



America's Great Outdoors: Connecting Youth to the Outdoors 2012 Grants Request for Proposals

Our public lands have never been more important to our nation than they are today. Yet we live in a changing America, where, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 80 percent of the U.S. population now lives in urban areas and the average American relocates an average of six times during their life. Our engagement with the natural world is influenced by complex factors, including our increasingly mobile and technology-connected society. This is especially true for our youth. According to the Children and Nature Network, the average child in the U.S. can recognize 1,000 corporate logos but cannot identify ten native plants or animals in his or her own area. Amid these changes, re-establishing a connection to the natural world is critical for a truly sustainable future.

President Obama launched the [America's Great Outdoors Initiative](#) (AGO) on April 16, 2010. He asked the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the Administrator of the EPA and the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to develop a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda that addressed the challenges faced by our public lands today. One of the overarching themes is to offer opportunities to engage young people with the outdoors.

There is agreement among young people on the paramount importance of environmental education to illuminate the multiple meanings and intrinsic value of nature – and to explain the responsibility we share to protect it. The AGO initiative has begun to focus on connecting youth to America's great outdoors in the 21st century. This encompasses four key goals for youth:

- A. Make the outdoors relevant to today's young people: make it inviting, exciting and fun;
- B. Ensure that all young people have access to outdoor recreation and places that are safe, clean and close to home;
- C. Empower and enable youth to work and volunteer in the outdoors;
- D. Build upon a base of environmental and outdoor education, both formal and informal.

The U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are committed to providing opportunities for youth from all backgrounds to experience and learn about America's Great Outdoors. Since its establishment more than 100 years ago, connecting Americans, and in particular youth, to their public lands, has been a core value of the U.S. Forest Service. Today, Forest Service employees across the nation reach millions of children each year through diverse, engaging and effective outreach and education efforts. The Bureau of Land Management, too, engages children and families through both formal and non-formal education programs as well as recreational and volunteer activities. Nurturing citizens who

are committed to shared stewardship is essential to protecting the health and productivity of the 245 million acres managed by the BLM.

In support of these goals, the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are launching the ***America's Great Outdoors: Connecting Youth to the Outdoors 2012 Grants***. Through the grants, NEEF and its partners are catalyzing efforts to increase the number of youth who build a connection with public lands as places for recreating, learning and practicing environmental stewardship.

As part of this funding opportunity, Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management units, non-profit organizations, academic institutions and tribal groups who partner with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are eligible to apply for funding to support youth engagement projects supporting missions of the partner agencies. The projects must include a meaningful outdoor conservation education experience while also producing quantifiable positive outcomes for conservation and for participants' attitudes about public land and the outdoors. The most competitive projects will demonstrate an alignment with one or more of the following:

- [America's Great Outdoors](#) initiative four key goals for youth (referenced on page 1).
- a [Forest Service](#) or [Bureau of Land Management](#) youth program and/or projects in direct partnership and coordination with one of those agencies.
- a NEEF program area ([Public Lands Every Day Program](#), [Classroom Earth](#), [Children and Nature](#) or [Hands on the Land](#)).

Approximately \$243,000 in funding is available to support grant awards in the range of \$2,500 to \$20,000. It is estimated that the average award amount will be \$15,000 for 16 grants. Applications are due by September 19, 2012.

These grants are made possible through a partnership between the National Environmental Education Foundation, [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#), [Forest Service](#) and [Bureau of Land Management](#).

Grant Details

Before you apply, carefully review the grant details below.

Eligibility

Applicant must:

- ❑ Be a Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management unit or a nonprofit organization, academic institution or tribal group that partner with the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.
- ❑ Have been in existence for at least two (2) years.
- ❑ Establish, or already have, a collaborative relationship with the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.
- ❑ Hold the proposed youth engagement events on a Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management site, or show that the project clearly benefits these agencies.

Process

This grant opportunity is funded through federal dollars from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Grantees will be expected to manage these grants using federal guidelines, such as, but not limited to, OMB Circular A-122 (available here: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_circulars). Note that any organization that spends more than \$500,000 of federal funds in one year is also required to comply with Circular A-133.

Types of Projects

Proposed projects should maximize hands-on outdoor engagement opportunities on public lands, focused on three areas:

- *Education*: Opportunities that provide quantifiable and meaningful conservation education outcomes that enhance environmental literacy, support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education and use of the environment as a context for learning;
- *Recreation*: Opportunities that promote healthy lifestyles, build outdoor recreation skills, and engage youth in active recreation (e.g. hiking, paddling, snowshoeing, hunting and fishing, wildlife watching, geo-caching etc.);
- *Environmental Stewardship*: Opportunities that provide quantifiable and meaningful conservation outcomes (native fish focused stream restoration, species focused landscape restoration, invasive species removal, native plant restoration, wildlife surveys/assessments, project monitoring, trail restoration, etc.).

