

## Program Application: 82153271

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### **Linked Pre-Application Form - DO NOT DELETE**

Growing Sustainably's Cool Planet Program

### **Grant Amount Requested**

\$75,000.00

### **Organization Name**

San Jose State University Research Foundation

## Urban Grant Program Application Questions

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### Overview

#### **Type of project (check all that apply)**

#### **Grant category (check all that apply)**

Environmental Stewardship and Restoration, Parks, Trails, and Public Access, Environmental Education

### Project Location: Address / Neighborhood

**What is the physical location of the project? If there is no physical location, please enter "N/A." If the project will be in multiple locations, please list all. Note: project location(s) must be within the Authority's jurisdiction.**

Anne Darling Elementary School--333 N 33rd St, San Jose, CA 95113; Catholic Charities CORAL Onsite Afterschool Program (OSA District 2)

Olinder Elementary School--890 E. William St San Jose CA 95116. A partner since 2005 (Olinder Neighborhood); Catholic Charities CORAL Onsite Afterschool Program (OSA District 6)

Olinder Park-- 1117 Woodborough Dr, San Jose, CA 95116. An important green space located in our service area, 20% owned by OSA (Olinder Neighborhood) (OSA District 6)

Williams Park-- E William St & S 16th St, San Jose, CA 95112. An important green space located in CommUniverCity's service area (Olinder neighborhood) (OSA District 6)

San Jose State University-- Multiple locations on the main campus. One Washington Square, San Jose CA 95192 (e.g., Environmental Studies Department, Campus Community Garden, MLK Jr., University Greenhouse, etc.) (South University Neighborhood) (OSA District 6)

Sacred Heart Nativity Middle School- 310 Edwards Ave, San Jose, CA 95110 (OSA District 6)

Santee Elementary School--1313 Audubon Drive, San Jose, CA 95121; Catholic Charities CORAL Onsite Afterschool Program (OSA District 7)

Valley Water Outdoor Classroom--791 Williams Street, San Jose 95112 (District 6)

Washington Elementary School--100 Oak St, San Jose, CA 95110. Think Together Onsite Afterschool (Washington Neighborhood) (OSA District 6)

Select program activities may also take place via Zoom!, Google classroom or other online platforms for remote engagement.

### Project Location

#### **Open Space Authority District of Project Location(s)(check all that apply)**

Authority District 2, Authority District 6, Authority District 7

**Who does the project serve? Please indicate which Open Space Authority Districts are served (where do the people served by the program live) (check all that apply)**

Authority District 2, Authority District 6, Authority District 7

### **Project Abstract**

COOL PLANET is a new environmental education and stewardship initiative developed by Growing Sustainably, a signature program of CommUniverCity SJSU. It engages K through 8th grade students from underserved Central San José neighborhoods in hands-on environmental learning emphasizing three interconnected focus areas--wildlife, climate resilience, and environmental perspectives--through a standards-based curriculum that supports English language learners. Responding to student and teacher feedback, COOL PLANET merges physical and environmental education by combining soccer drills with the introduction of environmental concepts such as conservation and cooperation. The initiative aims to expand equitable access to nature, empower families with tools for climate change adaptation, and cultivate the next generation of environmental stewards in San José.

## Project Planning

### **Describe the proposed project.**

Growing Sustainably, a signature CommUniverCity SJSU program, will develop and deliver a new program, COOL PLANET, which connects k-8 students to nature and engages them in fun, active, and CA education standard-aligned environmental education and climate resilience activities. We will teach 480 Central San Jose residents about wildlife appreciation, local flora and fauna, and environmental science using evidence-based soccer drills to help our community create climate adaptation strategies. COOL PLANET will develop and deliver 80 workshops and fieldtrips to students who live in underserved Central San Jose neighborhoods. Program activities include outdoor learning, field trips, a university soccer game, and visiting the SJSU campus.

Growing Sustainably's Cool Planet program will consist of two parts. Specific activities are as follows:

#### NEST (Nurturing Environmental Skills Together)

A comprehensive environmental education program for 280 k to 8th-grade students that emphasizes phenomena that affect them personally and animals--two lesson topics that our partner San Jose elementary school teachers overwhelmingly indicate spur the most engagement. Programs offered through 2 schools or afterschool programs with two trips to a local greenspace or wetland in Year 1 and two in 2 in Year 2 to learn about wildlife conservation, the impact of climate change on human and animal populations, and adaptation strategies. 52 workshops and fieldtrips will address topics like healthy living, air quality monitoring, flood preparedness, and native bird species.

#### LET'S GO (Where the Environment and Sports Meet)

Our recent research on k-6 environmental education in the San Jose community involving direct input from students and elementary school teachers indicates a strong desire for active and hands-on learning as it relates to environmental education. A six-week afterschool soccer program will be offered to 100 k to 6th-grade students that combine fun soccer drills with climate change education (e.g., properly sorting waste, deforestation) that will culminate in watching an SJSU soccer match. 80 participants (students and chaperones) will attend an SJSU soccer game. An emphasis will be on using transferable soccer skill exercises (e.g., cooperation, situational awareness, precision, practice) to illustrate ways of resolving environmental issues. This program builds off the success of a similar CommUniverCity program Sammy Play, which taught school children sportsmanship through basic motor skills development at McKinley Elementary School in San Jose.

Programs will be developed in consultation with community members. Program content includes in-person (online if needed) workshops, soccer exercises, and field trips to SJSU main campus and wildlife refuges. Program implementation will take place primarily within the underserved neighborhoods of Central San Jose (zip codes 95110, 95112, 95113, 95116 and 95192).

Descriptions of example lessons are below. All program lessons will be aligned with one or more Common Core or Next Generation Science Standard criteria.

**COOL LIFESTYLES:** Students learn about the connection between being in nature and health. By using personal fitness trackers), students will learn how spending time in a green space and being mindful affects health indicators such as heart rate.

**COOL ANIMALS:** Students learn about native flora and fauna in SF Bay and Estuary, such as pickleweed and the salt marsh harvest mouse, as well as and their unique adaptations. Students will learn about predictions for rising Bay Area sea levels and restoration strategies for supporting wetland ecosystems (e.g., invasive plant removal, horizontal levees).

**COOL WATERS (2 LESSONS):** Students learn about flooding in the Bay Area in a Valley Water outdoor classroom where a previous flood occurred

and homes along the creek were removed to keep people safe. They will engage in a fun group exercise where they determine the eight essential items to pack a “go bag” for their family in case of flooding. Students will be introduced to native flora and fauna of the area. Basic measurements stream health (e.g., dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, and temperature) will be taken of Coyote Creek.

**HARVESTERS VS. ENVIRONMENTALISTS SOCCER DRILL:** Participants play a skill building drill where players on team A are ‘harvesters’ and players on team B are ‘environmentalists’. Cones serve as trees. The objective of the harvesters is to knock over the trees with a soccer ball, simulating the felling of a tree. The objective of the environmentalists is to keep the harvesters from knocking over the cones (i.e., protecting the tree). Students can play with an even number of harvesters and environmentalists or switch the ratio so that there are more harvesters than environmentalists or vice versa. After 5-7 minutes of the drill, the coach will stop play and students will discuss what students learned and how the drill applies to real life.

The proposed project builds community climate resilience in three main ways. First, it builds environmental awareness and literacy (e.g., native flora and fauna, sea-level rise, flooding, wildlife conservation). Second, by working directly with teachers and involving them in program development, local knowledge, needs, and priorities are respected—critical for just and inclusive resilience strategies. And third, the program encourages personal and household-level adaptation. Through activities like go-bag packing for flood preparedness and using fitness trackers to connect time in nature to health benefits the program helps individuals and families take direct action to adapt to climate risks and improve overall well-being, a critical element of community climate resilience.

Research conducted by SJSU’s Department of Environmental Studies (Dahl and Cushing, 2022) and supported by OSA indicates that environmental literacy levels of school children living in the underserved neighborhoods of Central San Jose are low to moderate and verifies that students have limited opportunities to enjoy themselves in natural environments. This same research also shows that Growing Sustainably’s environmental education programming is effective at increasing environmental literacy in the areas of awareness and attitude but that more or longer support may be needed to develop skills, knowledge and action. Building on these findings and input from partner teachers and students, the proposed project targets these areas.

**Describe key project deliverables and estimated completion dates.**

**NURTURING ENVIRONMENTAL SKILLS TOGETHER (NEST) [280 Participants]**

To promote wildlife appreciation, vocabulary development, and skills that enhance standard school instruction, CommUniverCity’s six-lesson environmental education program will be delivered to 2 partner schools. In Year 1 of the program, beginning summer 2026, 24 lessons (6 new lesson plans) will be delivered (6 workshops at 2 sites in the fall and 2 sites in the spring) (4 total) to k through 8th grade students by June 2027. The number of workshop series participants in Year 1 will be 100 (25 students per site), with 40 students taking part in a field trip to a preserve, refuge, or SJSU’s Earth Day celebration. In Year 2 of the program, beginning summer 2027, 24 lessons will be delivered (6 workshops at 2 sites in each of 2 semesters) to k through 8th grade students by June 2028. The number of workshop series participants in Year 2 is also 100 (25 students per site), with 40 students taking part in a field trip to a preserve, refuge, or SJSU’s Earth Day. The greenspace/wetland/SJSU field trips will be completed by May 31st in year 1 (2027) and May 31 in year 2 (2028).

