Blue Sky FUNDERS FORUM

Summary of Grants for 2017

TRACKING THE FIELD

ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTMAKERS ASSOCIATION

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY programs contribute to the development of awareness, knowledge, and attitudes about nature and environmental issues that lead to positive personal and collective decisions and actions.

AUDIENCE

- Early Childhood (ages 0–5)
- School Age (grades K–12)
- University
- Adult

IMPACT AREAS

Conservation

Conservation outcomes include those that increase environmental knowledge, improve environmental awareness and attitudes, and inspire positive environmental actions that lead to improvements in environmental quality.

Education

Education outcomes encompass improved academic performance, broadly defined. Specific outcomes can include greater STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) literacy, higher standardized test scores, and increased school engagement for students. Education outcomes may be achieved through programs that support teacher professional development and improve school grounds and other outdoor learning spaces.

Health & Wellness

Health outcomes are improvements in physical, mental, emotional, and social health and wellness. Specific outcomes can include improved nutrition and physical fitness, reduced stress and anxiety, recovery from physical or psychological trauma, and greater awareness and understanding of personal and environmental health.

Social Justice

Social justice outcomes expand access and opportunity for underserved communities and underrepresented populations. These outcomes can include more equitable access to outdoor experiences, greater cultural relevancy of outdoor programs, improved parks and public spaces, and leadership development opportunities for individuals from underrepresented populations.

Youth Development

Youth development outcomes support young people as they grow into responsible, engaged community members who care for the environment and future generations. These outcomes may be achieved through professional or character development, outdoor experiences, and/or community service.

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2014 as a working group of the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), the Blue Sky Funders Forum (Blue Sky) is a collaborative of funders that inspires, deepens, and expands philanthropy to strengthen communities by advancing environmental literacy and connections to nature. A historically underfunded field in environmental philanthropy, the intersection of people and nature is a critical area where grantmakers have the opportunity to support communities and effect measurable improvements in conservation and stewardship, education and academic achievement, health and wellness, social justice and civic engagement, and youth development.

Since 2016, Blue Sky has partnered with EGA to monitor and better understand grantmaking for environmental literacy. Through the *Tracking the Field* initiative, researchers collect and tag Blue Sky and EGA members' environmental literacy grants according to a number of categories, including grantmaking strategy, geographic region, and issue area. Adding to EGA's existing *Tracking the Field* taxonomy, Blue Sky worked with members and advisors to develop taxonomy specific to environmental literacy. Each environmental literacy grant is tagged with one or more of four target audiences and one of five impact areas.

This report reflects findings from 2017 environmental literacy grantmaking. It seeks to provide a more complete picture of funding for environmental literacy, supporting funders as they identify trends, gaps, and opportunities in the landscape of funding that connects people and nature.

Blue Sky and EGA hope that the findings in this report will inform funders' individual grantmaking, and allow Blue Sky members and partners to align their efforts to ensure that everyone has positive experiences outdoors and shares the joy, health, growth, and sense of community that come with it.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY FUNDING 2017 SNAPSHOT

THE GRANT POOL

$104.8 MILLION

In 2017, $104.8 million was given to environmental literacy, a steady increase from $93.9 million in 2016 and $72.5 million in 2015.

50%

32 Blue Sky members out of the 168 total funders gave just over 50% of the total environmental literacy funding tracked in this report.

1,689

In 2017, a total of 1,689 environmental literacy grants were given to 1,299 grantees.

AUDIENCE

Consistent with 2015 and 2016, school-age children received the most funding as an audience group (40%).

The university audience group had the greatest increase in funding in 2017, receiving 17% of total funding, compared to 6% in 2016 and 11% in 2015.

Early childhood programs continued to receive the smallest share of funding, making up 2% of environmental literacy funding.

IMPACT AREA

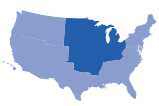
In 2017, funding for "Education" continued to grow, making it the most-funded impact area two years in a row, followed by "Conservation." The two impact areas received 38% and 31% of funding, respectively.

From 2015 to 2017, the percentage of funding going to "Health & Wellness" had the greatest increase, rising from 2% to 9%.

ISSUE AREA

"Freshwater" replaced "Terrestrial Ecosystems" to become the most-funded primary issue area in 2017.

