planning, organizing, supervising, or providing data and reports on summer programs so that more kids are able to access great opportunities, you can help make the ‘extra’ work is worth it by considering adding a stipend and/or completion bonus or other workday incentives for their time (these costs can be included in grant applications).
If you don’t think you have the time to plan and organize programs, consider finding a partner organization or subcontractors to divvy up the planning and programs. These partners might include:

» For-profit organizations / businesses (dance studios, martial arts schools, tennis, golf or swim clubs, art stores, etc.) Non-profit organizations (nature conservation, public libraries, arts organizations, STEM providers, theater companies, music organizations, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs and other organizations providing services to youth)

» Churches

» Retired educators

» Public, Private & Charter Schools

**Ideas for Quality Programs, Activities & Best Practices**

There are many resources for summer camp themes, program models (see “Scheduling Options that Work”, below), best practices and activities, including the following:

» [ODE Summer Learning Resources](#)
  » [Summer Best Practices Guide](#)
  » [Summer Best Practices Guide Toolkit](#)
  » [Summer Learning Recommended Resources](#)

» [ODE resources for Healthy and Safe Learning this Summer](#)

» [100 Ideas for Summer Camp Themes](#)

» [STEM in Summer Activity Guide](#)

» [National Summer Learning Association Resources & Knowledge Center](#)

» [STEM Next Summer Ideas](#)

» [LDE Summer Programs Guidance](#)

» [VentureLab Youth Entrepreneurship Programs & Curricula](#)
Recruiting Qualified Staff

Of all the challenges in making summer programs happen, staffing can be right up at the top. It helps to have plenty of time to recruit and train staff, but many high school and university students might not start looking for summer jobs until May or June, so that can be another good time to re-post summer jobs that you haven’t been able to fill earlier, or if you are getting a later start, some other ideas for recruiting staff might include:

» Use Existing Staff
  » If your organization already has qualified staff who claim that they don’t want more hours during the summer, be flexible with scheduling and job duties. Many existing staff would be happy to work for at least part of the summer, or only part-time, and you may be able to schedule effective programs around their needs and / or combine part-time staff to cover full-time programs. Be flexible, collaborative and creative.
  » Staff may be more willing to step up if they are offered additional incentives to supervise summer programs, which can be written into grant applications.
  » Offer free spots for children of staff to attend programs or offer a trade with partner organizations to access other local opportunities for children of your staff at reduced cost.

» Retired Educators - Summer is a short-term commitment that allows retired educators to stay connected and share their own interests with youth. Consider partnering retired educators with younger staff and encourage them to team up in sharing responsibilities, leading activities, and managing behavior so they can help one another grow.
  » Post jobs in online community bulletin boards, like NextDoor or Facebook. Reach out to your network of educator colleagues, or contact the Oregon Retired Educators Association to ask about how they might help.

» Americorps / VISTA Volunteers
  » Consider reaching out to former participants

» High School Students
  » Recruit high school students to support existing staff while they build skills and partner them with experienced staff to reduce behavior concerns.
  » Sample job description (see more examples below)
  » Hiring youth under 18
  » Instead of minimum wage, you may pay stipends to high school interns who are getting on-the-job training and guidance from more experienced mentors.

» College Students
  » You can target students majoring in youth development or education, but don’t forget those in a field like fitness, the sciences or history that can share their interest with youth in a new way. Contact the career center of your local college about posting your jobs there.
Find examples of **summer staff job descriptions** on the [Wallace Foundation](https://www.wallacefoundation.org) website, on [Monster.com](https://www.monster.com) (for a [Camp Counselor](https://www.monster.com/camp-counselor-jobs) position), or with [OMSI](https://www.OMSI.edu) (for a [Summer Class Assistant](https://www.OMSI.edu/)).

**Training Staff**

Grant funds may be used to pay for staff training/professional development.

Having trained summer staff is important for quality programs. If you need help training summer staff in classroom / group behavior management, social emotional learning skills, engaging learning techniques, health and safety protocol, etc., there are many resources available. You may consider live, in-person or virtual workshops or an asynchronous module option.