**LET’S GO [200 Participants]**

CommUniverCity’s environmentally themed soccer skill workshop series will be delivered to at least two partner organizations. In Year 1 of the program, beginning Fall 2026 two six-session (12 workshops) series will be delivered by May 31, 2027. The number of elementary school participants in Year 1 will be 60 (30 students per series). Beginning in Fall 2026, 40 students will take part in a field trip to an SJSU soccer game (2 groups of 20 students each) with both field trips completed by May 31, 2027. In Year 2 of the program, beginning Fall 2027, two six-session (12 workshops) series will be delivered by May 31, 2028. The number of Let’s Go participants in Year 2 will be 60 (30 students per series). Beginning in Fall 2026, 40 students and chaperones will take part in a field trip to an SJSU soccer game (2 groups of 20 people each) with both field trips completed by May 31, 2028.

See Documents section for an easy to read deliverables schedule.

**Does this project require permission, permits, or other approvals? If so, please describe the status of these.**

CommUniverCity's work in the community for the duration of the proposed project is approved by both the Franklin McKinley School District and the San Jose Unified School District through signed University-Organization Agreements. Planned field trips (e.g., the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory Banding Station) with local schoolchildren will be organized in partnership with partner schools and field trip permission will be obtained from parents and legal guardians in Years 1 and 2 of the project. Parental/guardian permission will be obtained at least two weeks prior to field trips to the preserves and SJSU. Human Subject Protocols (used for surveying program participants) are in review with SJSU's Institutional Review Board (Protocol #25-253) and will be completed prior to program start dates planned in Fall '26.

**What is the lifetime of this project? If applicable, describe plans for operating and maintaining the project in the future.**

The direct lifetime of the project is two years (approximately June '26 to June '28). After this period, we will work with interested partner school administration, teachers, and afterschool program managers to share our program curriculum after the grant period concludes, as workshops are designed to be easily deliverable to groups of 25-30 students.

We have a strong working relationship with SJSU's Environmental Resource Center in SJSU's Environmental Studies Department, a CommUniverCity partner since 2017. We plan to partner with them and other interested departmental faculty to provide continuing support for the project. We will share the NEST and LET'S GO curricula with partner school classroom and physical education teachers.

Growing Sustainably and its next iteration, COOL PLANET, is central to CommUniverCity's mission, providing student touchpoints for environmental education and community-building to neighborhood residents community for over 20 years. It will continue to exist as long as CommUniverCity exists but external funding is necessary for it to continue its present and expanded reach. The OSA funding supports critical project staff and faculty guidance that make the program's content and outcomes particularly impactful, without which program delivery would be only occasional and based largely on volunteers with limited faculty supervision and classroom integration.

**Describe the project's readiness for implementation.**

Growing Sustainably, a signature CommUniverCity SJSU program, is well-positioned to implement COOL PLANET, a new initiative that connects K-8 students to nature through outdoor, active, and educational NGSS-aligned climate resilience activities. The program is grounded in two decades of CommUniverCity's experience delivering evidence-based, community-engaged environmental education and benefits from a robust infrastructure of university, school, and community partnerships. CommUniverCity has a proven track record of success implementing OSA-funded programs that build environmental awareness and community climate resilience. Since 2017, its suite of programs has reached over 5,100 Central San José residents, with 365 SJSU students contributing over 13,000 hours of service. With continued support from OSA since 2022, Growing Sustainably has successfully engaged more than 1,000 K-8 students through 80+ environmental education workshops, seven field trips, and multiple school-based fairs. These experiences have consistently demonstrated measurable increases in students' environmental literacy, connection to nature, and understanding of local environmental challenges. The proposed COOL PLANET initiative builds on this success and is ready for immediate implementation.

Curriculum development is already underway by CommUniverCity staff and SJSU Environmental Studies faculty, in collaboration with community partners and local teachers, ensuring lessons are locally relevant, age-appropriate, and aligned with California and international education standards. However, funding will end in December 2025. Partnerships with participating Central San José schools and afterschool programs have been confirmed, and field trip coordination with SJSU and local wildlife refuges is in progress. The program's two components: NEST (Nurturing Environmental Skills Together) and LET'S GO (Where the Environment and Sports Meet) have clear implementation plans, CUC staff training protocols, and evaluation methods based on prior Growing Sustainably research. Piloting of the LET'S GO draft curriculum is underway with Santee Elementary School in San Jose.

If awarded the grant, detailed program planning will begin in Summer 2026, with curriculum finalization and staff training completed by Fall 2026. A team of three CommUniverCity staff, one SJSU Environmental Studies faculty advisor, and 5 trained SJSU student educator interns will deliver the workshops and field trips across Central San José and within OSA District boundaries. Staff will undergo a two-week training in curriculum delivery, safety protocols, and evaluation methods before implementation. Existing school and community partnerships ensure that recruitment, scheduling, and logistics are already in place, allowing COOL PLANET to launch smoothly and on time.

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## Project Budget

Budget Summary - Grant Request & Budget Summary - Matching Funds

**Grant request: Personnel**

\$52,569.00

**Grant request: Contracted Services**

\$0.00

**Grant request: Supplies / Materials**

\$4,000.00

**Grant request: Other Direct Costs**

\$5,930.00

**Grant request: Indirect Costs**

\$12,500.00

**Total Matching Funds**

\$18,753.00

**Total Budget**

\$74,999.00

**Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:**

UGP\_Project\_Budget\_Template 2025.xlsx

Materials and Budget Template (item #9) found here: <https://www.openspaceauthority.org/programs/grant.html#Materials>

**Provide a brief budget narrative to explain the expenses listed in each of the budget categories (e.g. Personnel).**

Senior Personnel (\$9,570 Direct Request; \$13,568 Match)

The Principal Investigator (PI), Katherine Cushing, Director of SJSU's School of Planning, Policy, and Environmental Studies is requesting approximately 3 days or 0.14 person months of summer support per year at her CSU contracted rate. Dr. Cushing will provide 8 days or 0.36 person months during summer as in-kind. The PI will be responsible for managing the overall project design and implementation, overseeing senior project staff, and hiring/managing project personnel, including students.

SJSU Faculty (\$4,482 Direct Request)

Jacqueline Taylor, a Lecturer in the School of Planning, Policy, and Environmental Studies Faculty, will devote requesting approximately ~4 days or 0.18 person months per project year at their CSU contracted rate. She has extensive wildlife conservation expertise, having completed field projects studying the following animals: Western burrowing owl, giant garter snake, western pond turtle, Swainson's hawk, San Joaquin kit fox, and California red-legged frog. Ms. Taylor will oversee the work and provide quality control on community engaged learning students in their Environmental Studies courses as they prepare and deliver workshops and lessons on wildlife biology and conservation and environmental science with a vocabulary-building emphasis to local k-8 students.

Other SJSU Personnel (\$38,220 Direct Request: \$5,185 Match)

SJSU Faculty-HR & Budget Analyst, Matthew Snyder (Direct Request: \$2,171)

The Budget Analyst, Matthew Snyder, will assist with project personnel appointments, purchasing, budget tracking, and budget reconciliation with SJSU Research Foundation post-award staff. He will work ~2 days on the project each year.

Associate Community Director, Alicia Allan (\$2,193 Direct Request; \$5,185 Match)

The Associate Community Director, Alicia Allan, will work ~4 hours/week for 8 weeks in year 1 & ~4 hours/week ~8 weeks in year 2. She will commit ~9 hours/week for ~10 weeks as in-kind. The Associate Community Director will be responsible for helping Program Manager recruit partner schools and afterschool programs, supporting workshop and event implementation, administering project assessment and project reporting.

Graduate Students (\$34,055 Direct Request):

Program Manager, Jose Paolo Asuncion (\$24,575 Direct Request)

We request approximately 20 hours for 25 weeks in Y1, 20 hours for ~24 weeks during summer for the Program Manager. The Program Manager is the on-the-ground lead on lesson content, and workshop, as well as special event planning and execution. This person is the focal point of Cool Planet's education programs. Main duties and responsibilities include recruiting and supporting classroom teachers, students, and residents to participate in education programs; planning and executing workshop and field trip activities at partner schools and with program partners; establishing and maintaining community partnerships with local organizations; coordinating and/or teaching workshops; establishing and maintaining participant tracking and other data collection systems; evaluating and reporting on program results; and creating and implementing

semi-annual workplans.

