REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
FOR
NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION
PROGRAM EVALUATION

The National Park Foundation (NPF) is requesting proposals from evaluation professionals for strategic assessment of NPF grant activities to inform decision-making, elevate storytelling, inspire philanthropic support, strengthen and expand culturally relevant programming. Annually, over 350,000 youth, families, partners, Service Corps organizations, and other audiences connect with national parks through NPF grant-funded activities. In addition, NPF helps to strengthen national park infrastructure and build partner communities to wholistically approach a wide and changing set of needs faced by the National Park Service (NPS). As the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, the National Park Foundation generates private support and builds strategic partnerships to protect and enhance America’s national parks for present and future generations. We also seek to inform our own work culture, strategically enhance program outcomes, and help strengthen our partnership around education outreach with NPS.

In addition to supporting the National Park Service (NPS) through strategic philanthropy, NPF helps to deliver scholarly, cultural and stewardship activities, and we seek to increasingly implement programs meant to enhance park access for people of differing interests, needs, and abilities.

Over the past decade, the scope, scale, and complexity of our programs have grown (see Appendix A for NPF Program Pillar chart). We’re delivering more programs and funding to partners than ever before, but we have not yet scaled evaluation commensurately. Over the next several years, we want to create a stronger culture and practice of learning and evaluation, including the creation of an evaluation impact planning framework and strategies to help us more thoughtfully understand, report on, and make informed decisions about the full scope of NPF’s work. Specifically, we seek insight about how investments in education, recreation, research, resource management, and community partnerships, to name just a few, achieve intended outcomes, inspire new philanthropic support, and provide equitable park access. NPF also seeks to implement a utilization approach to evaluation that goes beyond programmatic awareness to actually use evaluative data to aid organizational decision-making, learn ways to enhance the relevance of our grant-making activities, and to build adaptable assessment approaches for diverse contexts over time.

Some NPF activities have been professionally evaluated (see Appendix B). NPF also collects general program data using a generic in-house survey (see Appendix C), rolling up this information to report on annual impact (see Appendix D). Looking ahead, in addition to reporting to donors on activities, we seek to collaborate with evaluation resources that will help lead NPF through workshops and collaborative visioning sessions with Programs, Philanthropy, and Communications teams to identify evaluation needs, goals and outcomes, and also, through this work, to help position our workplace culture in reflection, utilization and change derived from a well-articulated cycle of evaluative process (see Appendix E). Currently, NPF is working with a DEI Consultant to identify needs and ways to enhance NPF’s workplace equity.
Section 1: Program Evaluation Objectives and Approach

Program Evaluation Objectives:

NPF seeks to use program evaluation as a tool for learning, planning, and growth to support a broad and inclusive narrative that everyone belongs in parks, helping to more meaningfully support communities historically excluded from participation in the outdoors – either through a community’s physical presence on public lands (i.e. segregation, forced removal, or lack of accessibility accommodations) or through the narrative of who belongs in the outdoors.

In addition to forging a better understanding of the outcomes connected to our grant-making, NPF seeks to tell the story of our work in more culturally relevant and socially compelling ways, and to illuminate power dynamics that influence park spaces, communities, and activities. NPF seeks to enhance our workplace culture at various levels including the Program/Pillar level (see Appendix A) and in guiding activities with NPS, partner organizations, and stakeholders.

Given the emerging complexity and interconnectedness of our grant-making work, NPF is listening for ideas from a variety of evaluation communities, particularly for utilization-focused modalities to help identify blind-spots regarding our ability to plan and effect change, reach new audiences, identify intersections and collaborative opportunities, and assimilate new ideas for desired growth. We recognize that our workplace is just starting to understand how to use evaluation to enhance our work, therefore a major need in bringing new evaluation resources onboard is to guide discussion and sessions that teach NPF how to create, implement and learn from an objectives-driven program.

