

Guidelines for Request for Application (RFA) on the New Mexico New Mexico Outdoor Learning Start-Up Grant

I. PURPOSE OF THIS REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA)

The outdoors is a resource for enhancing learning, social engagement, and health and should be available to all New Mexico students in every community. Experiences in nature and access to the outdoors are associated with greater health and wellbeing and academic success.

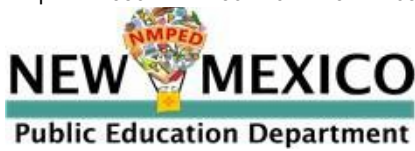
In New Mexico, children are experiencing higher rates of stress, depression, obesity, diabetes, and other health risks. These health risks, which increase with health inequity, have been further exacerbated by the pandemic; utilizing outdoor spaces for academic learning and incorporating **environmental education** into school curricula can help reduce these risks and inequities. COVID-19 has made it more relevant than ever to bring learning outdoors during school reentry to help lower stress while engaging students in a setting that reduces the risk of transmission—similar to when students were brought outside to protect them against tuberculosis and the Spanish Flu at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The most effective **outdoor learning** is student-centered, culturally and linguistically relevant and responsive, multidisciplinary, and supports physical, emotional, and social, health and wellbeing.

This RFA is designed to promote innovation in the critical area of outdoor learning by expanding access to outdoor learning and environmental education programs for New Mexico students. Up to three hundred thousand (\$300,000.00) in competitive grants are available to New Mexico PreK–12 public school districts or state-chartered charter schools, a group of public schools (**consortium of schools**), regional educational cooperatives, and single public schools in partnership with a community outdoor learning or environmental organization, to operate, expand, and sustain outdoor learning programs to:

- 1) Support outdoor learning and/or environmental education professional learning that integrates instruction in science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics, literacy, social studies, or humanities.
- 2) Develop a plan to create a new outdoor learning program, including training and supporting public school teachers on outdoor learning protocols and best practices, and developing an outdoor learning space/**outdoor classroom** on school grounds.

Note: **Emboldened** terms are defined in the Glossary of Terms



II. NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (PED) VISION

Provide a culturally, linguistically responsive education to ALL students in New Mexico to prepare them socially, emotionally, and academically for success in college, career, and life.

III. LEVEL OF FUNDING

One-year, one-time planning grants of up to fifty thousand (\$50,000) are available through an application process, where total funding shall not exceed three hundred thousand (\$300,000) for fiscal year 2023. Grant amounts will be determined by each entity's grant application. The full amount may be awarded to multiple applicants or a combination of applicants submitting a single application. Any funds not expended by June 30, 2023, shall be reverted to the PED and shall not be permitted to carry over to subsequent years. Current and continued funding for this project is dependent upon annual legislative appropriations.

IV. ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS

Purpose: Support professional learning on outdoor learning and/or environmental education that integrates instruction in science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics, literacy, social studies or humanities.

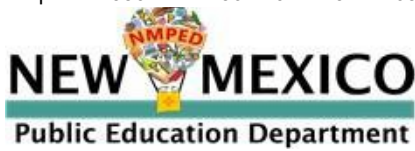
Funds may be used for professional learning tuition, fees, and/or training program costs, and/or professional learning books and/or materials for the teachers receiving training. Funds may be used to pay teacher stipends or substitute costs when teachers participate in professional learning. Funds may be used to contract with professional learning providers, mentors or coaches with outdoor learning expertise.

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V. UNALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS

Indirect costs are not allowable. The fiscal agent shall bear any indirect costs.



VI. LENGTH OF FUNDING

The resulting contract shall begin upon the awarding/execution of an award memo to winning applicants and continue through June 30, 2023. The PED reserves the right to terminate any award that does not meet the requirements as defined by the guidelines governing the program or does not demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting the objectives set forth in its approved application.

VII. ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

Eligible entities are New Mexico PreK–12 public school districts or state-chartered charter schools, a group of public schools (consortium of schools), regional education cooperatives, and single public schools in partnership with a community outdoor learning or environmental organization to operate, expand and sustain outdoor learning programs.

A school district that wishes to apply does not have to include all schools within the district in its application to be eligible for funding. Similarly, it is possible that not all schools included in a school district's or consortium of school's application will be funded.

A charter school's authorizer will be the fiscal agent, if funded.