GEOGRAPHIC REGION



Funding to "Midwest" had the greatest increase in 2017. The share of "Federal Level / Multi-Region" funding continued to decrease from 2015 to 2017.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

KEY FINDINGS

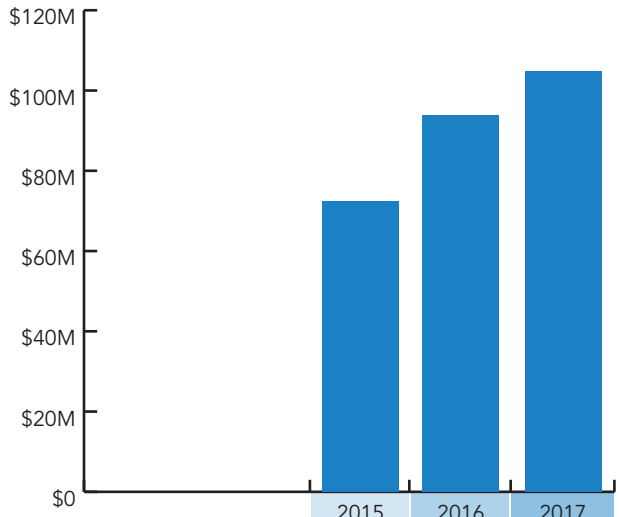
- In 2017, $104.8 million was given to environmental literacy, a steady increase from $93.9 million in 2016 and $72.5 million in 2015.
- 32 Blue Sky members out of the 168 total funders gave just over 50% of the total environmental literacy funding tracked in this report.
- In 2017, a total of 1,689 environmental literacy grants were given to 1,299 grantees.

Environmental literacy grants made by Blue Sky and EGA members amounted to $104.8 million in 2017 and $93.9 million in 2016, a steady increase from the $72.5 million given in 2015. Over those two years the share of environmental literacy funding also increased, from 4.4% of the total environmental funding in 2015 tracked by *Tracking the Field* to 5.7% in 2017. In 2017, 32 Blue Sky members out of the total 168 EGA funders gave just over 50% of the total $104.8 million in environmental literacy funding. The total giving in 2017 consisted of 1,689 grants across 1,299 grantees.

In 2017, 30 grants of over $500,000 accounted for 30% of total environmental literacy funding. Grants of less than $10,000 accounted for 38% of the number of grants made, but only 3% of the total funding. 2017 saw more grants over $500,000 than did 2016 or 2015, continuing a consistent increase in the number of these large grants, from 14 in 2015 to 30 in 2017.

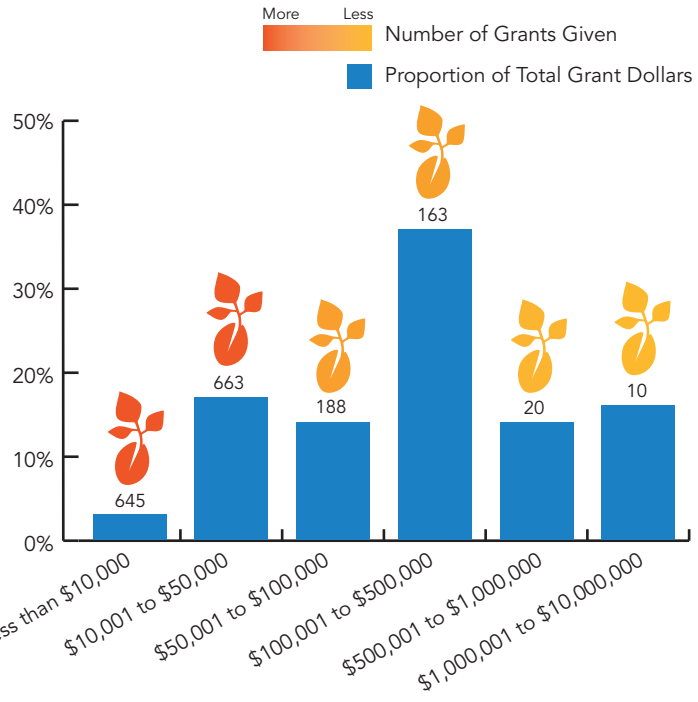
Figure 2 shows the distribution of 2017 environmental literacy grants by dollar amount. The majority of grants made to environmental literacy were less than $50,000. Ten grants were over $1,000,000, a significant increase from the two grants of over $1,000,000 that were awarded in 2015.