Matching Contributions

There is a minimum one-to-one non-federal match required for this grant, though larger match ratios are encouraged. As such, applicants will need to identify non-federal sources of funding, which can include non-cash and in-kind support, to at least match the amount awarded. Partnerships with corporations and foundations are strongly encouraged. Amount and diversity of matching contributions will be given consideration as part of the selection process.

Third party in-kind contributions may be in the form of real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property, and the value of goods and services directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to the project or program. This includes volunteer hours for the proposed project. See OMB circulars for more details (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_circulars).

Evaluation (Outputs and Outcomes)

Each grantee will be expected to track and report on youth participation in the program, and participants' attitudes about public land. Outputs (metrics) and Outcomes (impact) should be an integral part of the application.

Budget

A budget form will be provided in the application. All budget items must be broken into and displayed as distinct line items. Also, budget items must directly relate to the activities described in the proposal and include matching funds.

The budget must comply with the OMB Circulars that apply to the applicant's organization and type of project, such as A-122 (A-133 may apply if the grantee spends more than \$500,000 of federal funds in their fiscal year). OMB circulars can be found at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_circulars.

Reporting

Two reports will be required over the grant period. An interim report due at six months of the period and a detailed final report are due within 90 days of completing the project. This report will include metrics and outcomes associated with the project and a financial report. Report forms will be provided by NEEF and will be completed online.

Objectives and Criteria for Grant Selection

Applications will be reviewed based on the following Objectives and Criteria for Grant Selection.

Successful applications will achieve the following objectives:

- Incorporate innovative partnership-based projects that integrate conservation education, meaningful environmental stewardship, and outdoor recreation;
- Engage youth (pre-K-12th grade), particularly urban and/or underserved youth, in meaningful outdoor and conservation education experiences on National Forest System or Bureau of Land Management lands, or in direct benefit to these public lands;

- Build partnerships with diverse entities including corporations, Tribal, state and local agencies, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations to leverage federal dollars awarded with non-federal contributions to the project;
- Support the [Forest Service](#) and/or [Bureau of Land Management](#) public land stewardship missions.

The most competitive proposals will:

- Show a well thought-out plan for implementing the project. Stronger consideration will be given to organizations focusing on urban and underserved youth, and for using innovative and contemporary approaches that actively engage youth, model best practices, and share successes broadly;
- Demonstrate an alignment with one or more of the following:
 - [America's Great Outdoors](#) initiative four key goals for youth (*referenced on page 1*).
 - A Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management youth program and/or projects in direct partnership and coordination with one of these agencies.
 - A NEEF program area ([Public Lands Every Day Program](#), [Classroom Earth](#), [Children and Nature](#) or [Hands on the Land](#)).
- Describe plans for diverse partner collaboration and support;
- Describe in detail how output and outcome data will be collected, synthesized and shared;
- Describe how the project will be sustained in the long-term;
- Demonstrate that the organization has the capacity to undertake the proposed project and can manage federal funding.
- Include details for non-federal support to match grant funds. Some preference will be given to organizations that are able to provide a match higher than the required one-to-one match ratio.

Funding Restrictions

Funds cannot be used for:

- ❑ Conducting lobbying, carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.
- ❑ Influencing the outcome of any specific election through any means.
- ❑ Purposes other than charitable, scientific or educational.
- ❑ Budget shortfalls, general support or endowment funds.
- ❑ Land acquisition or real estate purchases.
- ❑ The purchase of food.

- ❑ New permanent staff positions. Costs for staff time are allowable, unless the applicant is a federal unit or the staff is new. Temporary staff or contractors are permissible.
- ❑ Travel costs, *except when it is used to support youth participation in events*.
- ❑ Scholarships, fellowships or grants to individuals. This does not include stipends for time spent on the project. For example, a stipend for a teacher's time is permissible.
- ❑ Any other restrictions detailed in OMB Circulars (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_circulars).

Timeline

Applications Open	July 31, 2012
Applications Due	September 19, 2012
Grantees Announced	November 2012
Grant Period	One Year
Interim Report Due	Seven months after Grant Period begins
Final Report Due	90 days after Grant Period ends

Submission

Applications are accepted *only* through our [online application system](#). Follow these steps to register and apply:

1. Go to our [online application system](#).
2. You will be taken to a Log On page. If you have not created an account from a previous NEEF grant or award, select Create New Account. If you have previously created an account with NEEF, skip to step 4.
3. Follow the instructions to create your account. It will ask you for your contact information as the account holder and the contact information for your organization's representative. For example, you may be the development director, but want the executive director's name on the application as the representative.
4. Upon creating an account, it will take you to your home screen. To apply, click Apply in the menu on the left. You will be taken to a list of NEEF grants and awards. Select ***America's Great Outdoors: Connecting Youth to the Outdoors 2012*** begin your application.
5. Complete the application. Remember:
 - a. You can save your application and return later.