VIII. COMPETITIVE PRIORITIES

The PED will prioritize distribution of available grant funding based on:

- proposals planning the creation of a new outdoor learning program;
- proposals from rural or urban entities that serve a student body in which at least 40 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, pursuant to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act;
- proposals from rural or urban entities that serve a student body in which at least 50 percent of students are "at-risk", pursuant to the PED Martinez-Yazzie Action Plan/Discussion Plan;
- impact in terms of number of students or potential students it will directly impact; and
- eligible entities that are working with providers of high-quality professional learning for kindergarten through grade twelve outdoor learning.



IX. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Consortium of schools	A group of public schools across school districts or within a regional education cooperative.
Culturally and linguistically relevant and responsive	Validating and affirming an individual's home culture and language to create connections with other cultures and languages in various social contexts.
Environmental education	An interdisciplinary educational process that helps people learn more about individual and community connections to natural systems, fostering environmental literacy and civic engagement.
Outdoor classroom	An external shelter or space within the school grounds which creates a practical area for outdoor learning.
Outdoor learning	An interdisciplinary set of activities that include discovery, experimentation, learning about and connecting to the outdoors and natural world, and engaging in environmental and recreational activities in an outdoor setting.

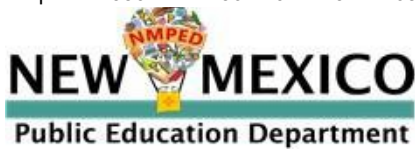
X. PROGRAM OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT

The PED has assigned the following individuals to oversee and manage the progress of the projects/programs, listed below:

Jacqueline Costales, Division Director, Curriculum and Instruction
Jacqueline.Costales@state.nm.us

Shafiq Chaudhary, Interim Director, Math and Science Bureau
 Shafiq.Chaudhary@state.nm.us

Christy Krenek, Science Specialist, Math and Science Bureau
 Christy.Krenek@state.nm.us



XI. SCORING GUIDELINES

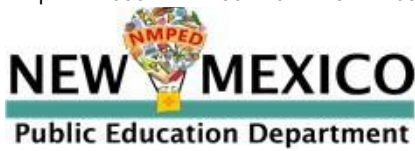
Each application will be scored across four (4) application sections. A total of 40 points are possible:

- I. Project Narrative (Detailed narrative illustrating intended goals, scope, partners, timeline, and any evidence-based justification) (7 points)
- II. Project Plan (Detailing the identification and implementation of high-quality professional learning to support teachers) (20 points)
- III. Project Budget (Budget overview detailing the requested funding by category through June 30, 2023) (7 points)
- IV. Sustainability of Project (Narrative detailing how the project will continue past June 30, 2023) (6 points)

Either a score of '0' or 'no submission' of any of the components of the application will result in a disqualification of the application.

XII. COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

All eligible entities awarded grant funding must participate in a Community of Practice (CoP) through the PED during the SY2022–2023 in order to receive grant funds. Failure to actively participate will constitute in awarded funds returned to the PED. All eligible entities must enroll in the CoP and share best practices, problems of practices to support collegial learning among one another. All applicants must enroll in and complete any required online Canvas course modules during the 2022–2023 school year. At a minimum, participants should include the schools' principal and teachers implementing outdoor learning programs.



XIII. TIMELINE

Program managers will make every effort to adhere to the following schedule:

Action	Responsible Party	Due Dates
Discuss RFA with interested stakeholders	PED	June 21, 2022
Issue RFA	PED	June 21, 2022
Deadline to submit Intent to Apply	Potential applicants	July 6, 2022
Deadline to submit questions	Potential applicants	July 11, 2022
Response to questions	PED	July 14, 2022
<i>Submission of applications</i>	<i>Potential applicants</i>	<i>July 27, 2022</i>
Evaluation of applications	Review Panel	July 28 – August 5, 2022
Selection of grantees	Review Panel	August 8–9, 2022
Finalize award memos	PED/Grantee(s)	August 9–31, 2022
Award Memo(s) Transmission	PED/Grantee(s)	September 1, 2022

XIV. EXPLANATION OF EVENTS

Discuss RFA

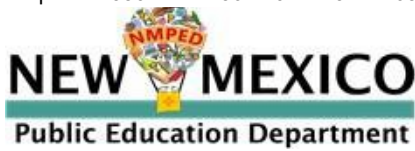
Pursuant to the issuance of the RFA, officials from PED will host a virtual meeting to discuss the intention of the RFA and go over the guidelines as stipulated in this document with interested stakeholders on June 21, 2022, from 2:00–3:00 pm MST. [Please register](#) for this webinar through the registration link. If you have questions or issues regarding registration, please email Shafiq Chaudhary.