FIGURE 1. Environmental Literacy Giving vs. Total Environmental Giving, 2015–2017



	2015	2016	2017
Environmental Literacy Giving	$72.5 M	$93.9 M	$104.8 M
Total Environmental Giving	$1.65 B	$1.77 B	$1.84 B
% of Environmental Literacy Giving	4.4%	5.3%	5.7%

FIGURE 2. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Grant Size, 2017



SECTION 2: ISSUE AREAS

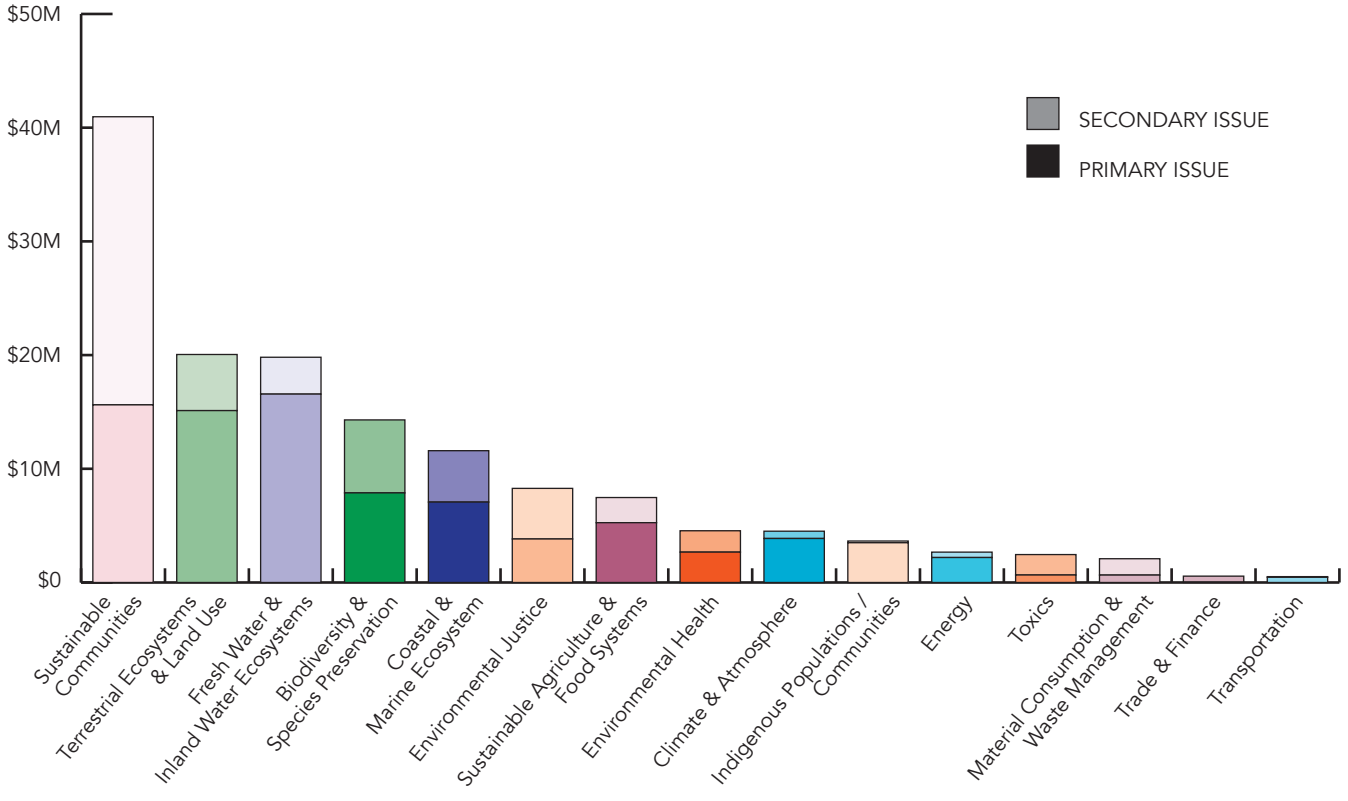
KEY FINDINGS

- "Freshwater" replaced "Terrestrial Ecosystems" to become the highest-funded primary issue area in 2017. These two issue areas remained in the three highest-funded primary issue areas from 2015 to 2017.
- "Sustainable Communities" continued to be the highest-funded secondary issue area from 2015 to 2017.
- In 2017, the highest-funded primary and secondary issue area combination was "Terrestrial Ecosystems" and "Sustainable Communities."

Environmental literacy funding by issue area remained relatively consistent from 2015 to 2017. The top-three funded issue areas continued to include "Freshwater & Inland Water Ecosystems," "Terrestrial Ecosystems & Land Use" and "Sustainable Communities." A shift from the previous two years, in 2017, "Freshwater & Inland Water Ecosystems" replaced "Terrestrial Ecosystems & Land Use" to become the highest-funded primary issue area of environmental literacy funding. "Sustainable Communities" continued to be the highest-funded secondary issue area over the three years. "Biodiversity & Species Preservation," "Coastal & Marine Ecosystems," and "Sustainable Agriculture / Food Systems" also consistently received significant shares of funding. It's worth noting that in 2017, a higher percentage of funding was given to multi-issue or general environmental literacy programs (18.5% in 2017 compared to 13% in 2015). Major types of grants in this area included grants supporting environmental studies or fellowship programs at universities and general environmental literacy programs for school-age children.

