

## **Organization**

Visit Bend

## **Project Title**

The Bend Sustainability Fund

## **Project Description**

The Bend Sustainability Fund is a newly developed grant program launched in response to the need to give back and to take care of the places that take care of us. At a time when room tax revenues are at an all-time high, so is visitor usage of the places which make destinations like Bend so popular. While destination marketing remains important, more than that is the need to ensure sustainability in our destinations. If the very reason folks choose to visit no longer exists, then marketing won't help. Through that lens, the Bend Sustainability Fund reinvests a portion of Visit Bend's restricted, transient room tax revenue generated by visitors into the places and spaces that are important to our community. Annually, grants are awarded to organizations and projects in and around Bend that protect, steward, or create tourism-related facilities that have grassroots, community support and move our destination towards a more sustainable future. These projects oftentimes benefit locals as much as visitors but are funded by visitor tax dollars.

## **Project Effectiveness**

The Bend Sustainability Fund is still in its first year with the second cycle set to begin in September. In 2021, we granted \$840,000 to eight projects which will result in a bike park complete with a pump track, skills park, wooden features and jumps, a nature-based play area providing education to young learners, 15 miles of public trail, two improved riverbank and riparian access points, and four enhanced trail access points complete with trail signage and interpretive information. These and other smaller investments from the Bend Sustainability Fund provide the final leg of funding often needed to complete a project which is so beneficial to a destination like Bend. While the effectiveness of this is ultimately gauged long-term, all projects funded in year one are still underway and on track to be completed. We're equally excited about the buzz around second-year projects and cannot wait to share those successes as well.

## **Return on Investment**

The return on investment, similar to the project effectiveness, will become easier to measure over time. What we do know is that investing in these projects through the Bend Sustainability Fund will result in a destination that continues to be appealing to visitors and even encourages long-term, repeat visitation as the destination of Bend evolves. We know certain projects will result in increased economic activities, which will help local stakeholders to fight costs associated with inflation and other economic challenges. The investment in the Bike Park, for example, will make Bend more attractive to large-scale cycling events that were previously not afforded to our destination. The new hiking trail at Mt. Bachelor will introduce more hikers to the mountain, taking the strain off of nearby wilderness areas but also resulting in more consumer spending with Mt. Bachelor. We foresee many other examples similar to those above occurring in the future. It is our belief at Visit Bend that a sustainable destination is one that is equally strong across environmental, social, and economic segments.

## **Project Costs**

The Bend Sustainability Fund will be seeded this year with approximately 20% of Visit Bend's revenue. In

2021, the Bend Sustainability Fund invested \$840,000 in projects like those mentioned above and in the attachments.