Recognizing that grant reporting can be a barrier for program participants as well as a tool with limited sight lines into the complexity of grant-funded initiatives, NPF seeks new reporting modalities that reduce obstacles and deliver clearer insights. We aim to leverage visual storytelling and adapt evaluation approaches to evolving grantee, partner and community needs. We expect these objectives to shift over time as we listen and learn.

Additional Objectives include:

1) Assess basic grant-funded activity dynamics such as: capacity to scale up, justification to scale down or shift focus; and help formulate key questions to guide year-after-year analysis, among other evolving information needs.

2) Build robust multi-year approach to program evaluation. Collect, interpret, report, and periodically present on qualitative and quantitative analysis, emerging opportunities, and social trends factoring into NPF’s current and evolving program space.

3) Build adaptable evaluation plans that respect grantee limits for reporting, recognize divergent donor and participant needs, and help guide organizational transformation through fresh insights supported by data.
4) Decipher how NPF’s work supports multiple outcomes including equitable access to parks, future viability of grant-funded activities and impact storytelling in collaboration with NPS and partners.

5) Help NPF use evaluation to make sound strategic decisions, identify interconnections between grant-funded activities that are driven from the work of different teams and help staff proactively use evaluation insights to guide planning, strengthen program accountability and leverage collective impact.

6) Host staff debriefs and frame next steps as part of annual & multi-year planning. Explore how grant funded activities are intended to connect communities that have been historically excluded, among other topics.

7) Help NPF understand the qualitative indicators associated with grant-funded activities, including social emotional learning, attitude, interest, behavior, and 21st Century skills. Guide staff to recognize and prioritize key qualitative indicators to fuel new storytelling, deepen relationships with stakeholders, and frame new initiatives accordingly.

8) Help to position NPF as a thought leader and authentic partner in park spaces and the many audiences and communities we serve.

**Three-Phased Approach:**
NPF seeks to scale-up evaluation of our grant-making activities in a phased approach, aware that we are embarking on a process of exploration to thoughtfully plan the expansion of our current activities; to cultivate awareness and agreement among stakeholders about the utility of evaluation; and to frame baseline cost/implementation requirements in a more comprehensive and evolving plan.

**Phase One:** Summative evaluation of 6 current programs (see Appendix B for list of programs). Phase One work will occur September 2021 to August 2022. NPF may extend the contract of the consultant selected to conduct this scope of work as annual program evaluation for FY ’23 will also be needed.

**Phase Two:** Exploration and planning (NPF & Consultant) to frame a utilization-focused plan to assess all NPF grant activities. Deliverables may include: creation of an Evaluation Impact Planning Framework; facilitation of a series of workshops and collaborative visioning sessions with Programs, Philanthropy and Communications teams to identify evaluation needs, goals and outcomes; and budget and planning documents necessary to position our workplace culture in reflection, utilization and change derived from a well-articulated cycle of evaluative process. Phase Two work will begin November 2021.

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1 Assessment, as opposed to evaluation is intentionally used. Not all NPF grant-funded activities require summative evaluation or statistical data analysis. Different assessment modalities are envisioned to capture change over time.
Phase Three: Pursuant to completion of Phase Two, NPF will issue a new RFP seeking submission of a detailed five-year plan to assess the full suite of NPF grant-funded activities. Anticipated due date is December 1, 2022.

NPF recognizes that the skillsets needed for Phase One and Two work are different, and that consultants may prefer to bid on a single Phase only. We encourage prospective bidders to reflect upon the expertise of your team, and to bid on the work that allows you to best use your expertise.

Scalability and Applicability of Work:
NPF recognizes that evaluation is scalable, and serves information needs for a variety of different stakeholders. NPF will work with our evaluation partner to define multiple levels of data needs and the ways evaluation insights inform foundation work at various levels including at the specific program level, to raise awareness of cross-cutting themes among and between specific program teams, at the strategic planning level, at the philanthropy and donor stewardship level, and perhaps ultimately, to build a culture of shared understanding and utilization of program evaluation insights to uncover blind spots, leverage new opportunities and continuously find ways to make meaningful differences in people’s lives.