» [OregonASK Online](https://www.oregonask.org) offers asynchronous opportunities and access to dozens of ready to go trainings you can include in the cost of in your proposal.

» [You 4 Youth](https://www.youth.gov) is an online resource designed for 21st Century Community Learning Centers with professional development opportunities. You do not need to be in a 21 CCLC program to create an account.

» [ODE Summer Learning Resources](https://www.ode.state.or.us) is a series of seven sessions on Summer Learning Best Practices
Program Schedule Options & Models that Work

It is ideal for working parents to have programs that students can attend all day, every day (or have options for before and after-care to extend program hours). If you are feeling that full-day or week-long camps are not going to work for you or for your target student population, don’t forget that there are as many ideas for scheduling as there are for themes and activities. **If you have time to survey your target families about their needs or preferences, they might help you decide on the best scheduling options.** If your community has many low-income, migrant or refugee families, think about the scheduling and transportation needs of people without cars or driver's licenses, with two full-time jobs, or with young children who also need care while older siblings are in programs.

During the summer, many families may prefer morning or afternoon-only options for about a week at a time. But in some locations, families with working caregivers will be happy to have all-day, every-day options for most weeks of the summer, and other locations might do well to provide once-a-week or one-hour-per-day options. More in-depth programs like theater productions could be multi-week commitments.

If you don’t have staff available to be able to offer all-day programs, consider partnering with other organizations (like the YMCA, Champions, Boys and Girls Clubs, or for-profit youth businesses like dance studios, martial arts providers, tutors, etc.) with staff who could come and fill in before or after your programs, or hire extra, part-time staff to do only early or later hours (for before and after-care). If possible, provide childcare or options for childcare in the nearby vicinity for younger siblings of participants (who may otherwise not be able to attend because they have to babysit their siblings while parents are at work).

Some examples of scheduling options include:

- 7:30 or 8 to 5 or 5:30 every day
- Mornings only (including lunch on site or to take home)
- Afternoons only (including lunch only or also a send-home snack)
- One full day per week
- Weekly activities lasting only one or two hours each week
- One-time workshops or events
- Multi-week or month-long programs
- Weekend or evening programming for families (parents or caregivers can attend with children, or parents can attend parenting workshops while children participate in their own activities)
Outreach & Recruiting Participants

One of the number one barriers that keeps families and youth from participating in summer programs is “lack of awareness” or “we didn’t know about this opportunity” or “we learned about it too late.” Don’t let this keep youth from participating in your programs!

This Summer Learning Recruitment Guide (Wallace Foundation) has great information and resources for outreach and marketing summer programs. In your outreach materials, emphasize benefits like scholarships, free transportation, food provided, take-home kits or materials, or other incentives you may be providing. It may also be helpful to emphasize that you have bilingual staff (and what languages they speak), or special accommodations for disabled youth, if that is the case. Families like to feel a sense of belonging and that their children will be understood, assisted and accepted in programs before they sign up for them.

When possible, spend time over the long-term to build relationships with the various families and cultural groups in your area. Participate in events, meet them in person. This goes a long way to establishing trust and communications that will help them to enroll youth in your programs.

Many families with historically underserved students may not be on many social media platforms or engaging with local media or websites for these types of summer learning opportunities. While social media, local media outlets (especially local Spanish language radio programs and other international radio programs) and websites are still great places to advertise your programs, don’t forget to post information in the following places (or email information to them so they can post it), and in the languages used by families in your community:
  » Large employers in your area
  » Local cultural centers
  » Housing providers
  » Houseless Shelters
  » Churches
  » Transportation hubs (transit centers, etc.)
  » Bulletin boards in stores and international markets
  » Refugee organizations
  » Preschool programs
  » Libraries
  » Thrift shops
  » Food banks
  » Your local human services offices
  » Reach out to your local Tribal Council - send information about your programs to the Education or Family Services Specialist (find contact information on this directory)

Other outreach & marketing ideas might be
  » Ask schools & districts if they can help spread the word. If they are not allowed to share information about non-school events or programs, ask
how to work around that. Could they have an “opt-in” option for parents who would like to learn about non-school youth programs even if they are not vetted or sanctioned by schools? Could there be a page in the school newsletter titled “Non-School Programs” with a disclaimer that the school is not recommending or endorsing any of the programs?