From 2015 to 2017, the most prevalent primary/secondary issue combinations remained consistent. "Sustainable Communities" continued to be the most-funded secondary issue. "Sustainable Communities" was most commonly paired with "Terrestrial Ecosystems & Land Use." These grants often supported programs in national parks and public lands (receiving $9 million in 2017—the highest among all issue pairings). "Fresh Water & Inland Water Ecosystems" and "Coastal & Marine Ecosystems" paired with "Sustainable Communities" included grants supporting local freshwater/marine conservation education. "Sustainable Agriculture" paired with "Sustainable Communities" included grants supporting community garden and school garden programs. "Biodiversity & Species Preservation" and "Coastal & Marine Ecosystems" or "Fresh Water & Inland Water Ecosystems" were also common issue combinations, receiving $4.9 million and $4.2 million in 2017, respectively.

FIGURE 3. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Primary and Secondary Issue, 2017



SECTION 3: IMPACT AREAS

KEY FINDINGS

- In 2017, funding for "Education" continued to grow, making it the most-funded impact area two years in a row, followed by "Conservation." These two impact areas received 38% and 31% of funding, respectively.
- In 2017, "Health & Wellness," "Social Justice," and "Youth Development" received similar percentages of funding as they did in 2016.
- From 2015 to 2017, the percentage of funding going to "Health & Wellness" had the largest increase, rising from 2% to 9%.

Funding to "Education" and "Conservation" impact areas continued to be the highest of all impact areas for the third year in a row; however, in 2016, "Education" surpassed "Conservation" as the highest-funded impact area. Funding to these two issues accounted for approximately 70% of all environmental literacy grantmaking. All impact areas saw an increase in funding from 2015, with the exception of "Youth Development," which had a small decrease. "Health & Wellness," while accounting for only 9% of funding, saw the largest relative increase, from slightly over $1.5 million in 2015 to over $9 million in 2017. Funding for "Education" grants experienced the largest increase over the past two years. Four of the five largest "Education" grants in 2017 supported the development of education programs or exhibits in museums and/or aquariums, making up over $6 million of giving for "Education."

Overall, common key terms in environmental literacy grant descriptions in 2017 were similar to those used in 2015, with themes such as science, STEM education, and geography appearing in descriptions of many Education grants. Among "Conservation" grants, terms relating to freshwater were the most common, which contrasts with 2015, when terms relating to parks and public lands were more frequent. Furthermore, "Conservation" grants referenced community and local engagement more often in 2017 than they did in 2015. Many "Health & Wellness" grants in 2017 continued to focus on issues such as healthy food systems and nutrition, and school garden programs were also common among this impact area. "Social Justice" grants most frequently referenced underserved and low-income communities, followed by urban communities and ethnically diverse communities, with many grants also specifying at-risk youth and girls.

FIGURE 4. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Impact Area, 2015–2017

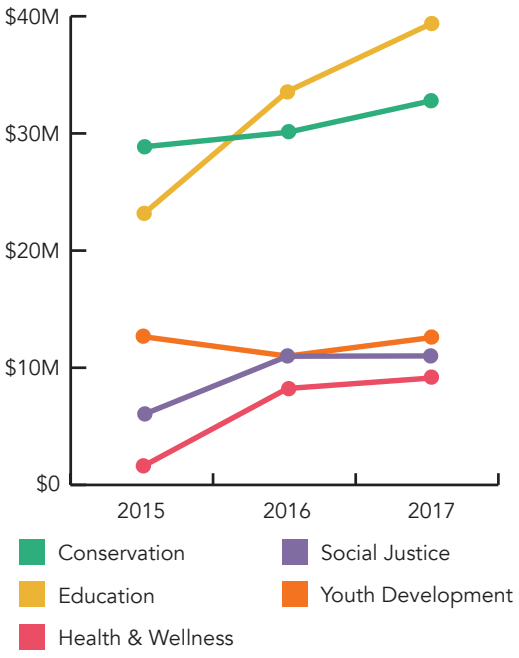


FIGURE 5. Environmental Literacy Impact Area Keywords, 2017

CONSERVATION	EDUCATION	HEALTH & WELLNESS	SOCIAL JUSTICE	YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
River/ Watershed/ Lake	Students/ School	Food/Nutrition	Justice	Youth/Young
Community/ Local/Regional	Science/STEM	Garden/Farm/ Grow	Underserved/ Low-income/ Disadvantaged	Leadership/ Leaders
Connect/ Engage	Geography	Health/ Healthy/ Organic	Urban/ Neighborhood	Outdoor
Park	Outdoor	Community	Diverse/ Indigenous/	Internship
Land/Forest	Curriculum/ Learning	School	Opportunities/ Access	Skills
	Teachers / Professional Development		At-risk	