Project Coordinator, Sophia Smith (\$9,480 Direct Request)

One SJSU graduate student will be hired, at a rate of \$20 per hour to work 10 hours per week for ~23 weeks during the academic year. Duties of the project coordinator will include, but not be limited to the following:

Under direction of Program Manager, supporting development of wildlife, climate resilience, and general environmental education lesson content and delivering lessons to community members. Centrally coordinating and executing project logistics, including traveling to multiple downtown sites; arranging for bus transportation; and obtaining field trip permission forms, volunteer screening, etc. Managing and effectively communicating with groups of SJSU student service learners and community members. Creating program materials (e.g., handouts, journals), Supporting Program Manager by collecting and inputting program implementation data.

Fringe Benefits (\$4,779 Direct Request)

The Department of Health and Human Services reviews and approves fringe benefit rates, which are effective as of July 1 of each year. Rates are subject to change. The actual approved rates at the time of award will be applied.

A standard 5% cost of living adjustment (COLA) is factored in and applied to subsequent years to the following budget categories: Personnel.

Other Direct Costs (\$9,930 Direct Request)

Materials and Supplies (\$4,000 Direct Request) – Funds are requested for supplies (e.g., staff uniforms, volunteer t-shirts, paper, color printer ink, notebooks, pens/pencils, specialty printing and set up, staff uniforms) and other items needed to support program development and delivery (clipboards, whiteboards).

Other

Food/Refreshments (\$2,000 Direct Request) – Funds are requested for (career fairs, workshops, program recruiting and thank you events, 4/year).

Environmental Education Program Providers for field trip hosting/school visits (\$2,000 Direct Request) – Funds are requested for to support staff time and materials for hosting four field trips (two per program year) to either the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory's Coyote Creek Bird Banding Station, a partner school site, or a nature field site within the OSA service area.

Travel/Transportation (\$1,930 Direct Request) – Funds are requested for buses to transport school children from school to field trip sites.

Facilities and Administrative Costs (\$12,500 Direct Request)

The sponsor-mandated rate is 20% of modified total direct costs.

**Award Amount: The Board reserves the right to award partial funding on projects. If your project were to receive partial funding, what would this mean for your project?**

Partial funding for the project would decrease the number of participants who could participate in the program. If the awarded amount is less than 50% of the initial request, CommUniverCity may only be able to provide one of the two planned program portfolios (i.e., either NEST or Let's Go but not both).

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## Project Goals

**Describe the specific problems, issues, or unserved needs the project will address.**

COOL PLANET addresses the environmental education needs of underserved Central San Jose residents by integrating instruction, physical activity, and community engagement into cohesive, engaging, and evidence-based programming. It has three overarching goals.

**1. Increase Environmental Literacy & Foster K-8 Students' Connection to Nature**

Children living in highly urbanized areas like Central San José face limited access to safe parks and green space which contributes to low environmental literacy and reduced physical activity. Research shows that during childhood and adolescence, exposure to nature fosters empathy, emotional regulation, and long-term stewardship behaviors (Barrable, 2019; Price et al., 2022; Viejo et al., 2018).

Despite its demonstrated importance, environmental education (EE) remains largely underrepresented in California schools: only 13% of all public schools have successfully integrated EE into their curriculum, even though 80% of educators express a desire to do so (Lawrence Hall of Science, 2024). In addition, the disproportionate effects of climate-induced challenges such as flooding, air pollution, and heat exposure on urban and underserved communities highlight the urgent need for accessible, experiential, and locally relevant environmental education (Shutaleva, 2023). Recent research conducted by CommUniverCity staff (See Additional Documents) indicate that our partner teachers feel pressed for time to include environmental education, especially experiential and hands-on activities, into their instruction and expressed the need and desire to for co-curricular programming like Growing Sustainably in their classrooms.

Recognizing that experiential, environmental education is often underrepresented in traditional classroom instruction, the program fills a critical gap by embedding experiential, NGSS-and Common Core-aligned environmental learning into the daily rhythm of students' lives. This dual-delivery model ensures that more students, regardless of scheduling, transportation, or socioeconomic barriers, have opportunities to connect with nature and learn climate resilience skills. COOL PLANET will deliver NEST workshops during regular school hours and LET'S GO sessions as an afterschool program.

**2. Reduce Barriers to Accessing Nature in Under-resourced Urban Neighborhoods.** In San Jose, low-income neighborhoods, households earning less than 75% of the city's median income (~\$117,000) have 33% less park space than high-income neighborhoods (Trust for Public Land, 2023). Students in these communities are disproportionately from historically marginalized demographic groups. More specifically, for four of the partner schools we work with most regularly, the proportion of students living in households that qualify for free or reduced lunch ranged from 72-94%, with the proportion of Latino/Hispanic students ranging from 91-97% and the percentage of English learners ranging from 53-75% students (Niche, 2025; California Department of Education, 2025; Census Reporter, 2025). In spring '25 focus groups CommUniverCity conducted with two classes of partner school fourth graders, being able to get to green spaces was identified by them as a barrier to them being able to experience nature.

COOL PLANET addresses these inequities by providing structured, hands-on outdoor environmental learning experiences directly to K through 8th grade students in their classrooms and near their homes. By bringing nature-based activities and field trips to schools and nearby green spaces, COOL PLANET ensures that children in low-income and racially diverse neighborhoods can safely engage with nature, build connections to their environment, and experience the physical, social, and mental health benefits of experiential outdoor learning. We will also integrate more literacy-focused activities to support English language learning in our workshop materials.

**3. Promote Environmental Stewardship through Soccer.**

COOL PLANET uses the universal language of play (via soccer) to cultivate environmental stewardship among youth. Research and program evaluations from previous CommUniverCity initiatives show that children are able to enhance their gross motor skills via a series of several workshops/classes. By combining the excitement of soccer with hands-on environmental learning. The COOL PLANET transforms an activity students already love into a powerful teaching tool for climate awareness, teamwork, and collective responsibility.

Recent reviews of academic research on the benefits of participating in outdoor sports and activities have shown positive effects on various environmental competencies such as connectedness to nature, awareness, sensitivity, empathy, behavior and stewardship (Eigenschenk et al., 2019; Klaperski-van der Wal, 2023). In line with this, our recent findings from a previous garden education program further reinforces the desire for innovative environmental education programs. Our researchers asked students about their favorite activities to do outside in nature. Several participants of the Growing Sustainability program in Spring 2025 responded saying, "We like when we can play games outside like tag and freeze tag" (Barry, 2025 in progress). Others contributed that they "like to play hide and seek with friends," and "kick soccer balls around" (Barry, in progress). One comment made by a partner teacher to CommUniverCity team this summer was that abstract weather concepts, like El Nino, were difficult for students to grasp. Similarly, physical phenomena, such as climate change and weather patterns, may be too large to be relatable to this group of students. LET'S GO addresses this connection challenge through a fun mixture of play and instruction.

How does this project serve the community?

**Number of people served**

480

**Number of youth served**

480

**Number of programs provided**

80

**Other Grantee Goal #1 (optional)**

70% of responding program participants report increasing their knowledge and understanding of local fauna and flora.

**Other Grantee Goal #2 (optional)**

70% of responding program participants report increasing their knowledge and understanding of climate change impacts and potential responses.

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## Impact

**Describe the lasting impact of the project. Please include whether the program is open to the public and whether any materials developed will be available to the public.**

Since 2017, Growing Sustainably's suite of programs has reached over 5,100 Central San José residents, with 365 SJSU students contributing over 13,000 hours of service. With continued support from OSA since 2022, Growing Sustainably has successfully engaged more than 1,000 K-8 students through 80+ environmental education workshops, seven field trips, and multiple school-based Green STEM fairs. These experiences have consistently demonstrated a rise in students' environmental literacy, connection to nature, feelings of stewardship, and understanding of local environmental challenges. The proposed COOL PLANET initiative builds on this success.

Below, we provide direct evidence from recent analysis of Growing Sustainably participants on the project's outcomes from teachers and students over the past two years. We expect similar increases in environmental knowledge, attitudes and behaviors from the proposed project participants. Additionally, program participants will learn about climate resilient behaviors and be able to connect more deeply to nature through physical fitness. These impacts are reflected in the Goals section of the application.