Ask marketing professionals to donate their services / volunteer to help with outreach

» As a group collaborating with other programs, hire a marketing company to handle publicity, or to provide a list of best ways and places to advertise programs to families, or an actual outreach plan

» Have a representative from your program attend local community events where you can promote your programs

» Get your local teenage “influencers” to post program info on their Instagram & Tik Tok accounts, or share info via email or text with other students

» Have information translated into all the local languages and dialects of your potential participants when possible, not just Spanish

» Have families or teens sign up for text alerts about local summer and after school opportunities that you will send out regularly

» Send out regular press-releases to newspapers, radio, TV about upcoming programs (and follow-up success stories!)

» Post on event sites like EventBrite, Facebook Events, Craigslist, NextDoor, and other event sites

» Specifically ask parents, community members and teens to spread the word via word of mouth or their own social media & contacts

» Provide “sharing incentives” for people who share your information or recruit participants

» Ask churches to make announcements at the end of the service, or give information to youth participants

» Identify key people in the community (communities) to inform their contacts “grass roots”
Registration, Cost, Scholarships & Financial Options

To increase access for low-income students, it is extremely important to have a communications plan and a selection plan for providing scholarships or stipends to reduce the cost burden of programs if possible. Grant applications can include funds to provide full or partial scholarships for your paid camps or programs, or to provide stipends and incentives for students and families.

For families to take advantage of cost reductions, stipends, scholarships and other financial solutions for children to be able to participate, they first need to be aware of these opportunities, so contacting families individually or doing thorough marketing and outreach to people is important. Contacting families individually through relationships with churches, schools and CBOs they are already involved in can be very effective, as can promoting scholarships and programs in migrant housing and low-income housing developments, employment offices, cultural centers, food banks and other service providers.

Make program & scholarship registration easy and keep it open for as long as possible. Many families may not think to register for programs or scholarships until the last minute - if you can, continue to do outreach and keep registration and scholarship applications open until all spots are filled, and make sure you keep a waiting list. See the section on Outreach for more ideas.

Some other affordability and financial options might include:

» Providing a very simple way for families register for programs and to apply for scholarships without too much “burden of proof” (perhaps giving several options, like providing a pay stub, a tax return, a letter of explanation, a letter of recommendation from an organization that knows the family, qualification for free or reduced lunch, SNAP eligibility, etc.)

» Providing stipends for parents to participate in parenting workshops or family events

» Providing stipends for middle and high school students who help in summer programs or participate in internships, employability, career-based learning, or other learning programs

» Making the program free for all participants (using grant funds)

» Not cut-off for scholarships too far in advance. Many parents who need scholarships may not register until the last minute.
Improving Access for Students - Space, Location & Accessibility

If you are worried about or have already found that your organization can not recruit enough participants because of your location, or if you have a target population in a specific location, think about offering your programs where the youth are (and also see the Transportation section, below, for getting kids to where you are). Make sure you ensure community representatives are part of planning. Check with your insurer to be sure your insurance policy covers the location you would like to use before confirming that location. If the site or location is a real issue, you could choose not to have a site - just a drop-off and pick-up location, and use vans or buses to go to different sites for field trips or activities each day. You could make a van or bus and driver a part of the program and grant applications.

Locations might include:

» On a farm (with migrant workers’ children) or nearby rural location
» In public housing or transitional housing properties
» At a local neighborhood park
» In local businesses or community centers
» In co-housing or apartment communities
» In community gardens
» In a church
» At a culture-specific center

Perhaps your organization does not have enough physical space to meet the demands of your community or to accommodate multiple groups of students. Again, recruiting partners works well to bring multiple providers or opportunities together to make access, transportation and cost sharing more possible. You can write the cost of renting or reserving spaces into your grant application.
Think about asking to borrow or rent out one of these summer learning spaces:

» Public schools (indoors or outdoors) and school libraries
» Public libraries
» Parks (go through your Parks & Rec department)
» Churches (many have both indoor and outdoor spaces good for large groups)
» Public buildings / Public property
» Community gardens
» Universities & Community Colleges
» Conference venues (when not in use)
» Non-profits (Humane Societies, museums, children’s theater or arts sites, refugee or migrant organizations, etc.)
» Youth-related businesses (Art schools, martial arts dojos, dance & yoga studios, pottery studios, climbing gyms, etc.)