SECTION 4: GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

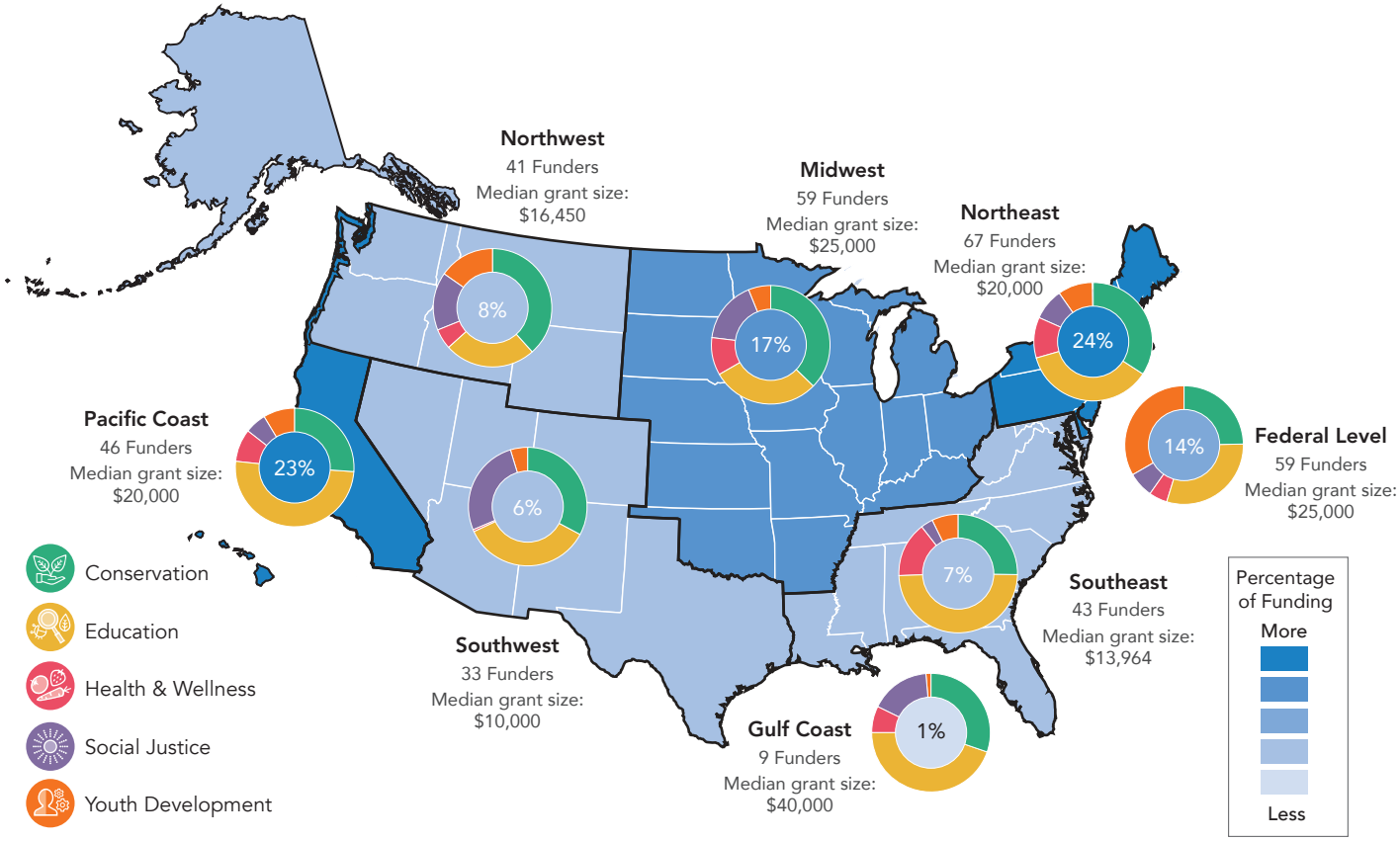
KEY FINDINGS:

- The Midwest had the largest increase in funding in 2017, receiving 17% of the total environmental literacy funding, making it the third most-funded domestic region.
- The Northeast replaced the Pacific Coast to become the highest-funded region of all environmental literacy grants two years in a row since 2016.
- The share of Federal-level/Multi-region funding decreased from 22% in 2015 to 14% in 2017, indicating that more environmental literacy funding was directed to specific domestic regions in 2017.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of grantmaking by domestic region and impact area. The Northeast (with 24% of the funding) surpassed the Pacific Coast (with 23% of the funding) for the second year in a row, with the largest share of funding. Both regions had a roughly equal share compared to their 2016 levels. This represents a shift from 2015, when the Pacific Coast received 31% of the total funding and the Northeast received 15%. The Gulf Coast received the smallest share of environmental literacy funding, at 1%. The Midwest rose in terms of its share of funding compared to previous years, with 17% of the share of funding. The share of funding received by other regions ranged from 6% to 14%.

