Community Engagement

The primary mission of Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) is to deliver scientific discoveries and technical breakthroughs to help solve the world’s most compelling challenges, but we have an additional mission that is also important—ensuring communities thrive and educational initiatives succeed in East Tennessee and around the world.

Doing Well by Inspiring Good

The value ORNL and our employees bring to communities is only as good as our collective commitment to helping those communities thrive. Whether it’s supporting economic development in East Tennessee; leading science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education initiatives; or encouraging employees to donate their time to nonprofit organizations, ORNL is focused on a strategy that spurs civic vitality and commerce, sparks a passion for learning, and supports a broad definition of giving that employees find meaningful and gratifying.

Corporate Giving

Corporate giving is the financial and in-kind support that ORNL, through its prime contractor UT-Battelle LLC, provides to nonprofits, foundations, community groups, and educational institutions to deliver value and social impact. ORNL has identified a handful of organizations that support altruistic programs connected to ORNL’s mission, keeping in mind that larger gifts to fewer organizations lead to greater impact.

- STEM education
- Public awareness
- Civic/cultural
- Volunteerism
- Economic development

Employee Giving

The power to bring positive, measurable change to communities through workforce programs that incorporate volunteering, financial giving, and in-kind support is at the heart of ORNL Gives, ORNL’s employee giving program. We encourage our employees to be actively connected with nonprofits that mean the most to them. For their efforts, we match donations and support participation in a variety of ways because giving back means more than just writing a check.

Some of the meaningful ways ORNL employees are actively connecting with community organizations include:

- Sitting on the boards of nonprofit organizations
- Volunteering for schools and charities
- Mentoring students
- Giving in-kind contributions such as donating materials to Habitat Restore
- Offering time and talent to ORNL’s employee resource groups
- Participating in events organized by nonprofits
The Measure of Our Success

Knowing the impact we make in our community is one way we measure our success. The variety of ways the Laboratory and employees give to the community underscores the importance we place on our outreach efforts.

- **Biannual grants**—ORNL donates annually to organizations that focus on STEM programs, larger community development, cultural initiatives, and employee engagement.

- **ORNL Gives**—Workplace giving is the pillar of our outreach, raising more than $913,000 in FY 2021 to support nonprofits in East Tennessee.

- **Team UT-Battelle**—Our employees are community advocates, supporting organizations important to them and the communities in which they live. In FY 2021, despite the coronavirus pandemic, Team UT-Battelle employees requested nearly $10,000 in financial support and participated in more than 15 activities.

- **Matching Gifts Fund**—East Tennessee is home to nearly 5,200 nonprofits, where small donations can make or break their important work. Through ORNL’s Matching Gift Fund, employee contributions can be matched up to $500 each year, leading to $40,000 in additional support for hundreds of charities.

- **Volunteer East Tennessee**—ORNL has partnered with Volunteer East Tennessee to connect employees with opportunities to help local nonprofits. Employees may choose from virtual or in-person service across a broad spectrum of categories including, but not limited to, advocacy, events, education, finance, food preparation, marketing, and physical labor.

Setting Our Sights on STEM

ORNL reaches thousands of students and educators every year with the goal of enhancing awareness and encouraging interest in STEM careers. These touch points continue to be reinforced through ORNL grants, virtual classroom support, and other educational connections in the science disciplines. For more information, see our [STEM Education and Outreach Fact Sheet](#) or visit [STEM.ornl.gov](#).

Connect with Us

Part of ORNL’s social responsibility is helping to build thriving communities, inspiring STEM-focused learning, and supporting employee-supported nonprofits. Connect with us on the following social platforms:

- Twitter – @ORNL
- Instagram – Oakridgelab
- Facebook – Oak Ridge National Laboratory
- Podcast – Sounds of Science

Fusion and Fission Energy and Science Associate Laboratory Director Kathy McCarthy tried her luck at fly fishing during the directorate’s Fish, Fetch, and Fly Festival, part of the 2021 ORNL Gives campaign. Local veterans’ support organizations benefited from the June 2021 event, which included a fish fry, demonstrations on how to tie a fly, and a visit by Hooligan the service dog.