For physical accessibility concerns, you may apply for grant funds to make improvements to existing structures that will directly connect to serving any of the designated underserved groups (like adding a wheelchair ramp), hire more staff assistants, or purchase other accessibility equipment.

**Transportation**

» Grant funds can also be used to provide transportation to and from program sites. Your local schools may have funds that they need to use for summer programs and may be able to partner with you to provide bus transportation or location.

» Some other ideas could be to:

» Check with the local schools to see if you can coordinate the use of a school van or minibus & driver with other summer school & youth programs using common routes, pick-up and drop-off times. The school or district could use ESSER funds to provide one or two on-call vans and drivers for multiple programs to use during the whole summer. Or schools could host multiple summer programs in school buildings and use a school bus or van to transport participants to and from the school for all the programs - collaborate on transportation and even schedule the programs so that a full 8-10 hours could be covered (one program in the morning, a different one in the afternoon for the same age groups)

» Reserve a school bus from the local school bus company

» In a small community, staff may walk to different locations to pick up and drop off groups of students at group meeting points
Rent or lease a van (purchasing is not an allowable state grant-funded expense). You only need a commercial driver’s license (CDL) for operation of vehicles weighing 26,001 lbs. or more, vehicles carrying 16 passengers or more including the driver, or vehicles used to transport hazardous materials. Double check the insurance requirements with your insurance agent before making this choice.

Ask families in advance if they would like to be on a shared carpool list, so they can coordinate carpooling with each other.

Provide students with public transportation passes or vouchers for ride-share options (Uber, Lyft, etc.) or Taxis.

Hire a full-time driver who could also help with other parts of the program in their “down time”

For young students who live within walking distance, a chaperone could coordinate a pick-up and drop-off walking route.

Provide bicycles or scooters and helmets for youth to use for transportation during the program.

Have parents indicate the best times & locations for transportation / pick-up / drop-off when they register.

For jobs & internships, students could be matched up with programs within walking distance, or if they have no transportation, they could be paired with a hybrid or work-from-home internship.

**Nutrition & Providing Food**

There are hundreds of sites providing summer breakfast, lunch and supper around Oregon. If your program is not a summer food site, you may check this website to find a location close by and call ahead about bringing your whole group, or sometimes arrange to pick up sack lunches to bring back to your site for your students.

Check the requirements and guidelines on the Oregon Summer Food Sites website.

You may ask for funds in your grant applications to purchase food for your participants. You may even want to have students help select, evaluate or prepare food as part of a Healthy Living activity.

Work with community partners (like community gardens, local restaurants, stores, churches, farms, etc.) to have additional food donated or provided (it may be distributed at the camp and/or sent home with students).
Getting Kids to Attend & Show-up Regularly

Many organizations and schools have found that it is a challenge getting students to show up for summer camps or to attend regularly. This can be for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is student anxiety, so one of the best suggestions is to make each child feel connected, seen, and heard, and to understand their comfort zone in group activities. One of the most cited barriers to participating in summer programs is “racism, or lack of belonging”, so try to emphasize belonging for all families starting with your outreach messages, languages & images. The first day or days of your programs should include lots of “anxiety-reducing” information, like schedules, consistent routines, and getting-to-know-you and team-building activities.

Cutting off sign-ups for your programs very early in the year might help you with planning, but can backfire when it comes to regular participation. Families who have to sign up for summer programs early in the spring, for example, may not have finalized other summer plans, so that students who registered early end up not being able to participate because other plans were made later on (family reunions, trips, etc.). Consider confirming registrations for those who are able to sign up early, but leave registration open as late as possible, or until all spots are filled, and keep a waiting list in case of last-minute cancellations.

