

Environmental Education and Outreach Specialist

Job Description

The role of the Environmental Education & Outreach Specialist is to research, develop, implement, and coordinate programs to **promote community engagement, awareness, and/or behavior change** around stormwater actions in their local communities.

Salary

Entry — \$89,000
Middle — \$97,000
Top — \$105,000

Core Tasks

- Coordination of and participation in special educational events and outreach activities.
- Provide planning and logistical support, which may include onsite visits to schools, businesses, neighborhood associations, and other organizations.
- Provide natural resource-related information, technical assistance, and outreach to other City departments and employees.

Workplace / Environment

- **Work hours**
Approx. 40 hours/week
(At key milestones overtime work may be required to meet deadlines)
- **Environment**
Typical office setting with occasional field excursions for educational events.
- **Travel**
Travel within City jurisdiction and surrounding area to **field sites, schools, or other organizations.**

Education / Prerequisites

Education Level

Associate or higher degree in related fields of education, natural resources, etc.

Licensing

Valid WA State Driver's License

Pre-Job Preparation

At least 2 years of experience in education, teaching, environmental stewardship, and/or communications.

Experience

Soft Skills

- Communication Skills
- Facilitation
- Public Speaking

Technical Skills

- Technical Writing
- Data Analysis
- Ecological Knowledge



Career Path: Kate Schmiett

About Me

Environmental Educations and Outreach Specialist at the City of Kirkland

Master of Education from University of Washington

Early Direction

"I had no idea what I wanted to do in high school, except that I knew **I wanted to change the world**. I knew I wanted to get out of my small town, so I went to study abroad at the University of Nottingham in England. I decided to study history because I liked the teacher in that class. That was all fine, except you can't switch majors in the English System - if you want to switch you have to drop out and reapply. So I was kind of stuck in history, which was a bummer, because I was realizing I really **missed the science** that I had also loved learning about in high school. I discovered that **environmental history** exists, which is the study of the relationship between people and their environment over time so I really focused on that, because that was as science-y as I could get. It ended up serving me well!"

A Winding Path

"When I graduated and moved to Seattle, there was an economic recession, there were no jobs. I went to volunteer at the Seattle Aquarium, which was one of the best things I've ever done with my life. I was **really passionate**, but I didn't really have the skills to help other people become passionate. I wanted some more educational experience, so I went to Islandwood and the University of Washington for a master's degree in science education. Basically the first year of your master's at Islandwood, you get to go take kids and teach them in the woods about science, and then every other week you're in classes learning about how to be a better teacher. That launched me on my **professional environmental education path**."

Changing Scales

"I went back to the aquarium after that, got a job as a Marine Science Interpreter and a Citizen Science Instructor, which was **really, really fun**. Then I kind of bopped around different nonprofits. I wound up at the City of Kirkland, and I'm really happy to be doing this! It all kind of came from a love of orcas, and then I realized how much their food web mattered, especially salmon and from there, how much the salmon food web mattered, and how much that whole web depends on clean water. So I feel like I'm supporting all the things I love, just **from the water up**."

About My Job

"I love that light up moment when people *get it*."

Pros

- "I love **talking to people**. I love helping them understand and connect with the environment where they live. That's my favorite part of being any kind of teacher, but especially when I know that that moment is going to lead to people understanding the creek next to their house a little bit better, appreciating it more, and maybe taking some different actions in their daily life that are going to **help support it**."
- "I also love the people that I work with, I'm on a **really great team**, and it's really fun to be in this kind of work, because we've all got a shared goal, and everyone's really passionate about it."

Fieldwork

- "One of our programs is our Yard Smart program, where we give people rebates to put in green stormwater infrastructure. I **do site visits** with them to talk about their landscape, goals, and if we can **reduce the impacts of stormwater** on their property."
- "I've started leading these **field trips for grown ups called "Wetland Wanders"**. We go out and do water testing, a little nature walk in their local creek, and help them **understand how it all works together**."
- "It's probably about **20/80 field to office work**. In the spring, everyone's thinking about their garden. In the fall we run our tree rebate program, and everyone wants to plant trees."

