

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION'S SERVICE CORPS FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Grant Applications Due: Friday, February 5, 2021

The National Park Foundation (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, clearing high-use areas, improving wildlife habitat, stream restoration, historic building preservation, and engaging volunteers. Service corps also instill a strong work ethic and a sense of stewardship of national park lands in participants from various backgrounds. Often these young people's first experience in a park, crew members gain valuable on-the-ground skills that can be leveraged for careers in their local communities, potentially with NPS, or with other federal land management agencies.

Service corps offer participants an opportunity to work for several weeks within a national park site to address the mission critical issues of the National Park Service (NPS). Each year, NPS staff determine their top-priority projects and work with partner organizations to coordinate service corps support of those projects.

Optional Informational Call: An optional informational call to discuss this RFP and the proposal process is tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 3:00 pm ET**. **A link to the video call and a final confirmed date and time will be posted at <https://www.nationalparks.org/grant-applications>**. All parties interested in submitting a proposal are welcome to attend the call, but it is not required that you be on this call to submit a proposal.

Deadline: Applications are due no later than **Friday, February 5th** (midnight ET).

Award Amount:

This year, parks and/or partner organizations will be eligible to apply for one of two types of support – extending an existing planned crew or supporting a new crew. Parks and/or partners can submit one application in each category, but will only be awarded one grant, if successful, due to anticipated high demand. Extending existing crews can apply for up to \$35,000. New crews can apply for up to \$75,000. Activities will be for the 2021 calendar year. NPF anticipates awarding a minimum of \$1,500,000.

Notification: Applicants will be notified of award selections by late February 2021.

Selection Process: All applications will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of representatives from the National Park Foundation and the National Park Service. Grantee selections will be based on the applicant's ability to meet and exceed program requirements and outcomes.

Questions: Contact Katherine Chesson at kchesson@nationalparks.org with questions about this Request for Proposals.

RFP Contents:

- A. Overview**
- B. Criteria**
- C. Requirements**
- D. Timeline**
- E. Evaluation**
- F. Instructions**
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A. Initiative Overview

The National Park Foundation is aligning its work around the concept of a continuum of engagement and service corps are a critical element in engaging young adults, as well as veterans, as the next generation of national park stewards. These crews provide skill building and leadership development opportunities for participants while providing tangible benefits and improvements to our public lands.

This is a critical time for National Park Service as it seeks to balance visitation, greater demands on the resources the agency must protect and preserve, and in a new time of social distancing. Visitors' enjoyment of America's more than 400 national park sites is threatened by aging park infrastructure due to increased pressure on park resources. The backlog of pressing repair and maintenance projects throughout the National Park System is estimated at approximately \$12 billion—far exceeding annual federal appropriations. However, with passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, which will direct up to \$6.5 billion over five years to address NPS deferred maintenance, now is the time to leverage federal funding for the National Park System to make lasting and impactful changes.

Improving park infrastructure is a high priority of both the Department of Interior, NPS, and NPF, reflecting our shared commitment to improve the visitor experience and protect America's treasures. NPF seeks to elevate the work of existing organizations dedicated to supporting and running conservation and service corps programs. Partnering with other national or regional non-profits in the public lands sector allows us to leverage our resources for greater impact to enhance the visitor experience through improved infrastructure and access.

B. Program Criteria

While NPF understands and respects that service corps models take many different forms, 2021 funding will again be prioritized for projects that exemplify a strong commitment to the key areas below.

This year, NPF will be awarding grants under two models. The first is to continue existing planned service corps crews with the explicit goal of extending terms of service for participants. NPF is placing increasing emphasis on providing as direct linkage as possible to move young people from service corps participant to federal employee. By extending terms of service for projects already underway, service corps participants will earn more hours furthering the development of career building skills. This is a pilot model that NPF will evaluate with the help of our grantees to understand the benefit and impact to parks, partners, and corps participants.

The second model is to support unfunded service corps crews, similar to years past.

