



Is this Career-Connected Learning Grant a good match for your organization?

This guide is designed to help organizations determine whether their organization and work is a strong match for the PGE Foundation's newly designed Career-Connected Learning grant program before investing time in an application. Our goal is to be transparent, reduce unnecessary effort for applicants, and focus review time on proposals that align closely with the strategy.

If you're still unsure about whether you should apply, we encourage you to sign up for an information session and drop-in office hours after reviewing this guide. Please sign up on the PGE Foundation website.

Start Here: What This Funding Is (and Is Not)

This grant program supports projects that help young people explore, experience, and prepare for future educational and career pathways through high-quality, hands-on STEAM learning.

If your organization and project align with multiple PGE Foundation grantmaking pillars, we encourage you to attend the information sessions and drop-in office hours after reviewing this guide to determine which pillar might be the best match to apply for. Please sign up on the PGE Foundation website.

At its core, this funding is meant to:

- Engage in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM).
- Participate in hands-on, applied, project-based learning experiences.
- Create, investigate, design, and solve real-world problems.
- Build durable skills such as creativity, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and persistence.
- Explore future educational and career pathways.
- Strengthen confidence, belonging, and identity as creators, innovators, and contributors.

This funding is **not** intended for:

- General youth programming that does not include a meaningful STEAM learning component.
- Programs focused primarily on sports, recreation, entertainment, or enrichment without clear educational or career-connected outcomes.



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- One-time events that provide limited participant engagement or lasting impact.
- Academic tutoring, test preparation, or homework assistance as the primary activity.
- Scholarship-only programs that do not include direct programming or learning experiences.
- Requests focused primarily on capital improvements, equipment purchases, or facility upgrades without a clear connection to participant outcomes.
- Programs serving primarily adults rather than K-12 youth.
- Activities that provide passive exposure to STEAM topics without opportunities for participants to create, investigate, design, build, solve problems, or apply learning.
- Projects that cannot clearly demonstrate how participants will develop skills, confidence, belonging, or connections to future educational and career opportunities
- Projects that are primarily research-only, advocacy-only, or planning-only without clear implementation or community benefit

Step 1: Basic Eligibility Check

Career-Connected Learning grants are available to any eligible 501(c)(3) organization that is based in Oregon and serves Oregonians (see additional eligibility criteria here: [Apply for Funding](#)).

Your organization's *mission & proposed project* **must** meet at least one of the following:

- Career Exploration & Pathways: Career-connected STEAM learning that integrates science, technology, engineers, arts, design, and creative practices with exploration of future education and career pathways.
- Hands-On Learning: Hands-on, applied, project-based learning experiences in which youth K-12 create, investigate, design, and solve real-world problems.
- STEAM Identity & Belonging: Building students' confidence, belonging, and identity in STEAM, particularly for youth who face barriers to educational and career opportunities.

If you do **not** meet these criteria, you can explore our other grant pillars to evaluate if others may be more aligned to your organization's mission.

Please note: Organizational mission is a key evaluation area for the PGE Foundation. We prioritize funding organizations for whom these priority areas are core to who they are.



For examples of activities that could be included, but not limited to, for consideration for each focus area, please refer to the end of this document.

Step 2: Does your work align with the Career-Connected Learning fund outcomes?

Competitive applications will clearly advance most, if not all, of the following outcomes:

- Access: Expanded access to high-quality STEAM and creative learning opportunities for youth facing barriers
- Skills: Growth in durable skills, including creativity, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and persistence.
- Pathways: Stronger connections between learning and future educational and career pathways
- Belonging: Increased student confidence, belonging, and identity as creators, problem-solvers, and contributors in STEAM

If you answered **no** to two or more of these outcomes, you can explore our other grant pillars here to evaluate if others may be more aligned to your organization's mission..

For exemplars of projects for each focus area that address multiple outcomes, please refer to the end of this document.

Step 3: Accessibility and Community Connection

Competitive proposals typically:

- Are community-led or deeply community-informed
- Center frontline, tribal, rural, or historically underserved communities
- Compensate community members for their time and expertise
- Build on existing community energy rather than duplicating efforts

Grant proposals that do not engage affected communities are not likely to be selected for funding.

Quick Check: Flow Chart

Start →

1. Does your organization meet basic eligibility requirements?
 - a. No → **X** Explore other PGE funding opportunities



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- b. Yes → Continue
- 2. Does the project address a clear career-connected impact and improve community STEAM learning?
 - a. No → ✗ Explore other PGE funding opportunities
 - b. Yes → Continue
- 3. Does the project align with at least one focus area and multiple intended outcomes?
 - a. No → ✗ Explore other PGE n funding opportunities
 - b. Yes → Continue
- 4. Are impacted communities meaningfully engaged in and benefiting from the work?
 - a. No → ⚠ May be less competitive
 - b. Yes → ☑ Likely a good match
- 5. Does your organization engage in collective impact initiatives and work in collaboration with other entities?
 - a. No → ⚠ May be less competitive
 - b. Yes → ☑ Likely a good match

Still Unsure?

Come to one of the scheduled weekly office hours with a brief description of your organization, project idea, and specific questions.

