

Print

Community and Economic Development Grant Application FY2025-26 - Submission #2590

Date Submitted: 11/19/2025

Name of Applicant Organization*

Oregon Coast Aquarium

Mailing Address*

2820 SE Ferry Slip Rd

City*

Newport

State*

OR

Zip Code*

97365

Person Completing the Application

Name*

Melissa Ousley

Email Address*

melissa.ousley@aquarium.org

Phone Number*

541-283-1132

Name of Your Project*

Amazon Exhibit at the Oregon Coast Aquarium

Total Project Budget*

\$449,954

This includes all anticipated sources of funding

Amount Requested from this Program*

\$15,000

(max \$15k for STANDARD, \$50k for IMPACT)

Location of Project Activities*

Newport

Where in Lincoln County is your project happening?

Pool of Funds Applying to*

- STANDARD (\$15K Max)
- IMPACT (\$50K Max)

Project Description*

The Oregon Coast Aquarium respectfully requests \$15,000 to support our upcoming Amazon Exhibit, funding the creation of art and the installation of live animal exhibits to illustrate four distinct ecoregions of the Amazon basin: savannah, tropical rainforests, flooded forests, and river system. This exhibit will champion environmental education through art, storytelling, discovery, and science.

The Aquarium averages 460,000 people visiting each year (75% Oregon residents, 3% Lincoln County residents, 12% rural communities, 18% Portland Metro, 24% out-of-state, 1% international). Providing visitors with opportunities to connect with 15,000 animals spanning 300 distinct species, Aquarium visitation alone contributes an estimated annual economic value of \$171 million to Lincoln County and boosts employment for our rural, coastal communities.

For over three decades, the Oregon Coast Aquarium has aimed to be a captivating destination and a trusted resource for environmental education and conservation in the Pacific Northwest. Every two years, the Aquarium features a multi-sensory exhibit in our indoor Changing Exhibits Gallery—usually an interpretation of the world by an artist, historian, writer, and/or ocean scientist. Examples of past exhibits include: Washed Ashore, featuring marine life sculptures to educate the public about plastic pollution; Cruisin' the Fossil Coastline, chronicling the journey of an artist and paleontologist on a road to discover fossils; Seapunk, a mariner's tale using Steampunk art and live animals; and Secrets of Shipwrecks, bringing to life the history of shipwrecks on the Oregon coast. These unique experiences, guided by strategic interpretation and education goals, drew return visitors, bringing more tourist dollars to the central coast, benefitting hotels, restaurants, and local businesses as visitors vacation in Lincoln County.

Our planet faces a variety of threats: climate change, habitat destruction, and species extinction. The Amazon basin is home to a diverse array of species such as poison dart frogs, caiman, and piranha who thrive in this unique biome and whose survival is threatened by climate change and human encroachment on essential habitat. Conservation of the Amazon is critical to the future of our planet, and this exhibit will provide valuable information for visitors. In addition, our Mission Engagement department will partner with schools, libraries, and community organizations to provide educational programming onsite and by taking the Aquarium on the road to reach K-12 students who may not have the resources to travel to the coast. We have strong partnerships with educators across the state, reaching rural, underserved communities.

The Amazon exhibit at the Oregon Coast Aquarium will open in May 2026 and be housed in the Changing Exhibits Gallery for 18 months to educate visitors on the importance of Amazon species and habitats for our broader world, inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards.

This exhibit aligns with the mission of the Oregon Coast Aquarium because it provides a unique, creative, and engaging opportunity to bring art, storytelling, and science to Aquarium visitors, challenging them to consider the environmental issues affecting the Amazon river basin, and how each of us can be part of the solution, choosing sustainable practices to counter climate change.

What is the project and what will it do for community and/or economic development? What tangible items or results will the project deliver? How will the success of this project be judged? IMPORTANT: This fund is not intended for staff or operations. Please describe the economic impact of the project and how it creates or retains jobs in the community.

Funding*

Revenue, Amount, Status:

Fall Appeal, \$20,000.00, Secured
Community and Economic Development Grant, \$15,000.00, Pending
Oregon Arts Commission, \$5,000.00, Pending
Chinook Winds Casino, \$10,000.00, Pending
Walmart, \$5,000.00, Pending
Tillamook Creamery, \$5,000.00, Pending
Reser Foundation, \$15,000.00, Planned
Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund, \$10,000.00, Planned
Jackson Foundation, \$5,000.00, Planned
Georgia-Pacific Toledo LLC, \$10,000.00, Planned
First Interstate Bank, \$2,500.00, Planned
NW Natural, \$2,000.00, Planned
Oregon Coast Aquarium Membership Fees, \$200,000.00, Secured
Oregon Coast Aquarium Admission Fees, \$145,454.00, Secured
Total Revenue: \$449,954.00

The Oregon Coast Aquarium will be investing in this project by committing 40 percent of our marketing budget toward the promotion of the Amazon exhibit, bringing tourism dollars to the coast and boosting our local economy.

If applicable, please describe the status of other funding sources you have applied for or intend to apply for, and indicate whether those funds have been awarded. Also, list any other funds for which you have applied but were not funded - how much did you ask for, from whom, and why was the application not funded?