"The Growing Sustainably garden program and pollinator lessons are favorites that leave a lasting impact [with the students] . . . [their] reflections reinforce learning and language development." –Ms. Antonini, 2nd Grade Teacher, McKinley Elementary School

"Thank you so much for your work with us. My students are very immersed in nature now, thanks to you!" –Ms. Doan, 2nd Grade Teacher, McKinley Elementary School

98% of 118 student in Growing Sustainably representing three partner elementary schools reported that the program increased their appreciation for plants, animals, and nature. During that semester's Green STEM Fair, 79% of 84 participants were able to identify two or more environmental careers they were interested in pursuing (e.g., oceanographer). –Growing Sustainably Staff Assessment, Spring '24

89% of 42 Selma Olinder Elementary School students participating on a field trip to Olinder Park (an accessible greenspace adjacent to their school) reported that they learned how to use binoculars; 73% reported that they cared more about keeping nature and parks clean as a result of the field trip. As one student put it "Today was exciting because I got to use real binoculars for the first time. I have only used fake ones before." – Growing Sustainably Staff Assessment, Spring '24

74% (n=70) of Growing Sustainably's 2nd and 3rd grade students correctly identified four or more of the five things plants need to survive. 83% (n=87) reported learning two or more new gardening or environmental science skills through the program. –Growing Sustainably Staff Assessment, Fall '24

Following the Growing Sustainably program, 92% (n=113) of student participants rated their appreciation for nature at a 4 or 5 out of 5.–Growing Sustainably Staff Assessment, Spring '25

Research in progress at San Jose State investigating children's connection to nature (CNI) using an evidence-based questionnaire (Chang & Monroe, 2012) indicates that fourth graders at our partner schools have a moderate level of connection to nature and that Growing Sustainably's six-week experiential environmental education program can increase it, with mean CNI scores increasing from 4.23 to 4.60 on self-reported a one to five scale (Barry, in progress). Overall CNI scores for 66% of 29 students (n=29) increased from the pre- to post-assessment, indicating a growth

in students' enjoyment, empathy, sense of responsibility, and sense of oneness with the outdoors. (Barry, in progress).

Just as importantly, focus group results provide insight into how 4th graders at our partner schools think about their personal connection to nature and the environment. For example, focus group participants shared that being outside makes them feel "happy," "calm," and "peaceful" (Barry, in progress). Comments also indicate that students are able to and enjoy apply ecological science concepts (e.g., plant life cycles) to group games. Others salient student remarks emphasize their affinity with being outdoors and acknowledgement of similarities between plants, animals, and humans: "Learning in different places in nature makes learning fun" and "We get bored inside. We like to be outside to see new natural things that we haven't seen with our own eyes before, but have heard about"; and "Trees feel things and so do I because we both breathe oxygen and see the world around us." (Barry, in progress).

Growing Sustainably's model of education delivery and applied research findings have been and will continue to be shared widely within the education, environmental non-profit, and municipal governance sectors. A teacher surveys and interview report on the science curriculum used by Central San Jose elementary and middle school teachers on the integration of environmental studies/nature education integration into science instruction was recently shared with the Northern California Environmental Justice Network listserv. We have also shared it with partner school teachers and principals and an environmental justice working group organized by the CSU. A similar outreach strategy will be used for COOL PLANET.

Lesson plans for NEST and LET's GO will be posted and freely available on the CommUniverCity website and by written request to CommUniverCity staff. Members of the public will be invited to attend program update and wrap up meetings through regularly scheduled CommUniverCity Steering Committee meetings, which are held monthly. CommUniverCity will host tables at several public SJSU sustainability-focused events (e.g., Earth Day) and the Growing Sustainably program will be featured in our talking points.

Please see the Documents section for photos of recent Growing Sustainably events that demonstrate our positive impact on community environmental education in San Jose.

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## Climate Resilience

**How does this project enhance and/or raise awareness about climate resilience? Please include any metrics that can be used to help quantify or understand the climate benefits of the project.**

Through activities such as NEST's Cool Lifestyles lesson, students will use personal fitness trackers to learn how time in green spaces affects heart rate. Additional lesson content will involve understanding other biometrics and how taking care of your body by eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep strengthens personal resilience. Moreover, another important aspect of the lesson will involve talking about the concept of empathy and caring for others, a concept vital to climate resilience for human and non-human communities alike. In LET'S GO sessions, planned water breaks between drills and debriefing sessions after workshops will cover drinking water and resting in shade on hot days.

As part of another the NEST lesson Be Prepared, participating students will learn how to make family 'go bags' containing important items for families to take with them in case of a flood evacuation (e.g., list of family member names and contact information, map, flashlight, radio, etc.). Part of the supplies budget for the proposed program includes providing several students each lesson with a sample bag.

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## Community Engagement / Stakeholder Support / Community Building

**Describe the community support and/or community engagement process. Please upload any community support letters in the Documents Upload section below.**

COOL PLANET is built on strong community partnerships that ensure the program is locally relevant, culturally responsive, and sustainable. Our work is supported by key stakeholders in Central San José, including the City of San José, Sacred Heart Nativity Middle School, Santee Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, and Sylvaldale Middle School, all of which provide guidance on program design, student recruitment, and site access for workshops and field trips. Partnerships with environmental organizations, such as the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory, and Talon Ecological Research Group provide expertise, field sites, and experiential learning opportunities that allow students to engage directly with native ecosystems and climate resilience practices.

The program development process emphasizes collaboration with teachers, school administrators, environmental organizations, and community leaders to ensure COOL PLANET activities meet the needs and interests of students and families. Input from these partners shapes lesson topics, field trip experiences, and hands-on activities, ensuring alignment with both educational standards and local priorities. More specifically, CommUniverCity staff conducted interviews and written surveys with nine Central San Jose schoolteachers to better understand the curriculum used for science instruction and its relationship to environmental and nature-themed education. Their input is reflected directly into the proposed project design (e.g., focus on English language learners, more direct physical activity, emphasis on animals and ecosystems) By integrating community feedback and leveraging existing relationships, COOL PLANET not only strengthens environmental literacy and stewardship among youth but also fosters ongoing engagement and investment from schools, families, and neighborhood organizations.

Through these partnerships, COOL PLANET creates a network of support that extends beyond the classroom, connecting students to local experts, natural spaces, and community resources. This engagement ensures that the program is responsive to community needs, encourages family participation, and contributes to building long-term climate resilience in Central San José. Please see our nine letters of support from stakeholders representing four sectors (government, schools, preserve managers, research organizations, and residents) that demonstrate strong community engagement in the Documents Section of the application.

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## Underserved Communities

**Describe how the project addresses open space needs for sensitive populations such as residents of park-poor neighborhoods, underserved, or disadvantaged communities, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, or is located within an under-resourced community.**

COOL PLANET will support the neighborhoods and schools surrounding the Highway 101 and Highway 280 interchange within 2 miles of the SJSU campus, and is focused both on creating opportunities for underserved youth to access and benefit from open space as well as introducing them to the wide variety of soccer exercises that are connected to nature and the environment. The residents we work with live in neighborhoods that overlap with OSA's Deep Engagement Community #3 (Olson et al., 2015).

CommUniverCity focuses its efforts in the underserved neighborhoods of Central San Jose, primarily in Open Space Authority Districts 2, 3, 6, and 7. All six schools that we regularly work with (i.e., Olinder, Anne Darling, Washington, Santee, Sacred Heart Nativity, and Lowell) serve predominantly Hispanic/Latino student bodies, who comprise roughly 80–95% of the student population (CA Dept of Education Dataquest, 2023). The percentage of students categorized as English-learners is very high, between 45 to 72 percent across the public schools we work with (similar data not available for Sacred Heart because it is a private school (CA Dept of Education Dataquest, 2023). Moreover, the economic need of this community is substantial. The percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch percentages, a proxy for low-income households, are between 70–80% at our partner public schools (CA Dept of Education Dataquest, 2023). A significant percentage of k-8 students in the schools that partner with CommUniverCity perform below the state average in English, math, and science. For example, eight percent of Santee Elementary school students met grade level standards for math, compared to 36% statewide; 16% of students met grade level standards for English (state average of 16%); and 5% met the state grade level standards for science (state average of 31%) (GreatSchool.org, 2025).

COOL PLANET is focused on low-income census tracts where a significant number of households have low vehicle access, high population density living in apartments and a high percentage of households that are linguistically isolated. Due to parental concerns, local parks are not often viewed by residents as safe places to recreate. The geographic service area and the populations to be served were selected based on community-identified needs, long established cross-sector service delivery partnerships, and grassroots interest and engagement in meeting neighborhood needs.

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## Organizational Capacity

**Briefly describe the organization and its ability to successfully implement this project. This might include successful past projects, key staff qualifications, financial resources, etc.**

CommUniverCity is a unique community-university-city partnership that engages local residents, faculty and students at San Jose State University, and local project partner organizations in learning projects that accomplish neighborhood-defined goals. Formally established in 2005, it is the flagship program for community engagement at SJSU. We focus our efforts in the underserved neighborhoods of Central San Jose, which is home to about 10% of the City of San Jose's residents. CommUniverCity believes everyone deserves to live in vibrant and healthy communities. Our project partners include neighborhood associations, parent groups at schools, thirteen k-12 schools, after school programs, community centers, food distribution sites, libraries, over a dozen City of San Jose departments, twenty five community and nonprofit organizations, and numerous SJSU academic departments.