We appreciate your interest and commitment to building career-connected learning opportunities.

Appendix 1: Examples of eligible activities per focus area

The examples below are offered as a very small sampling of projects that reflect some of our early thinking about how organizations and communities may wish to respond to this opportunity. We look forward to learning through practice in the coming year(s) to better understand how our investments may have the most impact on local communities.

Career Exploration & Pathways:



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- An elementary school career discovery program where students meet professionals from fields such as engineering, healthcare, design, technology, and the arts while participating in age-appropriate hands-on activities connected to those careers.
- A creative careers exploration program where students engage with professionals in graphic design, animation, architecture, filmmaking, industrial design, game development, music technology, and digital media while learning about related educational and career pathways.
- A high school internship and career exploration program that places students with local employers while incorporating structured mentorship, workplace learning, and career readiness activities.
- A skilled trades exploration program for middle and high school students that introduces careers in electrical work, construction, manufacturing, fabrication, and industrial design through hands-on workshops and industry site visits.
- An entrepreneurship and innovation program where students identify community challenges, develop creative solutions, receive mentorship from business and design professionals, and present their ideas to community leaders.

Hands-On Learning:

- An elementary engineering and invention program where students use everyday materials to design, test, and improve solutions to real-world challenges.
- A digital arts and design studio program where students create animations, films, podcasts, digital artwork, interactive media, or video games while developing technical, creative, and problem-solving skills.
- A community makerspace program where youth use 3D printers, fabrication tools, digital arts technology, and design software to create original projects and prototypes.
- An environmental science and design challenge where students investigate a local environmental issue and develop creative, community-centered solutions using science, engineering, art, and design thinking.
- A digital media, animation, and game design program where students combine coding, storytelling, visual arts, and technology to create original interactive projects.

STEAM Identity & Belonging:

- An elementary STEAM enrichment program that helps students see themselves as scientists, artists, engineers, designers, and problem-solvers through hands-on exploration and creative expression.
- A STEAM mentoring program that connects youth with scientists, engineers, artists, designers, technologists, and other professionals who reflect the communities being served.



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- An identity-based STEAM leadership program that combines creative design challenges, mentorship, and project-based learning to increase confidence and participation in STEAM fields.
- A year-round STEAM academy serving historically underserved youth that combines hands-on learning, arts integration, mentorship, and opportunities for students to publicly showcase their work and ideas.
- A youth arts and storytelling program where students use visual arts, music, theater, digital media, or creative writing to explore community issues, share their perspectives, and build confidence as creators and contributors.

Appendix 2: Exemplar projects with related outcomes

The exemplars below are offered as a very limited view of how the PGE Foundation may view project proposals as they pertain to outcomes. Successful applications will address more than one of the desired outcomes for the grant program, and we anticipate that most successful applications will address three or four outcomes. We look forward to learning through practice in the coming year(s) to better understand how our investments may have the most impact on local communities.

1. Career Exploration & Pathways Example

Project: Middle and high school students participate in a year-long creative careers program that combines mentor-led workshops, portfolio development, industry site visits, and hands-on projects in graphic design, animation, architecture, filmmaking, game development, and digital media.

- Access: Provides 150 students from rural and low-income communities access to creative industry professionals, workplace experiences, and career exploration opportunities that are not otherwise available in their schools.
- Skills: Students complete at least three portfolio-quality projects and demonstrate growth in creativity, communication, collaboration, and presentation skills through project reviews and public showcases.
- Pathways: Students develop an individualized education and career plan and report increased awareness of postsecondary programs, credentials, and careers in creative industries.
- Identity: Students publicly present their work, receive feedback from industry professionals, and demonstrate increased confidence in their ability to pursue education and careers in creative fields.

2. Hands-On Learning Example



Project: Elementary and middle school students participate in a year-round makerspace program where they use design thinking, fabrication tools, coding, visual arts, and engineering processes to develop solutions to real-world community challenges.

- Access: Provides more than 300 students with regular access to equipment, software, design tools, and project-based learning experiences that are not available through their schools or communities.
- Skills: Students complete multiple design-build projects requiring creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, persistence, and iterative improvement of their work.
- Pathways: Students engage with engineers, designers, artists, and technology professionals and learn how their projects connect to future educational and career opportunities.
- Identity: Students showcase completed projects to families and community members, strengthening confidence and helping participants see themselves as creators, innovators, and problem-solvers.

3. STEAM Identity & Belonging Example

Project: Students use digital media, visual arts, storytelling, music production, and design to explore community issues, express their perspectives, and create projects that are shared through exhibitions, performances, podcasts, or public showcases.

- Access: Expands access to high-quality creative learning opportunities for youth who may have limited access to arts, media, and design programming.
- Skills: Participants develop creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and project-management skills while producing original artistic and multimedia work.
- Pathways: Students learn about educational pathways and careers in design, media arts, communications, film, music technology, marketing, and related creative industries.
- Identity: Through creating and publicly sharing original work rooted in their experiences and perspectives, students develop confidence, strengthen their sense of belonging, and see themselves as contributors, artists, designers, and community leaders.