Section 2: How Your Proposal Will Be Evaluated
The ideal evaluation plan will build on its findings year-to-year. Annual data-driven baseline reporting is needed but program narratives are expected to evolve. Applicants are encouraged to propose their own ideas about how to approach the program evaluation objectives in their narrative.

NPF plans to award a contract/s based on best value to the Foundation considering a variety of factors described below. All of the following factors are of equal importance:

A. Relevant Experience/Past Performance
   1. Relevant experience obtained within the past three (3) years of providing or performing a combination of outdoor park, historic site, and cultural program evaluation services (of similar size, scope, complexity, and type of client that indicates your suitability for this project. Relevant work on outdoor, park, museum, historic sites, and similar venues and resources is preferred.
   2. Relevant experience engaging with diverse communities in programmatic discussions to help surface the needs, concerns, and challenges of activating potential/future audiences, partners, and prospective partners in shared mission and program delivery. Equitable and culturally responsive evaluation should be considered within the proposal and process, as outlined in the American Evaluation Association Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation, weblink: [https://www.eval.org/About/Competencies-Standards/Cultural-Competence-Statement](https://www.eval.org/About/Competencies-Standards/Cultural-Competence-Statement).
   3. Past Performance should be indicated by a list of current or previous contracts. Please include a point of contact (name, current email, telephone number) who can answer specific
questions on type and quality of evaluation past performance, tools used, quality of evaluation process and outcomes, and communication effectiveness between client and contractor. Provide contract periods of performance dates, dollar value, and brief description of the work performed. NPF will only contact references for final candidates.

4. The ideal candidate should have demonstrated experience leading evaluation projects that involve the active engagement of multiple stakeholders, bring insight of trends and emerging issues relevant in the field of public engagement in outdoor, park, historical and cultural spaces, be able to scale resources to adapt to changing needs for information and reporting focus, and be skilled in identifying and surmounting barriers to change.

B. Qualifications/Technical Competence

1. Technical Information – Technical information should include a narrative discussion addressing the technical competence, the firm’s capabilities, qualifications, and approach to satisfy the requirements. How will you scale to meet evolving needs?

2. Certifications – The contractor shall provide copy of current certificate for Human Subjects in research training.

3. The Consultant shall provide proof of professional liability insurance coverage at an amount to be agreed upon by the NPF and the Consultant.

4. Product Samples – (1) A sample front-end evaluation report for a park, museum, historic site or cultural venue; (2) a sample summative evaluation report for a park, museum, historic site or cultural venue project; (3) samples that demonstrate the outcome of a utilization-focused approach. These may include documents that guide organizations in strategic planning or risk assessment, or public-facing communications such as storytelling or a strategic plan.

C. Resumes of Potential Contractor Assignees

D. Price

Section 3: Proposal Structure and Estimating Cost of Phased Work
The skillsets for Phase One and Two are different; therefore, we expect firms to select which phase they’re best suited for if not both. There is no expectation that candidates will bid on both phases. However, if you decide that your skillset makes you a competitive candidate for both phases of work, please submit separate proposals and bids for Phase One and Phase Two, along with justification of your qualifications for both phases (see Section 2: How Your Proposal Will Be Evaluated, above).
**Submissions for Phase One Only:**
Phase One submissions must include detailed explanation of approach to deliverables as well as your thoughts about the interplay between Phase One and Phase Two work. If different consultants are selected to perform Phase One and Phase Two work (summative program evaluation remains a constant, annual need even as we plan for expansion of evaluation processes), NPF expects occasional communication between Phase One and Phase Two consultants will be needed.

A firm, fixed price must be submitted.

**Submissions for Phase Two Only:**
Phase Two submissions must include detailed explanation of approaches to deliverables as well as your thoughts about what is needed, should be prioritized and activated in Phase Two to set the stage for success as NPF rolls-out comprehensive evaluation plans. If different consultants are selected to perform Phase Two and Phase One work (summative program evaluation remains a constant, annual need even as we plan for expansion of evaluation processes), NPF expects occasional communication between Phase Two and Phase One consultants will be needed.

