

ANALYSIS

Higher Education Coordinating Commission Tribal Youth Restoration Landscapes Project Opportunity

Analyst: Kim To

Request: Approve the submission of a federal grant application to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Oregon Tribal Youth Restoration Landscapes Project Opportunity in the amount of up to \$1,000,000 to offer youth corps employment opportunities to tribal youth throughout Oregon.

Analysis: The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) requests authorization to apply for a grant of up to \$1,000,000 to provide youth corps employment opportunities to tribal youth throughout Oregon. The Oregon Tribal Youth Restoration Landscapes Project Opportunity grant from the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land (BLM) will build on the Western Oregon Tribal Youth Corps Project piloted by HECC and BLM in 2020 to hire tribal youth to conduct conservation projects that are mutually beneficial to BLM and to tribes. The grant is intended to engage the next generation of Oregonians in public service and instill a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for public lands and resources by providing tribal youth with meaningful training and exposure to careers in natural resources through paid opportunities on projects that improve the health of watersheds and wildlife populations, as well as access to recreation areas. These projects may include clearing trails, building new trails, constructing animal enclosures and fencing, removing weeds, propagating native plants, managing hazardous fuels/wildfire, watershed and riparian restoration, fisheries and aquatics monitoring, and education and interpretation programs.

If successful, HECC will use the federal grant funding to award grants to community partners, such as federally recognized tribes, local community-based organizations, and other nonprofits that specialize in providing tribal youth workforce development. In addition to providing wages to youth participants, a portion of the award may be used by community partners grant recipients to cover administrative costs, as established by the terms and conditions set forth in the grant agreement, including services and supplies, training, transportation as well as program promotion and monitoring.

The grant has a 25% state match requirement, which HECC can meet using existing General Fund and Amusement Device Tax resources for current HECC Oregon Youth Corps and Oregon Conservation Corps programming. HECC will not require additional staffing to administer the grant. HECC will use existing program funds to ensure no added fiscal barriers are passed through to external organizations, including provide the 25% federal match instead of passing this requirement onto the community partners. There is no expectation of continued federal or state funding of the grant beyond the grant period.

The application deadline is February 21, 2024. HECC provided timely notice to the Legislature on January 29, 2024. If awarded, grand funding is anticipated to be available in the spring of 2024.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Joint Committee on Ways and approve the request to apply for the grant with the understanding that if the funds are awarded, HECC may return to the Legislative Assembly for approval of any necessary Federal Funds or Federal as Other Funds expenditure limitation.

Higher Education Coordinating Commission Chase

Request: Authorization for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to apply for up to \$1,000,000 from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Oregon Tribal Youth Restoration Landscapes Project Opportunity grant to offer youth corps employment opportunities to tribal youth throughout Oregon.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: BLM is committed to connecting youth from diverse backgrounds to natural and cultural resources on public lands through conservation service projects, recreational experiences, natural resource-based employment, and educational opportunities, including scientific studies.

The Oregon Tribal Youth Restoration Landscapes Project Opportunity will include, but will not be limited to, fire/fuels treatments; trail maintenance or rehabilitation; wildlife habitat improvements; botany/plant projects; forestry and climate resilience; cultural inventory and surveys; and implementing education and interpretation programs with BLM specialists.

This grant opportunity aligns with three of HECC's Strategic Roadmap goals: 1) transform and innovate to serve students and learners best by supporting outreach and flexibility of programming to reach communities of color, low-income populations, and other marginalized communities; 2) center higher education and workforce training capacity on current and future state needs by focusing training resources to serve Oregonians where they are and who they are, with a priority on communities and populations that have historically been underserved; and 3) create and support a continuum of pathways from education and training to career by investing resources to support learners with work-based learning, apprenticeships, and career-connected learning.

Upon award, funds will be distributed to external organizations specializing in providing tribal workforce development. A small portion of the award may be used to cover administrative costs specific to implementing the terms and conditions set forth in the grant. To ensure no added fiscal barriers are passed through to external organizations, HECC will provide the federally required match portion of 25 percent utilizing existing Oregon Youth Corps and Oregon Conservation Corps funding. The allocation and percentage of each matching fund source will be determined by the type of programming (e.g., youth corps, conservation corps) being leveraged.

If approved, HECC plans to submit the application by the grant submission deadline of February 21, 2024. HECC anticipates the award will be made during the spring of 2024, with HECC awarding grants to subrecipients in early 2025. If awarded the agency anticipates returning to a future legislative body to request additional Federal Funds expenditure limitation.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Higher Education Coordinating Commission

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January 31, 2024

Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co-Chair
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means

900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301-4048

Dear Senator Steiner and Representative Sanchez:

Nature of the Request

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC) Office of Workforce Investments (OWI) is intending to apply for up to \$1,000,000 through the Oregon Tribal Youth Restoration Landscapes Project Opportunity from the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This grant program intends to build upon the Western Oregon Tribal Youth Corps Project, piloted in 2020, to offer youth corps employment opportunities to tribal youth throughout Oregon.