Key staff working on the project ensure its successful implementation. The project lead for this project is CommUniverCity's Senior Advisor and former Executive Director, Katherine Cushing. Dr. Cushing is the Professor and Director of the School of Planning, Policy, and Environmental Studies at San Jose State University. Professor Cushing has worked at SJSU for over 22 years and has successfully executed over 1.2 million dollars in project contracts. Jaqueline Taylor is an SJSU faculty member and environmental consultant with extensive experience working with local wildlife species. Jose Paolo Asuncion (Program Manager) is an experienced youth soccer coach and an MS candidate in the Environmental Studies program at SJSU. Similarly, Sophia Smith (Project Coordinator) is an after school program manager and an MS student in the SJSU ENVS MS program. She is also fluent in Spanish.

CommUniverCity's environmental education program has been regularly delivered to partner schools and afterschool programs for over 20 years. Over the past 9 years, CommUniverCity has been recognized over a dozen times at the national, state, regional, and local levels for bringing meaningful positive change to local neighborhoods in the areas of community health and the environment. Most recently, CommUniverCity was presented with two awards in 2022 by Catalyze SV (Catalyzing Community Leader and Catalyzing Engagement Nonprofit Award). The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) awarded CommUniverCity its Outstanding Leader in Experiential Education award (Non-profit Organization Category) in 2019, for our innovative and community-driven education projects in San Jose.

CommUniverCity's fiscal sponsor is the SJSU Research Foundation. The Foundation provides professional grant management services to our organization in the areas of staff hiring, payroll, budgeting, accounting, auditing, and insurance and has effectively managed CommUniverCity's previous three grants with the Open Space Authority. Moreover, the project also includes enlisting the services of Matthew Snyder, long-time HR and budget analyst for CommUniverCity's Growing Sustainably grant work.

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## Leadership & Innovation

**Describe how this project employs innovative approaches or encourages collaboration and partnerships.**

COOL PLANET’s program design employs several innovative approaches. First, by co-developing an updated curriculum created with direct input from local teachers, COOL PLANET lesson content is both relevant and responsive to the needs of the community. The proposed project combines relatable nature experiences with academic support. More specifically, content in all our programs will emphasize vocabulary development for English language learners. Related research shows that concept-oriented reading (i.e., focused on a science or social science topic students find engaging) that integrates science and reading through activities, increases reading comprehension, effective use of reading strategies, and motivation (Wigfield et al., 2008).

A second innovation is how the program connects k-8th grade students with college student role models. COOL PLANET will provide 40 participants with the opportunity to experience a live SJSU Men’s Soccer game on the college’s campus. Participants will also gain exposure to SJSU student interns who have backgrounds similar to them. Recent census data indicates that the college achievement level in our service area for adults is 16%. Having k-8 students interact with college students and visiting the SJSU campus, which is the closest 4-year institution to where they live, provides a supportive setting that lays the foundation for later educational achievement. The SJSU students represent diverse backgrounds and reinforce the idea that college is accessible and attainable. Through our experience spearheading community-engaged learning projects, we know that the college students benefit just as much, if not more, from interacting with our youngest learners in the form of honing group work, project management, public speaking and interpersonal communication skills. They also gain confidence as ambassadors for the larger university community.

A third COOL PLANET innovation will be the implementation of soccer activities with students at partner schools. Soccer was an activity cited by many of last year’s fourth grade participants as a way they connect with nature and the outdoors. LET’S GO soccer drills will promote this connection, while also leading them in fun, active play that they reported enjoying just as much, if not more than, more conventional nature experiences. Research indicates that learning through movement improves academic performance in elementary schoolchildren (Patrigna et. al, 2022), however, very little field data exists on how combining sport and environmental education impacts subsequent knowledge, behavior, and attitudes. This innovation builds on the work of a previous CommUniverCity project, Sammy Play, that showed k-2 students who engaged in several afterschool physical activity sessions with Kinesiology students improved several gross motor skills (e.g., throwing, running, kicking).

Cross-sector collaboration is the final innovative aspect of the proposed project. For every CommUniverCity project, including Growing Sustainably, SJSU, the City of San Jose, and local partners all play equal supporting roles. By combining the energy and expertise of SJSU faculty and students, City Departments, and schools and residents, we obtain results that are greater than the sum of their parts. For example, in addition to having grade school children benefit directly from environmental science instruction, SJSU students benefit by improving their teamwork and communication skills. SJSU students taking upper division environmental studies courses will serve as classroom helpers for both NEST and Let’s Go programming. The City of San Jose benefits by having its youngest residents learn about and engage in environmental knowledge-building and healthy physical activity. Local partner organizations, such as SJSU Athletics, involved in soccer can engage in community outreach with a different population and help inspire the next generation of environmental leaders.

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## Documents Section

**Document Uploads (please combine into one file if possible)**

Letters of Support Combined.pdf

**Additional files (if needed)**

Cool Planet Program Deliverables.docx

**Additional files (if needed)**

Growing Sustainably Workshop and Event Photos.docx

**Submitted Date - Internal**

## Summary Field:

Name: Average Score (no bonus)

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: average

Field: Base Score Total

Decimal: 2

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
  - isComplete | is | true

#### Summary Field:

Name: Total Count of Submitted Reviews

Form: Staff Review

Summary Type: count

Field: NONE

Decimal: NONE

Currency: No

Description/Help Text: NONE

Short Name: NONE

Field Purpose: NONE

Filter:

- ALL:
  - isComplete | is | true
  - Folder | is | Submitted

#### Program Application: File Attachments

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Please upload a detailed version of your budget by accessing the link below:

[UGP\\_Project\\_Budget\\_Template 2025.xlsx](#)

Document Uploads (please combine into one file if possible)

Letters of Support Combined.pdf

**Additional files (if needed)**

Cool Planet Program Deliverables.docx

**Additional files (if needed)**

Growing Sustainably Workshop and Event Photos.docx

Instructions

**Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority | 2025 Urban Grant Program**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Please provide a detailed project budget. More information, including a detailed list of direct and indirect costs, is available in the Urban Grant Program Guidelines (<http://www.openspaceauthority.org/urban>). A sample budget is included in a separate tab.

The Budget Form in a separate tab in this document. The budget categories are listed below with a description of each field.

**PROJECT**

**Project Name:** The name of the project

**Organization:** The name of the organization requesting funding

**PERSONNEL**

Estimate employee and volunteer time directly related to the project. Hourly rates for employees can include salary plus fringe benefits, payroll tax, etc, but can not include indirect costs. Note: please list position titles only.

**Position title:** Title of each employee working directly on this project. Note: please list position title only.

**Description of Budget Item:** The amount of time (e.g. hours) and the hourly rate for each employee. Hourly rates can include salary plus fringe benefits, payroll taxes, etc, but can NOT include indirect costs. Please provide adequate detail to show how totals were calculated.

**Grant Request:** The amount requested from this Grant (if applicable).

**Matching Funds:** The amount funded through matching funds (if applicable).

**Total:** This column will be automatically calculated.

**CONTRACTED SERVICES**

Labor, supplies, and materials to be provided by consultants/contractors for project implementation.

**Item:** The item listed

**Description of Budget Item:** Please provide a description of the item with adequate detail to show how totals were calculated.

## Instructions

<b>Grant Request:</b>	The amount requested from this Grant (if applicable).
<b>Matching Funds:</b>	The amount funded through matching funds (if applicable).
<b>Total:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.
<b>SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Supplies and materials that are <u>directly related</u> to the project.	
<b>Item:</b>	The item listed
<b>Description of Budget Item:</b>	Please provide a description of the item with adequate detail to show how totals were calculated.
<b>Grant Request:</b>	The amount requested from this Grant (if applicable).
<b>Matching Funds:</b>	The amount funded through matching funds (if applicable).
<b>Total:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.
<b>OTHER DIRECT COSTS</b>	
Other direct costs that are <u>directly related</u> to the project. This might include travel, service fees for fiscal sponsorship, or newly-acquired equipment.	
<b>Item:</b>	The item listed
<b>Description of Budget Item:</b>	Please provide a description of the item with adequate detail to show how totals were calculated.
<b>Grant Request:</b>	The amount requested from this Grant (if applicable).
<b>Matching Funds:</b>	The amount funded through matching funds (if applicable).
<b>Total:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.
<b>INDIRECT COSTS</b>	
Indirect costs are eligible for grant funding only for 501(c)(3) Nonprofits and are <u>limited to 20%</u> of grant funding. Indirect costs cannot be counted as matching funds.	
<b>Item:</b>	20% Administrative overhead for Nonprofits
<b>Description of Budget Item:</b>	Any additional description
<b>Grant Request:</b>	The amount requested from this Grant (if applicable).
	The percent of grant funding
<b>Total:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.

