

# TRAVEL OREGON

## **MEDIA ALERT**

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## **Travel Oregon Awards \$3.6 Million in Grants to Fund Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Projects Across the State**

*56 grant recipients will receive funding aimed at enhancing local economies and communities through visitor industry improvements and promotion.*

**Portland, Ore. (November 16, 2023)** - The Oregon Tourism Commission, dba Travel Oregon, is pleased to announce that \$3.6 million has been awarded to 56 recipients through the agency's 2023 Competitive Grants Program. This impactful grant cycle reflects the agency's ongoing commitment to equity and to enhancing local economies, creating jobs and strengthening communities across the state by investing in the creation and promotion of remarkable visitor experiences.

Travel Oregon's 2023 Competitive Grants Program centers funding through an equity lens around accessibility and inclusivity for underserved and under-resourced communities including people with disabilities, BIPOC, Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes and LGBTQIA+. Grant funds are intended to support projects that align with Travel Oregon's vision of a welcoming destination where tourism drives economic prosperity, benefits the natural environment and celebrates rich, diverse cultures—and must either enhance and/or expand tourism infrastructure to be more accessible and inclusive or promote accessible or inclusive tourism experiences or facilities.

More than \$20 million has been awarded over previous years to support hundreds of projects throughout the state, championing miles of new or improved mountain biking and hiking trails, promoting heritage and cultural tourism experiences in communities across Oregon, supporting local guides and outfitters, marketing food and wine trails, making Oregon tourism offerings such as beaches, museums, theaters and outdoor recreation more accessible and inclusive for all—and so much more.

“To say I’m inspired by the potential of this year’s grant awards would be an understatement,” said Todd Davidson, CEO of Travel Oregon. “Upon completion, each project will make a substantial impact on the accessibility and inclusivity of the tourism industry in Oregon, supporting Travel Oregon’s vision of a

welcoming destination for all where tourism drives economic prosperity, benefits the natural environment and celebrates rich, diverse cultures.”

This year’s grant awardees represent meaningful work from all seven of Oregon’s tourism regions. Highlights from each region include:

### **Central Oregon**

**City of Antelope** received \$38,500 as part of an effort to relocate historic cabins from the Young Life youth center at Washington Family Ranch, the former site of the Rajneesh camp, to downtown Antelope to serve as the city’s first local lodging facility. Funds will be used to make the cabins ADA-accessible.

**High Desert Museum** received \$40,000 to help make Central Oregon a more welcoming and inclusive tourist destination for Native audiences through intentional marketing that celebrates Native experiences and tourism opportunities.

### **Eastern Oregon**

**Pendleton Chamber of Commerce d.b.a. Travel Pendleton** received \$57,600 to create and expand marketing exposure across the Pacific Northwest for Jackalope Jamboree, an inclusive music festival highlighting communities that are underserved and under-resourced, including BIPOC, Oregon’s nine-federally recognized tribes and LGBTQIA+.

**Four Rivers Cultural Center and Museum** received \$20,000 to make the Hikaru Mizu Japanese Garden more accessible and inclusive by ensuring the grounds are navigable by wheelchair users and improving the experience of the garden for individuals with sensory disabilities.

### **Mt. Hood & Columbia River Gorge**

**Clackamas County Tourism and Cultural Affairs** received \$69,550 to develop and promote more inclusive content for their marketing and promotion channels targeting travel markets and underserved communities including people with disabilities and BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities.

**Friends of the Columbia Gorge** received \$21,150 to improve accessibility in the Gorge by providing information in English and Spanish through new signage at key recreational sites and by translating the “Find a Hike” website.

### **Oregon Coast**

**City of Waldport** received \$100,000 to install accessible pathways for the historical ‘Heritage Pavilion’ in the newly dedicated Southworth Park in honor of early Black pioneer Louis Southworth, a former slave who purchased his own freedom and homesteaded near Waldport where he operated a ferry across the Alsea River.

**Coquille Indian Tribe** received \$42,500 to develop and install five interpretive panels at the Mill Casino and RV Park in Coos Bay focusing on the Coquille Indian Tribe's cultural heritage and their relationship to the landscape along Southwest Oregon's waterways.

### **Portland Region**

**Alberta Abbey Foundation** received \$54,000 for promoting inclusive tourism to Portland for arts programming by Black artists, including marketing for Black History month and Black Music month programming in February and June.

**Hoyt Arboretum Friends** received \$100,000 to enhance tourism infrastructure within the park to become more accessible and inclusive by improving the access point at a trailhead to support recreational activities.

### **Southern Oregon**

**Mt. Ashland Association** received \$50,000 for a new ADA-compliant shuttle to provide reliable transportation for people with disabilities who participate in events on Mt. Ashland through the Adaptive Sports Association.

**Elkton Community Education Center** received \$37,500 to enhance a new 14-acre parcel along the Umpqua River by extending a walking path and improving driveways and existing paths to be more accessible. Interpretive signage focused on the location's heritage and interpretive displays will be installed and the site will host Native American cultural programming and inter-tribal gatherings, among other things.

### **Willamette Valley**

**Oregon Garden Foundation** received \$100,000 to improve access to the Garden for those with both age-and disability related mobility issues by installing automatic doors, repairing or improving pathways for accessibility and adding signage to designate accessible routes.

**Lane Arts Council** received \$20,000 to expand its First Friday ArtWalk visitor experience with a year-round activation of the accessible Farmer's Market Pavilion and Plaza and to support the participation of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ artists who help attract residents and visitors to Eugene to experience local arts and culture.

See the full list of awardees [here](#). Projects funded by the competitive grants program in 2023-2025 will be completed by April 14, 2025.

Funding for the current competitive grants program was limited to local government, port districts, federally recognized tribes and non-profit entities registered with the Oregon Secretary of State's Office.

Awardees must demonstrate direct work in support of improving the economic impacts of Oregon's travel and tourism industry. As such, eligible projects must clearly show alignment to tourism infrastructure that is accessible/inclusive or accessible/inclusive tourism promotion.

Images are available [here](#).

### **About Travel Oregon**

The Oregon Tourism Commission, dba [Travel Oregon](#), is a semi-independent state agency whose mission is to inspire travel that uplifts Oregon communities. Collaborating with stakeholders to align as stewards of Oregon, we work to optimize economic opportunity, advance equity and respect the ecosystems, cultures and places that make Oregon... Oregon. Travel Oregon aims to improve Oregonians' quality of life by strengthening the economic impacts of the state's \$13.9 billion tourism industry, which employs more than 100,000 Oregonians.

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