In addition to receiving the largest share of funding overall, "Education" also received the largest share in the Gulf Coast, Northeast, and Pacific Coast. Like in 2016, "Youth Development" was the highest-funded impact area at the federal level. "Conservation" was the highest-funded impact area in the Midwest and the Northwest. Each region saw an uneven distribution of funding across impact areas, with the highest-funded impact area receiving at least three times the funding of the least-funded impact area in each individual region.

FIGURE 6. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Domestic Region and Impact Area, 2017



SECTION 5: AUDIENCE

KEY FINDINGS

- While receiving a smaller share of total funding than in 2015 and 2016, school-age children continued to be the highest-funded audience in 2017.
- In 2017, funding for the university audience group more than doubled from 2015 and 2016 levels, accounting for 17% of total funding.[1]
- Early childhood programs continued to receive the least funding of any audience, making up 2% of all environmental literacy funding.

DESCRIPTIONS OF AUDIENCE GROUPS

Early Childhood (Ages 0–5): 2%

Funding targeting children up to and including five years old typically includes grants for preschool environmental literacy programs, museums, and science centers. There are also grants for backbone organizations and program providers dedicated to early-childhood environmental education, such as the Natural Start Alliance.

School Age (Grades K–12): 40%

Funding reaching school-age students commonly includes grants to K–12 environmental science and STEM education programs. These programs include in-school environmental literacy programs, outdoor youth development programs, place-based learning programs, and school garden programs.

University: 17%

Funding reaching university students and young adults commonly includes grants for undergraduate- or graduate-level environmental study/research programs (especially marine science, freshwater science, and sustainability studies) and leadership development and fellowship programs.

Adults: 16%

Funding reaching adults typically includes grants for adult and public education programs that promote climate and energy awareness, sustainable agriculture, and land and freshwater conservation.

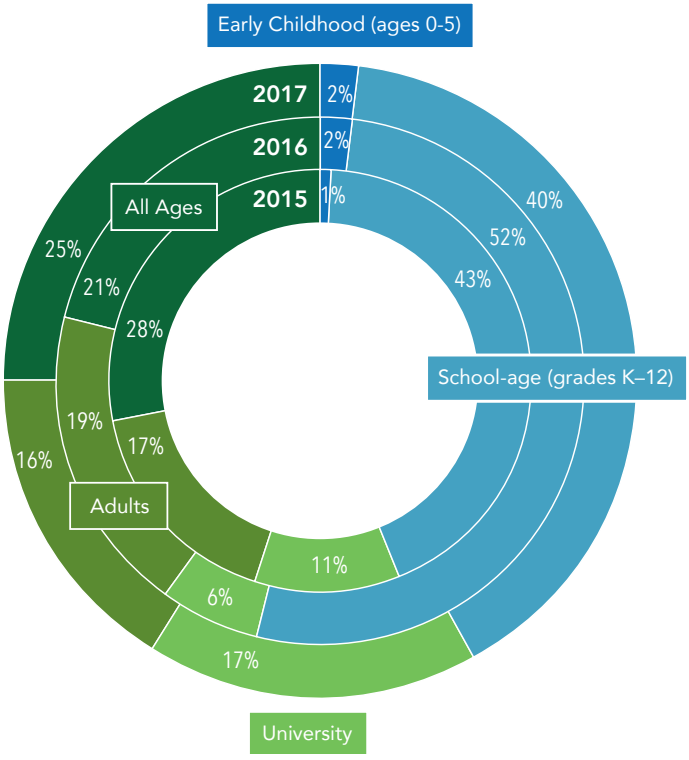
All Audiences: 25%

Funding reaching audiences of all ages typically includes grants to aquariums, museums, nature centers, and national parks.

Footnote

1. The increase in funding to the university audience was partially attributable to a new funder in the funder pool who gave $4 million in university conservation scholar programs in 2017.