Federal Grant Information

The objectives are to provide Oregon youth with opportunities to learn about natural resources management while gaining life skills that will help them with future employment opportunities. This project will increase the number of partnerships with Tribes and tribal youth serving organizations throughout Oregon; increase the number of tribal youth provided meaningful employment; provide a meaningful mixture of skills gained; provide youth with a minimum of 80 hours of employment; and instill a sense of shared community service that benefits public lands. In addition, youth corps participants will identify and establish pathways to natural resource education, career/vocation, and volunteerism.

The Youth Corps will work directly with BLM project leaders to outline project work statewide that supports the restoration and conservation goals of the Inflation Reduction Act and the BLM's Youth Program to offer meaningful employment opportunities to youth.

The youth corps project work will support both crew-based and individual placements. The project work will include, but will not be limited to, fire/fuels treatments, trail maintenance or rehabilitation, wildlife habitat improvements, botany/plant projects, forestry and climate resilience, cultural inventory and surveys, and implementing education and interpretation programs with BLM specialists.

Special emphasis may be placed on projects within the BLM Southwest Oregon (Coos Bay, Roseburg, Medford Districts) and the Southeast Oregon Sagebrush (Lakeview, Burns, Vale Districts) Restoration Landscape geographic areas.

HECC Goal Alignment

This grant opportunity aligns with the following goals from the HECC Strategic Roadmap:

Goal 1-Transform and innovate to serve students and learners best:

By supporting outreach and flexibility of programming to reach communities of color, low-income populations, and other marginalized communities.

Goal 2-Center higher education and workforce training capacity on current and future state needs:

By focusing training resources to serve Oregonians where they are and who they are, with a priority on communities and populations that have been historically underserved.

Goal 4-Create and support a continuum of pathways from education and training to career:

By investing resources to support learners with work-based learning, apprenticeships, and career-connected learning.

Grant Implementation

Upon award, funds would be passed through to external organizations in the form of intergovernmental agreements with federally recognized tribes and/or through grants with local community-based organizations, local governments, and other non-profits that specialize in providing tribal workforce development. A small portion of the award may help cover administrative costs specific to implementing the terms and conditions set forth in the grant agreement, which may include supplies and services, training, transportation, monitoring, and promotion. No additional FTE will be required by the agency. There are no known potential large expenditures of specific interest currently.

The funds from this award give HECC an opportunity to provide an additional resource for building and maintaining stronger Government to Government partnerships in youth workforce development. They also reinforce State to Federal agency partnerships and give space for co-development of on-the-ground and community-based project implementation. Above the systemic goals, however, these grant funds provide real and immediate opportunities to engage young tribal members in meaningful and paid workforce development programming.

HECC will utilize existing program funds to ensure no added fiscal barriers are passed through to external organizations. To reduce the impact of the federally required match component, HECC will provide a match of 25% (utilizing state general and other funds) and not pass this requirement along to community partners.

HECC Partners:

The BLM will serve as an active partner throughout the project implementation. HECC has several partners who may also be a good fit for this opportunity. These partners include Tribal sovereign nations, State and Federal Land Management agencies (Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Forest Service), community-based organizations who serve tribal youth, Oregon State Fire Marshal, Oregon State University's College of Forestry, Oregon Department of Human Services Resilience and Emergency Management, Local Workforce Development Boards, and others to ensure the successful launch and implementation of the project.

Grant Application Submission

If approved, HECC plans to submit the application by February 21, 2024, which is the grant submission deadline.

Anticipated Award Funding Dates

The turnaround time on previous BLM applications has been quick. It is anticipated that the award would be made during the spring of 2024 with HECC awarding subgrants in early 2025.

Matching Funds

A 25% match is required by the opportunity. Matching funds would include a combination of; 1. Amusement Device Tax (other funds) (ORS 320.005 – 320.150) that the HECC receives for the Oregon Youth Corps and 2. Oregon Conservation Corps funding (general funds deposited into a separate and distinct/other fund account) (ORS 476.698).

The allocation and percentage of each matching fund source will be determined by the type of programming being leveraged. HECC anticipates the \$1 million award to support both the Oregon Youth Corps and Oregon Conservation Corps but the percentage to each has not yet been determined and may not be determined until applications have been received in late 2024 and early 2025.

Current Budget for Matching Fund Programs:

Current programming is granted to local service providers on a biennial basis. The amounts listed below represent approximate biennial appropriations for 2023-2025.

<u>Oregon Youth Corps</u>	
Other Funds (ADT)	\$2.1 million
General Funds	\$2.7 million
 <u>Oregon Conservation Corps</u>	
General Funds deposited into distinct/separate fund	\$10 million

Will this grant reduce existing General Fund expenditures?

No, this grant will leverage existing state funds.

Action Requested

HECC requests authority to apply for a grant in the amount of \$1 million from the Bureau of Land Management.

Legislation Affected

If funds are received, HECC will be requesting additional expenditure limitation.

We appreciate your consideration in advance.

Sincerely,



Ben Cannon, Executive Director
Higher Education Coordinating Commission