

Challenge

Since 2013, Thriving Earth Exchange has helped communities address local, environmental priorities through community science. The program recognized the need to increase organizational capacity for community science and reach new audiences. By creating community science hubs, TEX can more effectively link to existing networks and better connect communities doing community science.

Process

From 2023-2025, Thriving Earth Exchange established 4 regional community science hubs. Supported by a generous grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, these community science hubs engaged community groups they already had relationships with around topics such as flooding, brownfields on Tribal lands, environmental contamination, and faith-based communities.



Figure 1: Standard Thriving Earth Exchange program model.



Figure 2: Thriving Earth Exchange program model with hubs.

Outcomes

Together with the four hubs; [Capacity Collaborative](#), [Kansas State University Center for Hazardous Substance Research](#), [Nurture Nature Center](#) and [Creation Justice Ministries](#), Thriving Earth Exchange launched 40 projects across 3 states and Puerto Rico. Projects focused on themes like flooding, gardening, contamination, and preserving traditional knowledge.

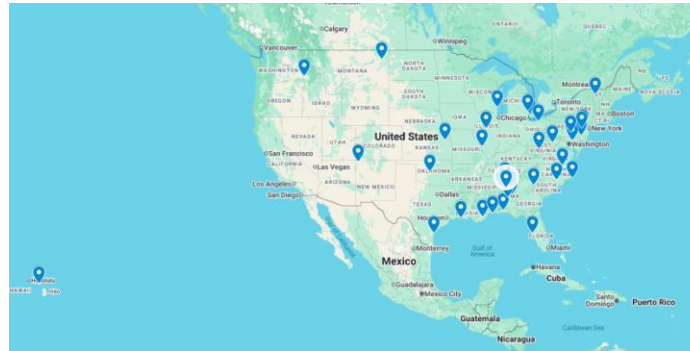


Figure 3: Interactive map with links to individual projects.

Four of the community projects are featured in this [video series](#).

Lessons Learned

As with any large-scale initiative, there were unanticipated challenges and many lessons learned. Processes were refined throughout the lifespan of the grant as feedback was received.

Communication

Hub coordinators greatly benefitted from opportunities to connect with one another and share tips and advice on managing their respective portfolios. It became important to reserve time for informal conversation and provide

opportunities to meet in person at AGU annual meetings. Communication with both hub coordinators and community projects needed to be consistent and intentional due to having to coordinate across so many people with differing roles.

Thriving Earth Exchange Model

The Thriving Earth Exchange model was sometimes confusing to communities and the benefit of participating wasn't always clear. Some communities were used to federal grant processes and were unfamiliar with the flexibility of this initiative. Furthermore, merely inviting them to participate didn't mean they always joined. However, partnering with hubs did result in reaching audiences TEX had not worked with previously. Hub coordinators also formed relationships with new community partners.

Time

Identifying hubs, setting up subaward contracts for hubs and community projects, and recruiting communities all took more time than anticipated. Many projects were given extensions to complete the work after the end of the grant. While timelines had to be adjusted, each community was allowed the time they needed to conduct their project.

Future Work

Thriving Earth Exchange continues to partner with hub coordinators and individual project teams through grant applications, AGU annual meeting sessions, and additional projects. Hub coordinators plan to continue work with community project teams as well as pursue opportunities to incorporate community science into organizational work.

¹ AGU Thriving Earth Exchange, bforsberg@agu.org ² The Nurture Nature Center, ksemmens@nurturenature.org