

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION (RFA)
New Mexico Outdoor Learning Start-Up Grant Program

RFA Released: May 16, 2024

Final Date to Submit RFA: July 19, 2024, by 4:00 p.m.

RFA received after the final date will not be considered for funding.

This RFA is designed to promote innovation in the critical area of outdoor learning by expanding access to outdoor learning 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, and to:

1. Provide all students and families with equitable access to outdoor learning environments to interact, play, explore, discover, and learn.
2. Integrate culturally sustaining, social-emotional, interdisciplinary, outdoor, and environmental education programs that are aligned with content standards and are in collaboration with local organizations and based on community need.
3. Provide a variety of learning experiences that integrate environmental literacy and systems thinking concepts.
4. Make connections between local, regional, national, and global community systems and how they work together for a sustainable future.

Application Checklist

Please complete the checklist below to ensure that all required information and actions have been completed before uploading your complete application to Canvas.

_____ Cover Page [PDF]

_____ Assurance Forms [PDF]

_____ Electronic narrative, no more than 8 pages, double-spaced, 12pt. font Times New Roman [PDF]

_____ Electronic Budget Information Sheet [Excel]

_____ Subcontractor or Equipment Forms [if applicable] [PDF]

Applications must be uploaded to Canvas no later than 4:00 pm, July 19, 2024.

For program questions contact:

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For fiscal/budget questions contact:

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PURPOSE

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, well-being, 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.

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

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) Provide all students and families with equitable access to outdoor learning environments to interact, play, explore, discover, and learn.
- 2) Integrate culturally sustaining, social-emotional, interdisciplinary, outdoor, and environmental education programs that are aligned with state content standards and are in collaboration with local organizations and based on community need.
- 3) Provide a variety of learning experiences that integrate environmental literacy and systems thinking concepts.
- 4) Make connections between local, regional, national, and global community systems and how they work together for a sustainable future.

Goals

The PED's goals for this investment are:

- 1) Support initial planning and creation of outdoor learning programs.
- 2) Promote and/or expand existing outdoor learning professional learning programs to reach more New Mexico PreK–12 students

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible entities are New Mexico PreK–12 public school districts or state-chartered charter schools, a group of public schools (a 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, not all schools included in a school district's or consortium of school's applications may be funded.

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

All eligible entities awarded grant funding must participate in a monthly Community of Practice through the PED during the SY2024–2025 in order to receive grant funds. Failure to actively participate will result in awarded funds being returned to the PED.

Application Requirements

The application must include:

1. Completed “Cover Page”.
2. Completed “Assurances Form” with all signatures.
3. Electronic submission of narrative, explaining your plan, no more than 8 pages, double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, inclusive of the following sections [PDF]:
 - a. Justification- Detailed narrative that exemplifies how the program meets the eligibility criteria, student demographics, and how the proposal meets the PED Martinez-Yazzie Action Plan/Discussion Plan.
 - b. Summary – A detailed summary of how your proposal will benefit PreK–12 students and teachers in accessing outdoor learning, including how it will support socio-emotional and academic learning; major goals for robust professional development or need for establishing an NM outdoor learning program; and any evidence-based justification for your plan.
 - c. Budget Overview – A detailed overview of the amount of funding requested to carry out your plan, connected to the electronic budget information sheet, and that will not supplant any federal, state, local, or other non-federal funds, through June 30, 2025.
 - d. Program Timeline – Detailed outline of expected program benchmarks and milestones through at least June 2025.
 - e. Sustainability – Describe a clear and well-conceived plan for how this project will be funded and sustained once the grant award period has ended. Include how the continuing initiative is/will be aligned with the entities’ NM DASH or EdPlan, if applicable. Include any and all additional funding streams that may be used to continue or improve the grant project/proposal after the grant award period.
4. Electronic submission of completed “Electronic Budget Information Sheet” [Excel Sheet].
5. Electronic submission of completed Subcontractor or Equipment forms, if applicable [PDF].

An electronic copy of the completed application packet must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. MST on July 19, 2024. Facsimile copies will not be accepted. The completed application packet must be uploaded in its entirety into the Canvas Assignment. Requests for an extension of this date will not be granted.

New Mexico Outdoor Learning Start-Up Grant

Assurances Form

The Superintendent, Executive Director or an Appointed Authorized Representative must sign below to indicate their approval of the contents of the application, agreement of all the assurances below and the receipt of program funds. Check all of the applicable assurances.

On _____ (date), 2024, _____
 hereby applies for and, if awarded, accepts the state funds requested in this application. In consideration of the receipt of these grant funds, the entity agrees that the General Assurances form for all state funds and the terms therein are specifically incorporated by reference in this application. The entity also certifies that all program and pertinent administrative requirements will be met. In addition, grantees that accept New Mexico Outdoor Learning Start-Up Grant Program funding agree to the following assurances:

1. Successful awardees will provide the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) the evaluation information required in the End-of-Year Program Report (Appendix A) of the Request for Application.
2. Successful awardees will work with and provide requested data to the PED for the Grant Program within the timeframes specified.
3. Successful awardees must participate in the monthly Outdoor Learning Community of Practice. At a minimum, participants should include the school's principal and/or identified program manager, and teachers implementing outdoor learning programs.
4. Awardees must send teachers implementing outdoor learning to Wilderness First Aid training.
5. The schools/entities will not discriminate against anyone regarding race, gender, national origin, color, disability, or age.
6. Funded projects will maintain appropriate fiscal and program records and fiscal audits of this program will be conducted by the grantees as a part of their regular audits.
7. All records of the program will be retained for five years and access to those records will be available for the purposes of review and audit.
8. If any findings of misuse of these funds are discovered, project funds will be returned to the PED.
9. If any portion or component of this Assurances are not followed or violated, project funds will be returned to the PED.
10. The grantee will maintain sole responsibility for the project even though subcontractors may be used to perform certain services.

Name of District Superintendent/REC Executive Director/IHE Executive Director	Date	Signature of District Superintendent/REC Executive Director/IHE Executive Director	Date
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Name of Program Contact	Date	Signature of Program Contact	Date
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Note: If grant is approved, funding will not be awarded until all signatures are in place. Please attempt to obtain all signatures before submitting the application. Complete and attach after the Cover Page. If needed, additional copies of this page should be attached to include each participating school.

Appendix A:

End-of-Year Program Report

To be completed after award is received, due by July 7, 2025.

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, 2025**, that includes but is not limited to:

- a summary of what planning occurred leading to next steps 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;
- names 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 training or events with attendance marked;
- a summary of which schools were represented at training 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.