- b. We recommend you use the [Word version](#) [link to Word application] of the application to create your narrative. This will allow you to edit and spell check as needed. Once you have your answers complete, cut and paste them into the online application.
 - c. Pay close attention to character limits. *These limits include spaces!*
6. Once you have completed the application and uploaded all attachments, click Submit Form to officially apply for the grant. If you do not click Submit Form, you will not have applied. You will also receive a confirmation screen upon submitting.

If you have any questions or problems, please consult our FAQ [link to FAQ] or don't hesitate to contact us at grantsadmin@neefusa.org.

AGO: Connecting Youth to the Outdoors 2012 Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to apply?

Applicant must:

- ❑ Be a Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management unit or a nonprofit organization, academic institution or tribal group that partner with the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.
- ❑ Have been in existence for at least two (2) years.
- ❑ Establish, or already have, a collaborative relationship with the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.
- ❑ Hold the proposed youth engagement events on a Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management site, or show that the project clearly benefits these agencies.

My organization works with several public land sites. Are we eligible?

Only organizations that work with Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management are eligible. If you work with several partners and one of them is the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management, and the proposed youth engagement events will be taking place on those sites, you are eligible. As part of the application, you must demonstrate a collaborative partnership with a Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.

I work for a Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management unit. Can I compete for these funds, and if selected how will I receive them?

Government units can compete for this funding opportunity. You must compete under exactly the same rules that apply to all other applicants and your proposals may not receive preferential attention or consideration. All proposals must reflect at least a 1:1 non-federal match for dollars granted through this RFP. If you are selected for funding, you will need to work closely with your agency's internal processes, and with NEEF, to ensure that all appropriate grants and agreements and documents are in place to authorize the receipt of funds from NEEF. In some instances, working closely with a partner who receives NEEF funding for your partnership project may be an effective strategy.

Does my proposal have to include a youth event for each project type (*education, recreation, environmental stewardship*)?

No, it is not required that you have a youth engagement event for each project type. For example, you could have several events that involve only one or two of the project types. However, the most competitive proposals will integrate the three project types. It is important that the events focus on hands-on outdoor engagement opportunities

Do we need to have experience in managing a federal grant?

Applicants will need to demonstrate in their proposal that they are capable of implementing the project and managing federal funds. Though your organization may not have experience managing federal funds, you may have staff that does or work with an accounting firm that does.

My non-governmental organization has been in existence for several years, but our formal 501(c)(3) status was not granted by the IRS until this past year. Does our tax status factor in to the eligibility requirement that states the applicant must have been in existence for at least 2 years?

The time period of two years can be measured from the date the group formed as an organization. We understand that some organizations may have worked through a fiscal agent in the past, or had delays in gaining 501(c)(3) status. As long as your organization has been working toward its mission for at least two years, regardless of tax status at the time of conception, you may be eligible to apply.

How do I apply?

Go to our [online application system](#). You will first be prompted to supply log on information, specifically a username and password. If you do not yet have an account, please click “Create New Account.”

How do I create an account?

When you click on the submit application button you will be prompted to either supply log on information or “Create New Account.” Clicking on the “Create New Account” button will allow you to supply the contact information necessary to create a log on and apply.

When creating an account, whose information should I provide in the User Information section? Whose information should I provide in the Organization Information section?

Contact information supplied in the User Information section should reflect the individual who will be directly handling the grant application process for your organization. If there is a problem with your application, or if we need to contact your organization for any questions, this is the person we will contact.

In the Organization information section, we recommend that you include the contact information of the person in charge of your organization. This would not be the person directly involved with the day to day handling of the grant application, but the person who is authorized to sign off on items such as Grant and Agreements and the like.

Who should I contact if I have problems with the online application?

For all questions regarding the online application system, or the requirements of the application itself, please contact grantsadmin@neefusa.org.

I already submitted a complete application, but I would like to revise some of my answers. Is there any way I can access my submitted application?

As long as it is prior to the application deadline, we can make your application available for edits. To request access to an already submitted application, please email

grantsadmin@neefusa.org, and be sure to include the name of your organization.

Please also note that if we open a submitted application for you, and you not do re-submit by the application deadline, your application will not be considered.