Collaboration*

We plan to collaborate with the Lincoln County School District to provide educational content to K-12 students. We have a long history of collaborating with LCSD as well as schools, libraries, and other community organizations across the state through our outreach education programs, increasing access to STEAM education for underserved students from rural communities.

If applicable, please list who you are collaborating with and why.

Viability*

In addition to tracking admission numbers to collect data regarding economic impact, we will contract with Inform Evaluation & Research to formally evaluate the Amazon Exhibit. This contractor has worked with the Oregon Coast Aquarium before to evaluate programs such as our Washed Ashore exhibit. The evaluator will use quantitative and qualitative methodology to gather data about visitor perceptions of the exhibit, as well as the extent to which our intended outcomes have been met, resulting in an increase of visitor knowledge about environmental issues and an increased willingness for visitors to change their personal consumer behaviors. Inform Evaluation & Research will generate a report on findings that we will be able to share if funded. Data will be collected once the exhibit opens. This project will not need ongoing funding as all requested funding will support the creation of the exhibit.

We have conducted similar assessments of past temporary exhibits (Secrets of Shipwrecks and Big Bites). Data showed that 20 percent of visitors came specifically to see the featured exhibit at that time. Based on our current average annual total visitors (460,000), we anticipate that at least 92,000 of our annual guests will visit the coast because of a desire to view the new Amazon exhibit. With our investment in marketing for this exhibit, we expect excitement for this exhibit to be high, bringing more tourism dollars to Lincoln County.

How will the success of this project be judged? State success measures and timeline. Will this project need ongoing funding? How will this be secured?

Desired Start Date*

3/1/2026

Desired End Date*

12/31/2026

Budget Documents*

Project Budget Amazon Exhibit.pdf

Please submit as a PDF file - project budget only (not organizational budget)

Letter(s) of Support

Aquarium - EDALC LOS.pdf

At least one letter of support is required for an IMPACT application.

Name of Chief Executive*

Carrie Lewis

Title*

President/CEO

Chief Executive Email*

carrie.lewis@aquarium.org

Tax ID Number*

93.0877807

Type of Applicant Organization*

501(c)(3) Nonprofit

	A	B	C
1	Project: Amazon Exhibit at the Oregon Coast Aquarium		
2	Expenses		
3	Description	Cost	
4	Staff Time	\$7,200.00	
5	Contracted Services: Art/Murals for Exhibit	\$29,000.00	
6	Materials/Supplies	\$221,554.00	
7	Equipment	\$90,000.00	
8	Animals and Exhibit Creation	\$82,200.00	
9	Contingency	\$20,000.00	
10	Total Expenses:	\$449,954.00	
11	Revenue	Amount	Status
12	Fall Appeal	\$20,000.00	Secured
13	Community and Economic Development Grant	\$15,000.00	Pending
14	Oregon Arts Commission	\$5,000.00	Pending
15	Chinook Winds Casino	\$10,000.00	Pending
16	Walmart	\$5,000.00	Pending
17	Tillamook Creamery	\$5,000.00	Pending
18	Reser Foundation	\$15,000.00	Planned
19	Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund	\$10,000.00	Planned
20	Jackson Foundation	\$5,000.00	Planned
21	Georgia-Pacific Toledo LLC	\$10,000.00	Planned
22	First Interstate Bank	\$2,500.00	Planned
23	NW Natural	\$2,000.00	Planned
24	Oregon Coast Aquarium Membership Fees	\$200,000.00	Secured
25	Oregon Coast Aquarium Admission Fees	\$145,454.00	Secured
26	Total Revenue:	\$449,954.00	



November 19, 2025

Economic Development Alliance of Lincoln County
P.O. Box 716
Newport, OR 97365

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Oregon Coast Visitors Association (OCVA), I am writing to offer our strong support for the Oregon Coast Aquarium's request for \$15,000 to help develop and install its upcoming *Amazon Exhibit*. As the regional destination management organization for the entire Oregon Coast, we recognize the Aquarium as one of the most significant attractions and tourism drivers in Lincoln County. They are also a vital partner in our shared commitment to climate action, sustainable tourism, accessibility, and year-round visitor experience opportunities.

The Aquarium's proposed *Amazon Exhibit* will deliver far more than an engaging visitor experience. By installing new art, interpretive displays, and live animal habitats representing four distinct ecoregions of the Amazon basin, the project directly aligns with OCVA's programs including: climate action, public art, and the expansion of shoulder-season visitation.

With more than 460,000 annual visitors (most of whom travel from more than 50 miles away) the Aquarium is uniquely positioned to draw overnight travelers whose spending supports lodging, dining, retail, and recreation businesses across Lincoln County. These visitors help sustain local jobs and bring new dollars into our coastal communities. This is especially important as communities across the Oregon Coast work to stabilize tourism revenues in the shoulder and off-seasons.

We believe the *Amazon Exhibit* will deliver meaningful outcomes consistent with the goals of the Economic Development Alliance of Lincoln County. It will enhance a cornerstone coastal attraction, attract new and returning visitors from well outside the region, stimulate off-season travel, and support local jobs while advancing the essential climate education that will guide Oregon toward a more resilient future.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your continued partnership in strengthening Lincoln County's economy and quality of life.

Sincerely,

Arica Sears
Deputy Director, Oregon Coast Visitors Association
541.819.9240 | deputy@thepeoplescoast.com