## Instructions

<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	
<b>Grant Request:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.
<b>Matching Funds:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.
<b>Total:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.
<b>COST SHARE</b>	
A minimum of 25% of grant request in matching funds is required. A project budget with less than 25% of the grant request in matching funds does NOT meet the grant requirements and will not be considered for funding.	
<b>Matching Funds:</b>	This column will be automatically calculated.
<b>MATCHING FUNDS</b>	
Please describe the source of matching funds listed above. This might include cash match (e.g. grantee's own funds, donations, grants, etc) or in-kind match (non-cash contribution such as volunteer time).	
<b>Source:</b>	The source of funding (e.g. In-kind contributions, Organization's contributions, Donations, Grant, etc.).
<b>Description:</b>	Any additional description.
<b>Type of Match (cash or in-kind)</b>	Indicate whether the funding is cash or in-kind match.
<b>Status of match (Secured or Pending)</b>	Indicate whether the matching funds are secured or pending.
<b>Matching Funds:</b>	The amount funded through matching funds.

Budget Form

Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority   2025 Urban Grant Program							
PROJECT BUDGET							
Highlighted cells are automatically calculated.							
PROJECT							
<b>Project Name:</b>		CommUniverCity SJSU: Cool Planet					
<b>Organization:</b>		San Jose State University Research Foundation					
PERSONNEL							
Estimate employee and volunteer time <u>directly related</u> to the project. Hourly rates for employees can include salary plus fringe benefits, payroll tax, etc, but can not include indirect costs. Note: please list position titles only.							
Position Title	Description of Budget Item	Grant Request (\$)	Matching Funds (\$)	Total			
Principal Investigator	Summer salary , 3-days per year starting at \$827.34/day year 1 (24 hours at \$103.42/hour year 1). Managing the overall project design and implementation, overseeing senior project staff, and hiring project personnel including students	\$ 5,597.00		\$ 5,597.00			
Principal Investigator	Approximately 8-days per year at \$827.34/day (64 hours at \$103.42/hour)		\$ 13,568	\$ 13,568.00			
Faculty Lead	Approximately 4-days per year at \$505.85/day (~34.56 hours at \$63.23/hour). Prepare wildlife biology curriculum for NEST and oversee and provide quality control on community engaged learning students in their Environmental Studies courses as they deliver workshops on local wildlife biology and conservation to local k-8 students.	\$ 4,930.00		\$ 4,930.00	2023.4		249.2434
HR & Budget Analyst	Approximately 2-days per year at \$423.53/day (~20 hours at \$52.94/hour). The Budget Analyst, will assist with project personnel appointments, purchasing, budget tracking, and budget reconciliation with SJSU Research Foundation post-award staff	\$ 2,388.00		\$ 2,388.00	423.53	52.941176	

Budget Form

Community Director	Approximately 8 days per year at \$227.36/day (~64 hours at \$28.42/hour). The Associate Community Director will be responsible for helping Program Manager recruit partner schools and afterschool programs, supporting workshop and event implementation, administering project assessment and project reporting.	\$ 2,193.00		\$ 2,193.00			
Community Director	Approximately 10 days per year at \$227/day (~88 hours at \$28.42/hour)		\$ 5,185.00	\$ 5,185.00		4.37	
Education Program Manager	\$25/hour for 20 hours/week for 25 weeks during the academic year. This person is the focal point of Cool Planet's education programs. Main duties and responsibilities include recruiting and supporting classroom teachers, students, and residents to participate in education programs; planning and executing workshop and field trip activities at partner schools and with program partners; establishing and maintaining community partnerships with local organizations; coordinating and/or teaching workshops; establishing and maintaining participant tracking and other data collection.	\$ 27,033.00		\$ 27,033.00			
Student Program Coordinator	\$20/hour for 10 hours/week for approximately 23 weeks during the academic year. Under direction of Program Manager, supporting development of wildlife, climate resilience, and general environmental education lesson content and delivering lessons to community members, Centrally coordinating and executing project logistics, including traveling to multiple downtown sites; arranging for bus transportation; and obtaining field trip permission forms, volunteer screening, etc.	\$ 10,428.00		\$ 10,428.00			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			

Budget Form

				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL</b>		\$ 52,569.00	\$ 18,753.00	\$ 71,322.00			
<b>CONTRACTED SERVICES</b>							
Labor, supplies, and materials to be provided by consultants/contractors for project implementation.							
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description of Budget Item</b>	<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
				\$ -			
<b>TOTAL CONTRACTED SERVICES</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -			
<b>SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS</b>							
Supplies and materials that are <u>directly related</u> to the project.							
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description of Budget Item</b>	<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>			
Materials and Supplies	Staff uniforms, volunteer t-shirts, paper, color printer ink, notebooks, pens/pencils, specialty printing and set up, staff uniforms) and other items needed to support program development and delivery (clipboards, whiteboards).	\$ 4,000.00		\$ 4,000.00			
				\$ -			



Budget Form

				\$ -		
				\$ -		
				\$ -		
<b>TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS</b>		\$ 5,930.00	\$ -	\$ 5,930.00		
<b>INDIRECT COSTS</b>						
Indirect costs are eligible for grant funding only for 501(c)(3) Nonprofits and are <u>limited to 20%</u> of grant funding. Indirect costs cannot be counted as matching funds.						
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description of Budget Item</b>	<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>		
20% Administrative overhead for Nonprofits		\$ 12,500.00	n/a	\$ 12,500.00		
<b>TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS</b>		\$ 12,500.00	n/a	\$ 12,500.00		
<b>PERCENT OF GRANT REQUEST</b>		<b>16.7%</b>	n/a	n/a		
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>						
		<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>		
<b>TOTALS</b>		\$ 74,999.00	\$ 18,753.00	\$ 93,752.00		
<b>COST SHARE</b>						
				<b>Matching Funds (%)</b>		
A minimum of 25% of grant request in matching funds may be required. This field is automatically calculated.				<b>25.0%</b>		
<b>MATCHING FUNDS</b>						
Please describe the source of matching funds listed above. The total matching funds listed here should match the total matching funds listed under Grand Total above. This might include cash match (e.g. grantee's own funds, donations, grants, etc) or in-kind match (non-cash contribution such as volunteer time).						
<b>Source</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Type of Match (cash or in-kind)</b>	<b>Status of match (Secured or Pending)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>		
Principal Investigator (time)	Approximately 8-days per year at \$827.34/day (64 hours at \$103.42/hour)	in-kind	Secured	\$ 13,568.00		

Budget Form

Community Director (time)	Approximately 11 days per year at \$227/day (~88 hours at \$28.42/hour)	in-kind	Secured	\$ 5,185.00			
<b>TOTAL MATCHING FUNDS</b>				<b>\$ 18,753.00</b>			



Sample Budget

				\$ -
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL</b>		\$ 15,000.00	\$ 5,692.00	\$ 20,692.00
<b>CONTRACTED SERVICES</b>				
Labor, supplies, and materials to be provided by consultants/contractors for project implementation.				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description of Budget Item</b>	<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Evaluation Consultant	20 hours @ \$100/hr. Consultant will design an evaluation of XYZ project and train staff on implementing the evaluation.	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
<b>TOTAL CONTRACTED SERVICES</b>		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
<b>SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS</b>				
Supplies and materials that are <u>directly related</u> to the project.				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description of Budget Item</b>	<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Training materials	Training binder and name badges for 50 volunteers @ \$10 per person	\$ 500.00		\$ 500.00



Sample Budget

				\$ -
				\$ -
				\$ -
<b>TOTAL OTHER DIRECT COSTS</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>INDIRECT COSTS</b>				
Indirect costs are eligible for grant funding only for 501(c)(3) Nonprofits and are <u>limited to 20%</u> of grant funding. Indirect costs cannot be counted as matching funds.				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Description of Budget Item</b>	<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>
10% Administrative overhead for Nonprofits		\$ 880.00	n/a	\$ 880.00
<b>TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS</b>		<b>\$ 880.00</b>	n/a	<b>\$ 880.00</b>
<b>PERCENT OF GRANT REQUEST</b>		<b>4.8%</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				
		<b>Grant Request (\$)</b>	<b>Matching Funds (\$)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>\$ 18,480.00</b>	<b>\$ 6,692.00</b>	<b>\$ 25,172.00</b>
<b>COST SHARE</b>				
				<b>Matching Funds (cash or in-kind)</b>
A minimum of 25% of grant request in matching funds may be required.				<b>36.21%</b>
<b>MATCHING FUNDS</b>				
Please describe the source of matching funds listed above. The total matching funds listed here should match the total matching funds listed under Grand Total above. This might include cash match (e.g. grantee's own funds, donations, grants, etc) or in-kind match (non-cash contribution such as volunteer time).				



October 2, 2025

Board of Directors and Staff  
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San José, CA 95119

Dear Members of the Board and Staff,

On behalf of the City of San José, I am writing to express my strong support for the *Growing Sustainably* team's application to the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority's Urban Grant Program. As Deputy City Manager and co-chair of CommUniverCity's Steering Committee, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the impact of their efforts to connect our youth, families, and neighborhoods with opportunities for environmental education, sustainability, and stewardship.