Issuance of RFA

This RFA is being issued on behalf of the New Mexico Public Education Department on the date specified in the above timeline.

Deadline to Submit Intent to Apply

Potential applicant must submit the Intent to Apply via SurveyMonkey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ODLG23> by July 6, 2022, at 11:59 pm MST. Completing the Intent to Apply Form does not obligate the eligible entities in any way but will provide useful information to the PED in preparing for the grant review process. Entities may continue to apply even if they miss the deadline to submit the Intent to Apply.



Deadline to Submit Questions

Potential applicants may submit questions to the NM Outdoor Learning Grant Q&A on Canvas to the intent or clarity of the RFA until 4:00 pm MST on July 11, 2022, as indicated in the timeline above. Questions shall be clearly labeled and shall cite the relevant sections of the RFA or any other attending document.

Response to Questions

Responses to questions will be distributed as indicated in the timeline above and according to the order in which the questions were received.

Submission of Application

All applications must be received for review and evaluation through the New Mexico Outdoor Learning Start-Up Grant Canvas Portal no later than **4:00 pm MST on July 27, 2022**. Applications received after this time will not be accepted. The date and time of receipt of application will be noted on the application itself.

Evaluation of Applications

The Evaluation Committee will perform the evaluation of applications. The process will take place as indicated in the timeline above depending on the number of applications received. During this time, Shafiq Chaudhary may initiate discussions with Applicants for the purpose of clarifying aspects of the proposals. However, proposals may be accepted and evaluated without such discussion. Discussions may not be initiated by Applicants.

Selection of Grantees

The Evaluation Committee will notify all Applicants of the decision on their application August 9, 2022, or earlier. Feedback and final application score will be distributed to Applicants not selected for funding. Each application will be scored by the panelists individually and then discussed at a meeting of the entire panel in order to arrive at final scores and committee feedback for each component. For more detail on the scoring guidelines, see the "Scoring Guidelines" section above.

Finalize Awards

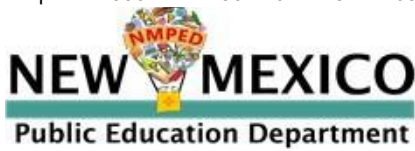
During the window of time stipulated in the timeline above, the PED will work directly with successful grantees to establish assurances terms leading to the awarding/execution of award letters.



After review of the Evaluation Committee Report and the signed contractual agreement, the Agency Procurement Office will award as per the schedule in the timeline above. This date is subject to change at the discretion of the State Purchasing Division or relevant Agency Procurement Office. The award letter(s) shall be awarded to the Applicants whose proposals are most advantageous to the State of New Mexico and the PED, taking into consideration the evaluation factors set forth in this RFA. The award is subject to appropriate Department and State approval, and both entities reserve the right to not fund any of the applications, if none are judged to be advantageous and/or do not score sufficiently.

XV. EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The committee tasked with the evaluation of applications has a broad level of experience with professional learning programs and content experts collectively, representing a variety of perspectives and experience in the field. Members are highly familiar with the professional learning and outdoor learning landscapes in New Mexico.



XVI. REPORTING

Each successful grantee awarded funding through the NM Outdoor Learning Start-Up Grant is required to report, at a minimum, the following information to the New Mexico Public Education Department on or before **July 7, 2023 that includes but is not limited to:**

- a summary of what planning occurred leading to next steps the entity will take;
- a timeline of program implementation;
- agendas from all planning meetings with attendance marked;
- the number of teachers who attended planning meetings or participated in professional learning;
- the number of administrators who attended each planning meeting;
- name of stakeholders, coaches, and/or mentors who assisted with planning and participated in the community of practice;
- the number of teachers who implemented outdoor learning and participated in the community of practice;
- the number of students who participated in outdoor learning;
- the gender, racial, and socioeconomic diversity of those students;
- agendas from trainings or events with attendance marked;
- a summary of which schools were represented at trainings or events; and
- a narrative showcasing the impact on students, teachers, community engagement, school culture and any other aspects that you have noticed, including artifacts and quotes.