

Project Grant Report: Community Environmental Sustainability Grant 2023

Summary of Key Project Activities

The Nanaimo Community Gardens Society (NCGS) utilized the Community Environmental Sustainability Grant to implement the Community Engagement Project. This initiative focused on providing diverse opportunities for public engagement, fostering environmental education, and encouraging community involvement in activities that promote environmental health. Over the reporting period, NCGS successfully executed multiple activities and initiatives aligned with the project's objectives, reaching a broad audience and achieving meaningful outcomes.

Key Activities Undertaken:

1. **Specialty Work Parties:** Hosted ongoing hands-on workshops covering topics such as seed saving, transplanting, and pest identification, attracting over 70 participants and visitors.
2. **Native Plant Garden:** Collaborated with the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust (NALT) to design and establish a native hedgerow, benefiting local bird and insect species.
3. **Gleaning Food Processing Lending Library:** Expanded the Gleaning Program to include specialized food preservation equipment, enabling 25 families to process locally gleaned produce.
4. **Share, Care Repair Event:** hosted a 4-hour long event at Beban Learning gardens on July 20th, 2024, open to the public which included the following activities
 1. **Tool Care Workshops:** Delivered one-hour workshop on tool maintenance, reaching 30 participants.
 2. **Children's Station:** Composting and worm farm activities.
 3. **Tool care and sharpening station:** Members of the public bring their gardening tools to learn how to fix and sharpen them to increase their lifespan.
 4. **Plant sales for winter gardening:** This fundraising activity also educates the public on year-round food production and provides the plants needed for that effort.
5. **Tours and Field Trips:** Hosted 10 group tours and field trips, engaging 50+ individuals, including school groups and community organizations.
6. **Educational Signage:** Installed educational signs at Beban Park, highlighting organic horticultural practices and sustainable landscaping.
7. **Pollinator Garden Expansion:** Added new plant species to create a more robust ecosystem.
8. **Community Seed Cleaning Event:** Rented a mobile seed cleaning machine and hosted a seed cleaning event for local home growers at the Nanaimo North branch of VURL.

Allocation of Funds

The grant funding was allocated strategically to maximize impact and ensure sustainable outcomes:

- **Personnel Costs:** \$2,000 was allocated to employ a part-time project coordinator to manage activities, coordinate volunteers, and oversee program implementation.
- **Materials and Supplies:** \$250 was spent on native plants and seeds.
- **Equipment Purchase:** \$1,000 was used to acquire tools and equipment for the Gleaning Program's food processing lending library and to rent a mobile seed cleaning machine

- **Promotional Activities:** \$250 covered outreach efforts, including flyers, social media advertising, and event banners.

Project Outcomes and Metrics

The Community Engagement Project achieved significant outcomes, fostering environmental awareness and community involvement:

1. **Public Participation:** A total of 400 individuals engaged with the project through various activities, workshops, and events.
2. **Educational Impact:** Participants acquired increased knowledge of sustainable gardening practices and environmental stewardship.
3. **Volunteer Engagement:** 15 new volunteers were recruited at the garden sites, contributing over 300 volunteer hours.
4. **Environmental Benefits:** The native plant and pollinator gardens provided critical habitats for local wildlife, enhancing biodiversity in Beban Park.
5. **Public celebration and presence:** Ongoing, weekly work parties at both sites and both major community events were held with a great deal of focus on community building, horticultural therapy, celebration and sharing.

Reflection and Future Plans

The grant enabled NCGS to deliver innovative and impactful programming that aligned with our mission to foster a healthy community and environment through education. The success of this project has laid a strong foundation for continued community engagement and the potential scaling of activities in future years. With additional funding, NCGS aims to explore new initiatives, such as creating a living roof demonstration and establishing demonstration mason bee houses.

We are deeply grateful for the support of the City of Nanaimo, which has been instrumental in empowering our organization to drive meaningful change and engage the community in the stewardship of our shared environment.

Please note that our native plant hedgerow was successfully planted over the course of the spring and summer in 2024 but due to rabbit pressure at Beban Park, we will need to replace some of the plants and will have better photos of it once growing resumes in the spring of 2025.



Visitors to the Pollinator Garden at the Share, Care and Repair Event 2024



Sharpening tools at the sharpening station at the Share, Care and Repair Event 2024



Looking at red wiggler compost worms at the Share, Care and Repair Event 2024



Horticultural workshop at the Share, Care and Repair Event 2024



Educational signage at Beban Learning Gardens 2024



Visitors at the Share, Care and Repair Event 2024



Tool care and selection workshop at the Share, Care and Repair Event



Schedule of events at the Share, Care and Repair Event 2024



Seed cleaning at the Community Seed Cleaning Event 2024



Close-up of seed cleaning at Community Seed Cleaning Event 2024



The area of the lawn to be dug up for the native plant hedgerow 2024



Horticultural workshop at the Pine St Community Garden



Dehydrating apples