A firm, fixed price must be included.

**Submissions for Phases One and Two:**
Please submit separate proposal and cost estimates for Phase One and Phase Two as described above. Intent to participate in both phases should be reflected in both proposals. A firm, fixed price must be included for each phase.

Interested parties should email their application materials to klee@nationalparks.org and chansen@nationalparks.org. Please include ‘NPF Evaluation RFP’ in email subject line. Application Deadline: Phase 1 due August 13 and Phase 2 due August 31, 2021.

**Section 4: Budget and Timeline**
**Program Budget:** NPF has secured funding for Phase One. Funding for Phase Two (and beyond) of this multi-year initiative will require additional fundraising by NPF as we develop a better understanding of cost.

**RFP and Launch Timeline:**
- June 30, 2021: RFP issued
- July 20: RFP Informational Call #1, [Zoom Link for Tuesday](#)
- July 29: RFP Informational Call #2, [Zoom Link for Thursday](#)
- August 13, 2021: Phase One proposals due by 5:00 p.m. ET
- August 31, 2021: Phase Two proposals due by 5:00 p.m. ET
- August-September 2021: RFP review and finalist interviews
- August 31, 2021: Phase One award announcement
- September 16, 2021: Phase One kick-off meeting
- Mid October 2021: Phase Two award announcement
• Mid November 2021: Phase Two kick-off meeting

**Informational Calls:**
Optional informational calls to discuss this RFP and the proposal process are tentatively scheduled for July 20 at 2:00 pm ET and July 29 at 12:00 pm ET. Prospective bidders are encouraged to attend and ask questions.

**Tuesday, July 20, 2-3:00 pm ET** – Join Zoom Meeting via Weblink or Meeting ID: 859 4921 5626
https://nationalparks-org.zoom.us/j/85949215626

**Thursday, July 29, 12-1:00 pm ET** – Join Zoom Meeting via Weblink or Meeting ID: 895 3351 4718
https://nationalparks-org.zoom.us/j/89533514718
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<th>PROTECT</th>
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<td><strong>Landscape &amp; Wildlife Conservation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Youth Engagement &amp; Education</strong></td>
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<td>Protect and restore native wildlife and habitats and conserve scenic vistas within and around National Park sites.</td>
<td>Engage all in the wonder of our national parks to inspire a lifelong love of the outdoors, recreation and exploration. Eliminate barriers, promote access, and cultivate connections to the social, mental and physical health benefits of the outdoors.</td>
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<td><strong>History &amp; Culture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outdoor Exploration</strong></td>
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<td>Preserve historic and cultural sites and help tell the stories that hold our shared history.</td>
<td>Grow a diverse and effective national network of park partners – friends groups, volunteers, service corps and community members – and cultivate a pipeline of future leaders dedicated to protecting and preserving our national parks.</td>
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<td><strong>Resilience &amp; Sustainability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communities &amp; Workforce</strong></td>
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<td>Design infrastructure systems to ensure sustainable and resilient park operations, including waste reduction and expansion of renewable energy in parks.</td>
<td><strong>Youth Engagement &amp; Education</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Parks of the Future</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outdoor Exploration</strong></td>
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<td>Harness the power of technology and innovation to meet the needs of future park visitors.</td>
<td>Engage all in the wonder of our national parks to inspire a lifelong love of the outdoors, recreation and exploration. Eliminate barriers, promote access, and cultivate connections to the social, mental and physical health benefits of the outdoors.</td>
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**NOTE:** Some programs may fall under more than one pillar.
APPENDIX B
List of NPF Programs for Phase One

- **Service Corps**
  NPF works with national parks and other partner organizations to engage diverse youth and young adults to serve in professionally supervised teams as they explore future outdoor careers, learn practical field skills, and develop confidence as emerging leaders. Service corps members develop a deep connection to national parks through a variety of activities including building trails, improving wildlife habitat, stream restoration, and historic building preservation.
  - Metrics (self-reported):
    - Number of participants
    - Number of participant hours
    - Linear feet of trails built/restored
    - Acres of land monitored/mapped
    - Acres of habitat restored
    - Tons of trash/litter removed
    - Historic structures restored