The proposed *Cool Planet* program represents an exciting expansion of this important work. By bringing climate change education, hands-on sustainability projects, and environmental leadership opportunities to elementary schools in San José's Districts 3 and 7, *Cool Planet* will engage students in meaningful, age-appropriate activities that foster lifelong awareness of and care for our natural environment. This aligns directly with the goals of San José's **Children and Youth Services Master Plan**, which emphasizes equipping our young people with the tools and knowledge they need to thrive, lead, and build a sustainable future for our community.

Moreover, the program complements the City's broader priorities around climate action, equity, and neighborhood vitality. By focusing on historically underserved schools and communities, *Cool Planet* ensures that the benefits of environmental education and open space stewardship are accessible to all children, not just a select few. This is the type of innovative, equity-driven programming that strengthens San José's partnerships and helps us achieve our collective vision for a more sustainable and resilient city.

I commend the *Growing Sustainably* team for their commitment and creativity, and I am confident that the *Cool Planet* program will deliver measurable benefits to our children, families, and neighborhoods. I respectfully urge the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority to support this worthy proposal.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing leadership in advancing open space, sustainability, and equity throughout our region.

Sincerely,



Angel Rios, Jr.  
Deputy City Manager, City of San José  
Co-Chair, CommUniverCity Steering Committee



9/30/2025

Open Space Authority of Santa Clara Valley  
Urban Grant Program Committee  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San José, CA 95119

Dear OSA Urban Grant administrators,

My Name is Ernest Alnas and I am the Student Life Coordinator here at Sacred Heart Nativity Schools, a small middle school here in San Jose. I am writing in support of CommUniverCity SJSU's Urban Grant Program proposal for Growing Sustainably, submitted by the San Jose State University Research Foundation. CommUniverCity has provided our students wonderful enrichments and experiences, and we wish to continue our partnership for many years to come.

Over these past 2 years, CommUniverCity has provided our students with meaningful, engaging enrichments that our students have really enjoyed. These experiences include trips to the Alviso Bird Observatory, Green STEM fairs, nature walks, SJSU tours and much more. We are also very excited to welcome a soccer club this Fall, all in partnership with them. Their Growing Sustainably program has been instrumental in teaching our kids the importance of environmental science through hands-on lessons and activities while also providing bilingual content so that they can be inclusive of our student population and no student feels left behind.

Lastly, we really enjoy CommUniverCity's model of having SJSU students being the teachers. Not only is this beneficial because the students are learning the most current content, but it also gives our students the opportunity to interact with college students and ask them questions so that our students can be exposed to the college experience with the hopes that we continue to foster a college-preparedness environment for our students.

We appreciate your consideration for CommUniverCity's Growing Sustainability application. I cant think of a more deserving organization. Thank you for your time.

Ernest Alnas  
Student Life Coordinator



**SYLVANDALE**  
MIDDLE SCHOOL

September 26th, 2025

Open Space Authority of Santa Clara Valley  
Urban Grant Program Committee  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San José, CA 95119

Dear Urban Grant Program Committee,

As a former Elementary and current ELD teacher within the Franklin McKinley School District, I am writing to share my strong support for the initiatives proposed by CommUniverCity SJSU, under the San Jose State University Research Foundation's Urban Grant Program. In my experience, partnering with the CommUniverCity group offers enriching programs as well as engaging activities to our students.

Specifically, my students have benefited from participating in the CommUniverCity garden education projects in which they learned about problem solving through an environmental science lens. These experiences enriched their understanding of outdoor science and imparted hands-on skills they can practice in their personal lives.

CommUniverCity's multilingual participants thoughtfully address the language needs of our students while celebrating cultural diversity, ensuring that the lessons are both accessible and relevant to their everyday lives. I was pleased and relieved that the lessons were accessible to my diverse cohort of students.

Additionally, the SJSU students in this program offer our students inspiring role models and help nurture a culture that encourages higher education within our school community.

I sincerely thank you for considering the Growing Sustainably grant proposal and wholeheartedly endorse this program.

Sincerely,

Stephany Cala  
Classroom Teacher  
Sylvandale Middle School FMSD  
stephany.cala@fmsd.org



San José  
Unified  
School District

Washington Elementary



October 6, 2025

LETTER OF SUPPORT

Preparing  
today's students  
to be the  
thinkers,  
leaders,  
and creators  
of tomorrow.

Open Space Authority of Santa Clara Valley  
Urban Grant Program Committee  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San José, CA 95119

Dear OSA Urban Grant administrators:

As the Principal at Washington Elementary in San Jose Unified School District, I write in support of CommUniverCity SJSU's Urban Grant Program proposal for Growing Sustainably, submitted by the San Jose State University Research Foundation. I look forward to working with CommUniverCity and SJSU students in Fall 2026 and welcome collaboration with them in providing soccer opportunities and environmental science lessons and activities to our students.

The past three years my school has participated in CommUniverCity Garden Education projects, in which students have learned about important science and nutrition contents beyond the classroom. In addition, students have had the chance to develop relevant skills that they can replicate at home like propagating plants, germinating and sowing seeds, or transplanting seedlings.

The Growing Sustainably program will benefit our students by providing them with age appropriate, hands-on outdoor learning opportunities. CommUniverCity provides bilingual workshops that focus on meeting the students' language needs and show an appreciation of cultural diversity in their lessons and at the same time, give the students content which they can relate to in their daily lives.

Finally, CommUniverCity's model of including San Jose State University students in their projects, allows our students an opportunity to interact with positive role models and foster a college-going culture in our school community.

We appreciate your consideration of CommUniverCity's Growing Sustainably Program grant application and ask for your support of it as well.

Regards,

*Maricela Alcalá*  
Maricela Alcalá  
Principal, Washington Elementary  
malcalafranco@sjusd.org

sjusd.org  
408-535-6261  
100 Oak Street  
San José, CA 95110



**Franklin-McKinley  
School District**  
PREPARING ALL CHILDREN AS GLOBAL LEARNERS



Santee Elementary School  
Principal: Maria Reyes  
1313 Audubon Drive  
San Jose, CA 95122  
(408) 283-6450

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September 23, 2025

Open Space Authority of Santa Clara Valley  
Urban Grant Program Committee  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San José, CA 95119

Dear Urban Grant Program Committee,

As a teacher from McKinley Elementary, and now Santee Elementary, both within the Franklin-McKinley School District, I am writing to express my strong support for the COOL PLANET initiative proposed by CommUniverCity SJSU, under the San Jose State University Research Foundation's Urban Grant Program. We eagerly anticipate partnering with CommUniverCity and SJSU students in Fall 2026 to offer enriching soccer programs alongside engaging environmental science activities to our students. Many of our students from McKinley are now at the neighboring school Santee Elementary due to last year's school closures within our district, and I have been hoping to continue the partnership that McKinley had with SJSU's CommUniverCity at Santee.

CommUniverCity has worked with McKinley for over 20 years, and I have had the chance to be a part of this partnership during the last six years. The students grades 2-6 at McKinley have benefited greatly from participation in the CommUniverCity garden education projects. These experiences expanded their understanding of outdoor science beyond traditional classroom settings. Moreover, the hands-on skills they acquired are valuable lessons they can practice at home with their families. I am eager for former McKinley students to continue participating in the program and for all Santee students to experience the program!

**Board of Education**  
Marc Cooper    Hong Ha Hoang    Rudy Rodriguez    George Sanchez    Steven Sanchez



**Franklin-McKinley  
School District**

PREPARING ALL CHILDREN AS GLOBAL LEARNERS



CommUniverCity's bilingual workshops thoughtfully addresses the language needs of our students while celebrating cultural diversity, ensuring that the lessons are both accessible and relevant to their everyday lives. Santee has a similar demographic as McKinley, and all the students here would benefit from the experience that CommUniverCity offers.

Additionally, the involvement of San Jose State University students in this program offers our students inspiring role models and helps nurture a culture that encourages higher education within our school community.

We sincerely thank you for considering the Growing Sustainably grant proposal and wholeheartedly endorse this program.

Sincerely,

Melody Su  
3rd Grade Teacher

Santee Elementary  
melody.su@fmsd.org



San José  
Unified  
School District



September 22nd, 2025

Open Space Authority of Santa Clara Valley  
Urban Grant Program Committee  
33 Las Colinas Lane San Jose, CA, 95119

Dear OSA Urban Grant Administrators,

As a second and third grade teacher at Selma Olinder Elementary School in the San José Unified School District, I am excited to offer my full support for CommUniverCity SJSU's *Cool Planet* program proposal. Over the past six years, my classrooms have had the wonderful opportunity to partner with *Growing Sustainably*, and I am eager to continue this valuable collaboration with CommUniverCity and SJSU students beginning in 2026. Their commitment to hands-on, community-based environmental education has made a real and lasting impact on our students.

In just the past two years alone, *Growing Sustainably* delivered more than 32 interactive workshops and events, reaching over 216 k-5th grade students at our school. These workshops provided hands-on, engaging outdoor experiences in environmental science beyond what we can offer in a traditional classroom setting.