When submitting projects within your application, please keep in mind the following criteria and explain, when possible, how your project will address these specific areas:

- 1. Project Work:** All service corps project submissions should include a high-priority area of

work for the selected park site. This work can vary to include trail maintenance or restoration, habitat restoration, invasive species removal, historic structure preservation, public structure construction, and more. If crews will be improving, restoring, or building new trails, please indicate how many miles of trail will be worked on. Regardless of activity, the work should be of priority to the park as demonstrated by a letter of support from the NPS Superintendent and inclusion of a PMIS number for all facilities-based projects.

2. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** As a priority for NPF, NPS, and our sponsors, projects should incorporate increased access to service corps work for diverse audiences. NPF would like to continue to support equitable access to all parks, but also respect that diversity and inclusion may take various forms in differing communities. Service corps project applications should highlight the types of diverse and inclusive audiences that the project will connect with during the recruitment process.
3. **Leadership Development:** In addition to providing a service to the park, service corps projects should help to increase the skill set of the service corps members. By developing the corps member's competencies across a broad range of activities, the service corps experience will increase the crew members' job readiness for employment at the National Park Service or other conservation agencies. Job skills can include both technical certifications as well as 21st century skills like leadership, collaboration, creativity, flexibility, and more. Tangible skills such as setting up an account and navigating USA Jobs, resume development, trainings on direct hiring authorities, etc. are also encouraged.
4. **Geographic Priorities:** Priority states for this year's submissions include Alaska, Arkansas, California, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming, though competitive projects will be considered in other states as well.

C. Requirements

1. Service corps work should focus on projects related to deferred maintenance, increasing recreation access, and/or increasing access for visitors with disabilities.
2. NPF aims to award a minimum of \$1.5 million for service corps projects.
3. Grant requests should not exceed \$35,000 for extending existing crews or \$75,000 for new crews. Parks or service corps organizations can apply for one project in each category.
4. Funding will support project activities in the 2021 calendar year.
5. Final reports will be due end of December 2021, with interim high-level updates due in October 2021.
6. Selected national parks and service corps organizations will need to collect project content (videos, photos, participant biographies, impact stories, etc.) and work with NPF and partners to collaboratively amplify service corps story through social media, media inquiries, and other opportunities as available

D. Program Timeline

Early January: RFP open to parks and service corps partner organizations

2/05/21: RFP submission closes

Late-February 2021: Selected parks and service corps partner organizations notified of final decisions

March – December 2021: Program implementation

October 31, 2021: Top line reporting due

December 31, 2021: Service corps final report(s) due

E. Program Evaluation

Successful applicants will be required to detail their evaluation and reporting plan in a follow up conversation with the NPF program manager, guided by the standard NPF annual reporting template, which will be shared in advance.

F. Proposal Instructions:

1. Read the RFP

Please read this RFP carefully and then use the online application process to submit. NPS sites and service corps organizations are both eligible to submit applications for 2021 projects. For the application questions, please be as specific as possible. Including detailed responses that outline what the corps members will be doing, what dates (month(s) and exact dates, if known), specific trails or areas of the park, target participant demographics, etc. will help NPF to fully understand the scope of the proposed project. Please also be sure to include the full budget needed to support the project, the percentage/amount of total budget that requested NPF funding will be covering, and the in-kind match components.

- 2. Optional:** An optional informational call to discuss this RFP and the proposal process is tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, January 21st at 3:00 pm ET. A link to the video call and a final confirmed date and time will be posted at <https://www.nationalparks.org/grant-applications>.** All parties interested in submitting a proposal are welcome to attend the call, but it is not required that you be on this call to submit a proposal.

3. Online Application

NPF has recently transitioned to a new grants management system, Fluxx. All new users are required to create an account, which can be used to apply for future grants and complete final reports for NPF. Fluxx registration is a two-step process, as new accounts must be approved before grantees gain access to the portal. Please submit Fluxx registration requests as soon as possible to ensure ample time to finalize and submit grant proposals.