- **Open OutDoors for Kids, Field Trip and Hybrid program** [Single and Focus City]
  NPF works with national parks and partners to deliver outdoor educational field trips to fourth grade students and teachers nationwide, especially those in underserved communities. Over 1 million youth have been served with a goal of engaging 1 million more over the next four years.
  - Metrics:
    - # of 4th graders served; # of Title 1 schools served; % of Racial/ethnic diversity of participants; # of EKO passes distributed
    - Type of curriculum/program implemented; type of activity, i.e. to what extent was outdoor experience a part of the OOK program
    - Presence of three-touch design
    - Press releases, social media postings, web pages, presentations, community events, workshops.
    - Student survey questions: # of students who visited park before field trip; what did participant learn from visit; feeling attachment to park
    - Motivation for teacher participation

- **Junior Ranger Angler**
  Nearly 200 urban and rural parks allow recreational fishing in some capacity, presenting a great opportunity for NPS to educate and engage the next generation of fishing enthusiasts. The Junior Ranger Angler program supports recreational fishing experiences for people of all ages by connecting underserved communities with multi-generational family programming. The program aims to bolster fishing clinics, gear libraries, partner support, addition of community engagement coordinators, and digital resources.
  - Metrics:
    - Fishing Clinics: 3 of youth participants, # of adult participants, # of events planned
• Gear Libraries: # of items/individuals/groups that check out equipment

• **Fellowships** (Humanities, Science, Women’s History)
  Facilitate a variety of fellowships for post-doctorate scholars that deliver innovative research to enhance, expand, and deepen storytelling at national parks across the country. The humanities fellowship focuses on broadening scholarship and interpretation in relation to labor, civil rights, and equality history. Research conducted through science fellowships inform long-term challenges facing conservation of natural resources within the NPS system, currently focusing on Broad Landscape Ecology, Oceans, and Social Sciences. A Woman’s History Fellow will join NPS later this Fall.
  o **Metrics:**
    ▪ # of programs hosted; Variety and # of communications issued; Number of parks & partners engaged; Additional metrics TBD in consultation with Fellows and Consultant.

• **Outdoor Recreation**
  NPF seeks to engage new audiences with national parks through partnerships with local, regional, or national organizations who can facilitate activities that lead to participants’ increased confidence in experiencing the outdoors. Activities include kayaking, camping, fishing, birding, cooking on a campfire, outdoor photography, night sky observing/astronomy, hiking.
  o **Metrics:**
    ▪ Intent to return to local NPS unit
    ▪ Increased confidence or knowledge of outdoor skill(s)
    ▪ Likelihood of trying other outdoor recreational activities
    ▪ Intent to engage in recreational activity again
    ▪ Increased confidence/comfort in being outdoors
    ▪ Likelihood of recruiting family/friends to engage with park

• **Women in Parks**
  Launched in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, this evergreen initiative seeks to enhance story telling about historic and contemporary women who have shaped the fabric of national parks. Grant funded activities include: internship, fellowships, and a diverse array of education activities.
  o **Metrics:** To be determined in conjunction with Phase One consultant.
# APPENDIX C

## Sample Survey

**Due Date:**
30/31/2021

**Core Strategy:**
Connect People to Parks

**Status:**
Draft

### Background Information

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List all NPF sites/offices impacted by NPF grant:

### Project Information

Please enter the reporting start date (from date) and end date (to date) below.

**Reporting Period Start Date:**

**Reporting Period End Date:**

Is this for a Multi-Year Grant?

Please provide a brief description of your program/project:

Please share at least 2-3 highlights or proudest accomplishments from your program/project.

Explain any changes that were made to the original scope of work, timeline, objectives, and/or budget. What changed and why? If none, enter N/A.

Do you plan to continue your program/project? Are there plans to sustain or expand it? If yes, please explain.