There are many other ways to attract and retain students in programs, including the following:

» Offer scholarships to attend for free or at reduced cost (for paid camps / programs)

» Providing completion bonuses or stipends for each student or family with a full attendance record (this could be monetary, gift cards, or materials like books, activity kits, robotics, food boxes, sweatshirts or t-shirts, etc.)

» Providing transportation

» Providing food (breakfast, snacks, lunch)

» Providing something tangible to take home as incentives (maker kits, t-shirts, boxes of food, games, art supplies, etc.)

» Honoring students’ and families’ cultures, languages and traditions in programs and messaging, and when greeting and saying goodbye to students

» Making sure students understand the program schedules and routines every day

» Do lots of fun team-building activities and icebreaker games so kids make friends and connect with each other early in (and throughout) the program

» Survey parents ahead of time about any anxieties or concerns they or their students have about your program and try to address those in advance or in the first day(s) of your program. Ask parents what would make them and/or their children feel more comfortable or more of a sense of belonging there.
Accommodations & Disabilities

One challenge for many summer programs is how to accommodate students’ special needs, whether they have learning challenges, physical or mental disabilities or emotional issues. In order to be able to plan for accommodations, you should send out a “Special Accommodations or Special Needs” form (Sample Form) to parents or include a box for information about special needs of students in the program registration form, or make it clear what special needs you can and can’t accommodate. Some ideas for accommodations might include:

» Involve parents and caregivers in planning and / or helping
» Know what individuals’ needs are ahead of time to better prepare for success
» Get staff training in learning disabilities & assistive technology they could use
» Get IEPs or other special needs plan information from schools or parents ahead of programs if possible
» Have a list of trained instructional assistants or floating / traveling specialists who could help in different sites at different times during the summer
» Use grant funds to increase accessibility - materials, site modifications, special assistants, etc.
» Get gender information ahead of time, especially for MS / HS programs - have staff show pronouns to promote more natural gender inclusion
» Address safety issues and provide appropriate training for all adults that come in contact with children
» Provide lower adult-to-child ratios
» Have access to language services in the moment as needed (translators)
» Try for less staff turnover (have fewer changes in trusted adults for youth)
» Make physical spaces and materials more accessible to all
» Plan accessible field trips & offsite activities

Special Materials or Capital Expenditures

Schools and organizations can include materials that need to be purchased for summer learning activities in grant applications. These can include things such as art supplies, STEM, maker or robotics kits, 3D printers, tablets, books, materials for take-home kits, film making equipment, musical instruments, etc. You may propose to send materials home with students at the end of the camp as an “attendance incentive” or reward.
Insurance Requirements & Abuse Prevention Policies

Several Oregon insurance providers are willing to work with youth programs to expedite insurance requirements for summer programs and grant requirements. While these insurance providers are willing to work with programs, particularly on a faster timeline than normal, there may be additional requirements (such as broadening staff background check) that would be requested for some.

If you have not yet found adequate liability insurance to meet grant requirements, we encourage you to reach out to one of the providers listed HERE to inquire about what steps would be necessary for your program to meet the threshold of insurance.

Don’t forget, you do not need to have the insurance through one source or one policy. You may patchwork policies together to meet the needs. However, before purchasing any additional policies, make sure you are able to meet all the requirements.

Here are a few resources that may be helpful for writing Abuse Prevention Policies:

- CDC - Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures
- Protecting against allegations of child abuse - recommendations for programs
- YMCA Sample Child Abuse Policy and Procedures
- Sample Abuse and Misconduct Prevention Policy
- Prevention of Abuse - Best Practices & Recommendations for Policies
- Abuse Prevention, Sample Policy (New York)
- Crisis Plan - Managing Allegations of Abuse (for international schools but relevant to other organizations)

Conclusion

We hope that these ideas help more community organizations find solutions to provide summer programs for more youth across the state, and to help families overcome barriers to youth participation. Again, if you have other ideas or issues, or for any questions regarding information in this document, you may contact Bethany Thramer or Monica McQueen. We can't wait to see the magic that you make happen this summer.