- a. If you have previously created an account in Fluxx, please sign in using your existing username and password.
- b. To register for an account in Fluxx, please go to <https://nationalparks.fluxx.io/> and click on “Create an Account Now” to fill out the form.
 - **Reminder:** Please register for Fluxx at least **two-days in advance** of RFP deadline to avoid technical delays and ensure timely submission of all grant proposals.
 - Once registration has been approved, grantees will receive an email link to set up an account password. Please check your junk/spam folder for an incoming email from Do-not-reply.grants07-us-east-1@fluxx.io.
- c. To submit an application, please log into the grantee portal, navigate to the left-hand menu, and click on “Apply for Funding”. On this webpage, select “Service Corps Application” to get started.

- **Reminder:** Fluxx **does not automatically save**. Click on the “Save” button frequently to ensure that no information is lost. You may save applications to continue working on it later. We recommend you complete your application in Word first to ensure you don’t lose any information.

d. For assistance using Fluxx, please contact Emily Kamin at applications@nationalparks.org.

4. Start Online Application and Needing to “Saving and Finish Later”

After you have begun your submission, you may choose to save and complete it at a later date. You can exit the submission at any time and access it later by logging back into the Fluxx grants management system.

5. Complete and submit your finished application

Press “Submit” on the last page of the online system. You will receive an automatic email confirming that your application has been submitted. If you do NOT receive an automatic email, your application has NOT been submitted. Please note, the Fluxx system **does not** autosave so please be sure to save any changes that are made before exiting the application.

Proposals are due no later than Friday, February 5th.

G. Application Template

See following pages

WORD VERSION OF SERVICE CORPS APPLICATION

NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION'S
SERVICE CORPS FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Grant Applications Due: **Friday, February 5, 2021**

NPS Site Name: _____

Superintendent First Name: _____

Superintendent Last Name: _____

Superintendent Email: _____

NPS Project Lead First Name: _____

NPS Project Lead Last Name: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Service Corps Organization Information

Executive Director Full Name: _____

Executive Director Email: _____

Corps Organization: _____

Service Corps Organization Project Lead:

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Mailing Address (Street): _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

APPLICATION STATEMENTS:

Read and answer each question below.

1. Project Title

Project title should be concise and capture the essence of the project.

2. Project Description (Please address all four questions within your response.)

A. Describe the project including the NPS infrastructure priority need—why is it a priority for NPS? For example, is there an urgency or will it impact a large number of visitors?

B. Please be specific/explicit as to how your project will increase access to recreation, address deferred maintenance, or increase access for the physical disability community.

C. If you are requesting funds to extend a currently scheduled project, please include how many additional hours (or weeks of service) corps members will gain through this grant.

D. If your project will repair, restore, or build new sections of a trail, please name the trail. Where possible include specific metrics related to project activities (# of miles of trail restored, # of miles of riverbanks cleared, # of invasive species, etc.).

3. Target Population

Describe your core target audience and why you feel they are important for this project. Please include how many youth and/or veterans will participate.

4. Participant Outcomes

How will you support the career and leadership development of your participants to help them transition their corps experience into future employment opportunities? What success have you had in making this connection with past participants?

5. Participant Outcomes Assessment

Do you conduct pre and post surveys, or other assessment measures, with participants to determine the efficacy of your leadership development and overall corps experience? If yes, please briefly explain (no more than a paragraph).

6. Project Timeline

What are the major milestones? Please estimate specific dates for key project components. You may attach your schedule as a Word or Excel document to the online application.

7. Other Project Partner(s)

Identify any other new or existing partner organizations who will participate in the project and describe their project role.

8. Are there any other “leveraging” opportunities?

Describe opportunities to leverage funds, in-kind donations, outreach, expertise, research, partnerships, etc.

9. Other

What else do you wish to tell us about your project, if anything?

10. PMIS Number

Please include the PMIS number below.

11. Budget

Amount Requested

Please identify the total amount requested from NPF. Maximum for extending a project is \$35,000 and the maximum for an unscheduled project is \$75,000.

Project Budget

Please provide an overall budget for the project, including delineated additional revenue secured if NPF funds won't fully cover the full budget. You can attach an Excel or Word document in the attachments section.

12. Superintendent/Executive Director Certification

All applications must have NPS Superintendent approval before submitting. By providing the information below, you are certifying that the NPS site's superintendent approves this application.

NPS Unit Authority's Name

Title of NPS Authority (Superintendent, Executive Director, Site Manager)