Based on what you learned this year, what, if any, programmatic changes will you make?
Telling the Story

How did this program/project impact the participants? Please include participant or partner quotes. If possible, please include names and details of people being quoted (e.g., age, grade level, etc.).

Please describe how this program/project impacted the NPS site.

Is there anything else you would like to share about this program/project? What has been the most surprising?

If your program/project has an online component, please share the URL.

General Metrics

Please answer the questions below. If any of the requested metrics are not applicable, please put 0.

For the following question, please calculate how many people directly participated in your program/project. I.e., total number of visitors to the NPS site, participants in your program, or attendees at your event(s). Do NOT include full-time NPS paid staff, volunteers, corps members, or interns in this participant number.

Total number of participants:

How many of these participants were first-time visitors?

Out of the total participant number, please indicate how many of the following demographics participated in your program/project. If any are not applicable, or if the number is not available, please skip.

- Number of Youth/Young Adults (under 25 years old):
- Number of Seniors (65 and over):
- Number of Veterans:
- Number of Active Military Members or their family members:

Participant Demographics

To the best of your ability, please estimate the demographic breakdown of your participants. First, please click on the green + icon to the right of the Demographics Selection text below. Then select the populations that apply and click Save. The system will then allow you to select the percentages for each demographic group.

Demographic Populations

How many NPS staff were you able to hire/extend/continue as a result of this grant:

Number of interns supported by NPF grant funding:

Did you have any volunteers help with your NPF grant activities at your site? By volunteers, we mean individual people who are not being paid for their time.

Did you partner with any other organizations while implementing your program/project?

Did your partners provide financial donations?:

Did your partners provide in-kind support? (e.g., equipment to help with the project):

Number of participating K-12 schools:

For the following question, please calculate the dollar amount of deferred maintenance reduced as a result of this project (can be an estimate). "Deferred maintenance" includes repairs or maintenance on roads, buildings, utility systems, and other structures and facilities across the National Park System that have been postponed for more than a year due to budget constraints.
National Park Foundation

Dollar amount of deferred maintenance reduced: $0.00

Connect People to Parks

Please answer the following questions. If any of the requested metrics are not applicable, please put 0.

Number of public events held:

Number of teachers trained on using parks as classrooms:

Number of participating school districts:

Number of park-based professional development opportunities for teachers:

Number of communication activities deployed to raise awareness of program:

Number of programs implemented using standards-based curriculum:

Number of new standards-based lesson plans/curriculum/activities developed:

Please describe any field experiences that were provided that were directly related to school curriculum:

Number of lesson plans or curriculum modules created:

Number of hours students engaged at park or public land:

Number of hours teachers engaged in professional development activities at a park or public land:

How many Junior Rangers were sworn in during your program/project:

How does this program’s outcomes support other programs at your site? Does this program enhance or work in conjunction with other programs at the site? Please explain.

▼ Photos/Media

REPORT ATTACHMENTS
Please click here to access all National Park Foundation Annual Reports. Click image below for 2020 Annual Report.
APPENDIX E

Desired Narratives NPF Seeks to Strengthen/Expand Through Program Evaluation

Sample Narratives:

1. With the help of evaluation to reveal program connections and cross-cutting themes in the portfolio of our work, NPF will tell more complete, diverse and relevant stories featuring the “why” of our work, not just the ‘how’.

2. The Programs & Partnerships team will be able to story tell about program pivots, add context to why something new is launched, how challenges were faced and what outcomes we seek. This story telling will bring authenticity, relevance and compassion/passion to our work.

Questions Evaluation Can Help to Answer:

1. What processes should NPF put in place to increase the likelihood that evaluation findings are used to foster organizational learning and cultivate a more agile understanding of outcomes of our mission?

2. Do current grant investments in education, recreation, research, technical support, resource management and community partnerships achieve intended outcomes?

3. What forms of reporting will inspire philanthropic support, deliver timely & compelling communication and help guide NPF Units to intersecting opportunities in our work?

4. What evaluation approaches are most likely to assist NPF in strategic planning, assessing organizational risk, and analyzing trends to help guide decision-making?