Our student population is primarily Hispanic and from low-income households. Many of our families face challenges that limit access to outdoor or nature-based learning opportunities. CommUniverCity's dedication to offering bilingual workshops, culturally relevant curriculum, and visual learning supports ensures that all students, regardless of background, can fully engage and participate. Our students always look forward to the days when SJSU students visit campus. They form strong connections with the college students; many of whom come from similar communities as they do. This representation matters because it not only enhances education, but also fosters a college-going culture rooted in climate resilience and community development.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of the *Cool Planet* program. I wholeheartedly support CommUniverCity SJSU's proposal and strongly encourage your support as well.

Kindly,  
Denise Marx  
2nd and 3rd grade Teacher, Selma Olinder Elementary



October 7th, 2025

To: Open Space Authority  
Santa Clara Valley Urban Grant Program Committee  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San Jose, CA 95119

We write to you in support of CommUniverCity's funding grant application for grade school students to experience wildlife conservation and science. San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) is excited to provide field trip support to students in grades 3-8 who will be visiting our bird banding facility at Coyote Creek Field Station (CCFS). Our staff look forward to demonstrating bird banding and to helping students understand the critical role that birds play in Bay Area ecosystems and factors affecting bird behavior and health.

At CCFS we have a variety of activities that students can participate in depending on their grade level. One of our lessons simulates the bird banding process and another lesson involves a scavenger hunt. While on site, students will observe live bird banding with a variety of species, almost always including multiple ecomorphs (e.g. sparrows, warblers, wrens, woodpeckers), allowing us to discuss topics like adaptation and migration.

SFBBO's mission includes both scientific research and outreach because we know that science alone is insufficient. We believe that in order to successfully conserve birds, we need communities that value birds and are willing to work for their survival. Further, we believe that all people should have access to nature and to the information that will empower them to appreciate it, and thus we have been working to reach more under-resourced communities. CommUniverCity's proposed program focuses specifically on serving disadvantaged communities in San Jose and aligns with our own goal of broader outreach to diverse communities in the Bay Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fen Conway". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fen Conway  
Lead Biologist, Landbird Program  
San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory  
fconway@sfbbo.org

# Talon Ecological Research Group

1750 Lundy Avenue #611778, San Jose, CA 95161-1778

## Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

Board of Directors  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San José, CA 95119

Date: October 10, 2025

## Re: Letter of Support for CommUniverCity SJSU's Cool Planet Program

Dear OSA Staff and Board Members,

I write as **Phil Higgins**, co-founder of **Talon Ecological Research Group** and MS alumnus in Environmental Studies from San José State University, to express my wholehearted support for **CommUniverCity SJSU's Cool Planet Program** and their Urban Grant application.

Founded in 2015 and based in San José, Talon is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on **scientific research, conservation, and habitat management** for imperiled species and ecosystems in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. We have long standing programs for **burrowing owl conservation**, including habitat management, supplemental feeding, captive-breeding, juvenile overwintering, and banding work under contract with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency. We also engage in **riparian habitat restoration**, such as native understory planting and invasive removal along Fisher Creek through Valley Water grants.

If awarded, Talon would serve as an environmental education partner to the Cool Planet Program—delivering ecology curricula and hands-on experiences at partner school sites across San José and leading field trips within the Open Space Authority's districts. Talon would co-host one in person visit each academic semester (i.e., Fall '26, Spring '27, Fall '27, Spring '28) to a field site or visit a local school. Through our joint work, students can directly observe how we monitor species, enhance habitat, and conduct field research. We look forward to educating and inspiring the next generation of environmental leaders with CommUniverCity!

We fully endorse this proposal and look forward to supporting its success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Higgins". The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Phil Higgins**

Co-Founder, Talon Ecological Research Group  
Environmental Studies, MS, San José State University



**Philip Higgins**  
Wildlife Biologist, M.S.  
(408) 849 6075  
[www.talonecological.org](http://www.talonecological.org)

October 12, 2025

Board of Directors  
Open Space Authority of Santa Clara Valley  
33 Las Colinas Lane  
San Jose, CA 95119

Dear Members of the OSA Board of Directors:

As Chair of the Friends of Five Wounds Trail, a community-based group of residents dedicated to advancing environmental stewardship and equitable access to open space in San José's Five Wounds Brookwood Terrace neighborhood, I write to express my strong support for Cool Planet, the proposed project by Growing Sustainably.

The Cool Planet program exemplifies the kind of equitable, hands-on environmental education that uplifts our neighborhoods and aligns with the mission of the Open Space Authority to connect people and nature, particularly in underserved urban areas.

Cool Planet will provide more than 60 interactive workshops and field trips for over 400 residents—including 240 K–8 students from Title 1 schools in Central San José. These lessons integrate climate resilience, wildlife appreciation, and outdoor exploration with real-world applications like flood preparedness and healthy living. The creative mix of environmental science and active learning makes this initiative both innovative and accessible.

I recognize that projects like *Cool Planet* are essential to cultivating the next generation of environmental stewards who will protect and care for our shared resources. I am excited to partner with them on a trail cleanup as part of the program.

I am especially encouraged by the collaboration with CommUniverCity SJSU, whose 20-year track record in Central San José is a model of community-university partnership in underserved San Jose neighborhoods. Their commitment to public health, environmental education, college-going pathways, and neighborhood improvement ensures that this program will be rooted in both excellence and community trust.

I respectfully urge your consideration of support for this vital project and thank you for your ongoing commitment to open space and environmental learning in our city.

Sincerely,



Joan Rivas-Cosby  
Chair, Friends of Five Wounds Trail  
360 S. 19<sup>th</sup> St.  
San Jose, CA 95116  
joan\_cosby@outlook.com

## Growing Sustainably SJSU's

### Cool Planet Program Deliverables

NEST (Nurturing Environmental Skills Together) provides **280** k to 8th-grade students learning opportunities that promote their knowledge of and connections to wildlife, plants, ecosystems, and conservation. These are lesson topics our partner teachers overwhelmingly indicate spur the most engagement and that are consistent with fourth grade focus group comments.

ACTIVITY	# Events / Workshops		TOTAL 2 YRS	# Participants		TOTAL 2 YRS	Measurement Tool
	Yr 1	Yr 2		Yr 1	Yr 2		
Hands-on education <b>workshop series</b> (6 lessons per academic term at 2 k-8 school sites)	24	24	48				School Class Roster Post-participation Surveys Teacher Surveys
				100	100	200	
<b>Field trips</b> to local greenspace, wetland, or SJSU Earth Day.	2	2	4	40	40	80	School Class Roster (unduplicated) Post-Participation Surveys
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>52</b>			<b>280</b>	

LETS GO is a soccer-themed environmental education series designed with direct input from students and elementary school teachers that responds to students' desire for active and hands-on learning as it relates to environmental education. **200** k-8 students will participate in this program.

ACTIVITY	# Events / Workshops		TOTAL 2 YRS	# Participants		TOTAL 2 YRS	Measurement Tool
	Yr 1	Yr 2		Yr 1	Yr 2		
Play-based <b>soccer practice series</b> (6 lessons per academic term at 2 k-8 school sites) offered during after school programming	12	12	24				Sign-In Sheet Pre- and Post-participation Surveys
				60	60	120	Sign-In Sheets
Field trip to San Jose State University Soccer Game	2	2	4	40	40	80	Sign-In Sheets
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>28</b>			<b>200</b>	

Images from Growing Sustainably Events and Workshops 2024-2025

Spring 2024  
Love the Earth Fair



SJSU Campus Tour



# Green STEM Career Fairs





Field Trip to Olinder Park





San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory Field Trip

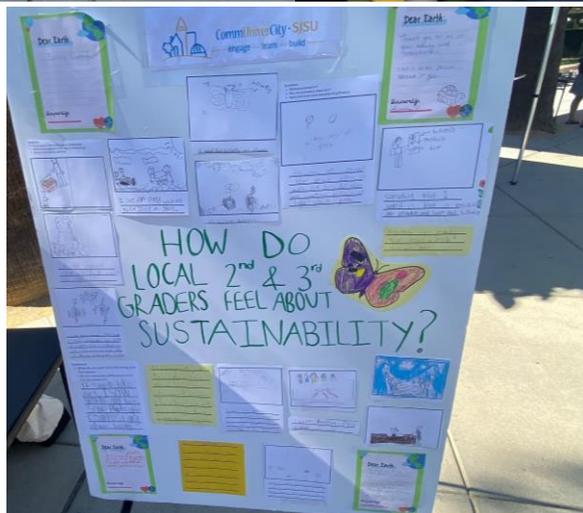






Fall 2024

Tabling at the ERC Sustainability Fair



Green STEM Fair at Sacred Heart Nativity Middle School



**Spring 2025**

**SJSU Campus Field Trip to the Greenhouse**