FIGURE 7. Environmental Literacy Grantmaking by Audience, 2015–2017



SECTION 6: GOVERNMENT FUNDING

KEY FINDINGS

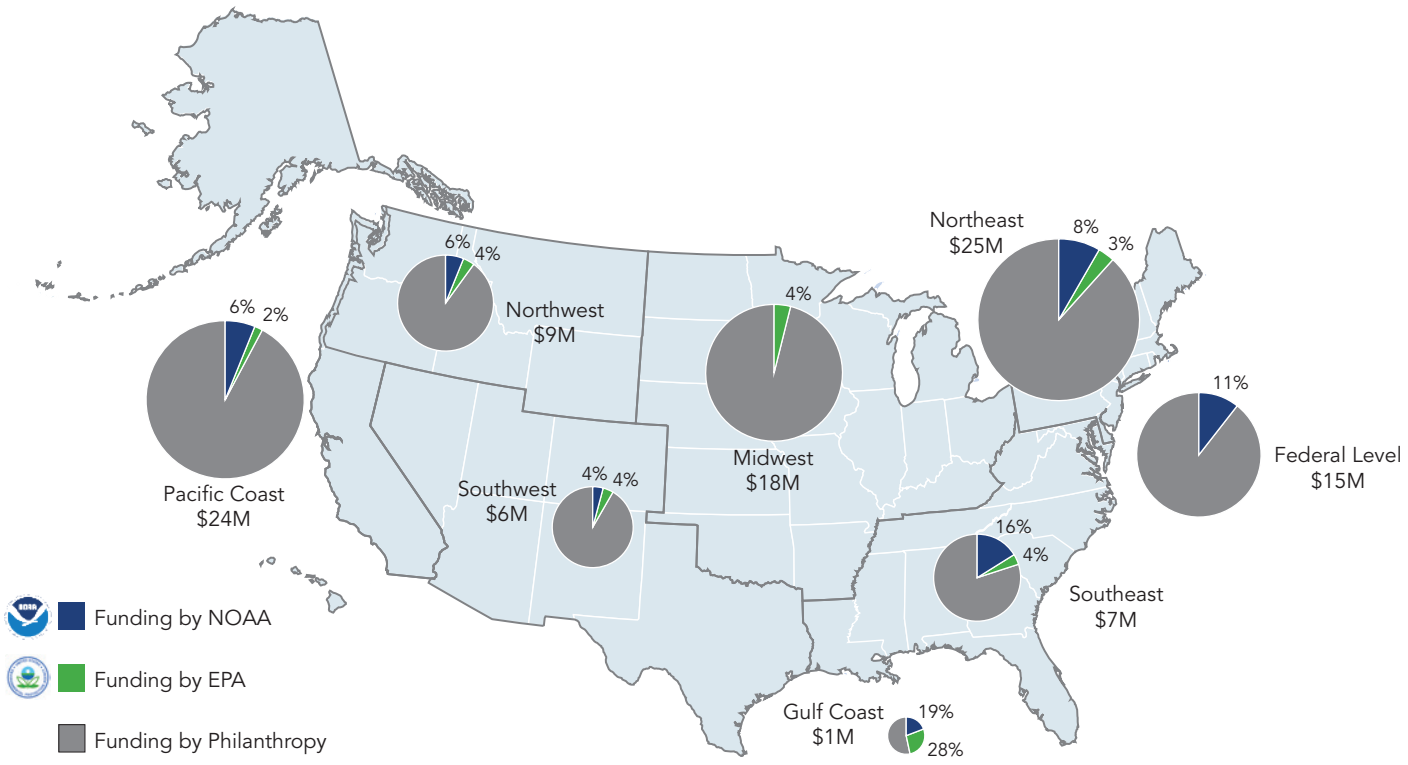
- 2017 NOAA and EPA funding tracked in this report totaled $10.5 million, accounting for 10% of all environmental literacy fuding.
- NOAA and EPA funding accounted for the highest percentage of all environmental literacy funding in the Gulf Coast and Southeast.
- In 2017, 86% of NOAA and EPA funding focused on school-age children, and 67% of funding had "Education" as the impact area.

Federal grant programs make up a large share of funding for environmental literacy in the United States. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) make significant investments in environmental literacy throughout the country. In order to better understand the larger landscape of funding for the field, Blue Sky partners with EPA and NOAA to track funding from their largest federally administered environmental literacy grantmaking programs, which include NOAA's Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) awards, providing funds for experiential watershed education for K–12 students and educators; NOAA's Environmental Literacy Program; and EPA's environmental literacy grants, awarded annually through the agency's Environmental Education Grants Program.

In 2017, environmental literacy funding given by NOAA totaled $7.4 million, and funding by the EPA totaled $3.1 million. This funding in total accounted for 10% of all environmental literacy funding tracked in this report. As shown in Figure 9, NOAA and EPA funding account for a critical share of funding in some regions. Specifically, NOAA was the largest funder in the Gulf Coast and Southeast regions. The EPA was also an important funder in the Gulf Coast, accounting for 28% of the region's total environmental literacy funding. In terms of regional- versus federal-level funding, NOAA gave a higher percentage (21%) of its funding to federal level/multi-region programs, while EPA directed grants to specific regions.