Cons

- "I guess the one con would be, if you're running a successful program, there's a lot of **back-end admin work**. A lot of spreadsheets and emails, things like that, which aren't the most exciting, but if that's the price to pay for a well running program, then **I'll take it**."

Office Work

- "I'm really fortunate that I have a **hybrid work schedule**, so I get to work at home and take breaks snuggling my dogs some days, and some days I'm in the office. My in office days are **really varied**, when I'm at home, I'm catching up on that admin stuff, writing emails, and having some online meetings. But when I'm in the office, I'm having meetings with my colleagues, getting to collaborate a little bit better, but I'm also out doing site visits with Kirkland residents."

Skills

- "It's important to have subject matter expertise, but it's even more important to understand how people learn. Figuring out how to be a good teacher is probably the **most important skill** for environmental education work."
- "To be successful in environmental education, you need to be able to talk to people and be comfortable with that. It took me until I was 17 to realize I wasn't an introvert and to get **confidence talking to other people at all**. Putting myself out there gave me confidence."
- You need to be able to say, "**I don't know.**" That's always really important because you're going to get questions you don't know the answers to."
- "Tending to your own joy and making sure that you are staying connected to the happy part of what you're trying to educate about is important. The ways I tend to my joy in my job are to advocate for working on projects where **I'm going to feel that sense of joy.**"

Education/Experience

- "I know environmental educators who have come to this field through so **many different paths.**"
- "I think that the most important thing that you can do is to get practical experience as **early and often** as you can. For me, that was volunteering at the aquarium."
- "Find people who are doing work that you think is interesting, and then start **asking them as many questions** as you can. If they love what they do, they will be really excited that you care too. So ask them. You never know who you'll get connected to, what kind of opportunities will open up. Who you know can really open those doors for you."

The Future of **Environmental Education**

"Stormwater is a **really interesting field**. For example, four years ago, we didn't know why salmon entering urban streams in Seattle were dying before spawning. Researchers at the University of Washington isolated the chemical, it's called 6-PPD-Q, it's a chemical that happens when something that we add to tires interacts with ozone, tire particles wear off with the friction on our roads and get into our creeks. Most people haven't even heard of it yet, right? But I think in the next 10 years, **everyone's going to have heard about it.**

There's a growing understanding of how important it is **to include everyone**. In my team, we're working a lot on integrating DEI into our work and identifying who needs this information that doesn't have it. Especially because in some of our programs we're offering people rebates and money to do the right thing. I want to make sure that those opportunities are **available to everyone** that can use them. It's a change that I hope will keep evolving with time, and a strength that I feel like we can **always get better at.**"

About Sustainability Ambassadors

We are here to **RAPIDLY ADVANCE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**. Empowering **YOUTH** to catalyze community sustainability, **TEACHERS** to integrate rigor with relevance for real-world impact, **COMMUNITY** to drive collective impact.

We support a year-round training program for over 60 highly motivated middle and high school youth, a Teacher Fellows Program, City-County CAP internships, and college-level interns, and work with hundreds of educators to design new models of problem-based, place-based learning around **a shared vision of educating for sustainability**.

Your Green Jobs Future

Ready to explore your future in green jobs? Use [Map your Career](#) to map your trajectory!

Find career opportunities near you now! Use [Career Connect - Washington's](#) tool to find programs to build your career skills.

Interested in a future in solar? Take a look at the [Solar Jobs Census](#) to track solar job growth nationwide.

Explore [RVC's opportunities](#) to work with organizations led by communities of color.

Dive into the [Center of Excellence for Clean Energy's](#) robust career tools in the sustainable energy sector.

Grow your professional sustainability skillset with the [Seattle Youth Good Program](#).

See Seattle's [Clean Energy Resources Map](#) to examine what the city is planning for a greener energy future.

Check out the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) to explore the sector's current opportunities. :

Funder Acknowledgement



King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Wastewater Treatment Division