In terms of funding by audience, both agencies largely focused on school-age children, with 86% of funding going to this audience group. NOAA gave the majority of its funding to freshwater and marine science, to support the environmental literacy of K–12 students, due in large part to the agency's B-WET awards program. EPA was similar in its focus on school-age children, but gave grants on a broader range of issues, including freshwater and marine science, but also biodiversity, climate, and energy. Consistent with their focus on K–12 students, two-thirds of grants from these two agencies had "Education" as the impact area.

FIGURE 8. Environmental Literacy Government Funding by Domestic Region, 2017



SECTION 7: METHODOLOGY

In partnership with the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), the data for this report was collected and coded by a small and cohesive research team rather than by each foundation or agency individually. This ensured that all grants collected were coded and tagged consistently.

The data collection team referred to funders' websites and 990 forms to obtain a list of grants for the 2017 calendar year. For most Blue Sky Funders Forum members, the foundation was contacted directly to obtain a list of grants from 2017. The 168 funders reflected in this report include Blue Sky members, EGA members, and foundations otherwise tracked through EGA's *Tracking the Field* partner reports.

Before inputting a grant, a profile for the grantor and grantee was created (if not already existing) in the CiviCRM database, with information such as the organization's website, address, and mission statement recorded under each profile. Then for each grant, information on year, amount, description and grantee name was inputted. Based on the grant description and the grantee's mission, each grant was then tagged with a primary and secondary issue area, the grant strategy, and the geographic region where the grant initiatives were to take place. If a grant was identified as being relevant to environmental literacy, the grant was also tagged with additional fields, including the primary impact area and target audience. Only grants given domestically and identified as environmental literacy grants were included in this report.

In cases where the grant description did not contain enough information to identify the appropriate issue area, the researcher was able to determine the information necessary to categorize the grants based on the grantee's mission statement and program areas as described on the grantee's website. Researchers also referred to the grantor's mission statement and program areas to help identify the general focus of a grant. If a grant was focused on general or multi-issue environmental work, the grant was categorized with "General Environment / Multi-issue Work" as the issue area.

SEARCH THE BLUE SKY *TRACKING THE FIELD* DATABASE:

Blue Sky members can log on to https://blueskyfundersforum.org/connect/ttf to search and view the grants included in this report. For assistance logging on to the Blue Sky website, contact Christina James at christina@blueskyfundersforum.org.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Photos courtesy of Big City Mountaineers, Discover the Delaware, Education Outside, and Marine Science Institute.

ABOUT BLUE SKY FUNDERS FORUM

The Blue Sky Funders Forum is a national collaborative that helps members learn, connect, and grow philanthropy that supports the many benefits of environmental literacy and stronger connections to nature. The Blue Sky community is united in the belief that when people have meaningful experiences outdoors, their quality of life, health, and social well-being improve, and, in turn, their communities become stronger and more sustainable. Blue Sky funders support environmental learning and connections with nature that strengthen communities and lead to measurable improvements in conservation and stewardship, education and academic achievement, health and wellness, social justice and civic engagement, and youth development.

"The Blue Sky Funders Forum has the potential to be a true game-changer. This field, more than any other, empowers individuals and communities to create the type of society that we all want—with healthy ecosystems, shared prosperity, and thriving communities for everyone."

—John Flicker
Trustee, George B. Storer Foundation
President, Prescott College

"Blue Sky has played a part in shining a light on leaders, innovations, and victories in the field, and has facilitated a collaborative learning community of funders and practitioners."

—Randi Fisher
Trustee, Pisces Foundation

MEMBERSHIP: Blue Sky provides a wide array of member services, programs, convenings, and grantmaking resources to maximize the impact of our members' individual and collective work, including:

- Access to collaborative funding networks of like-minded grantmakers
- Tracking the Field funding database
- Members-only listserv and member directory
- Access to Blue Sky advisors (nonprofit leaders and innovators)
- Annual national forum and regional convenings
- Members-only calls, webinars, and learning opportunities
- Grantmaking resources, including research briefs and case studies
- Eligibility to participate on the Blue Sky board

Interested in joining Blue Sky? Contact Anupama Joshi at anupama@blueskyfundersforum.org for information.

Blue Sky FUNDERS FORUM

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Environmental Grantmakers Association

www.ega.org

TRACKING THE FIELD

ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTMAKERS ASSOCIATION