

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION'S Open Outdoors for Kids Hybrid Learning Grant Program

The National Park Foundation is pleased to announce that it is accepting applications from ALL National Park System units and affiliated units officially administered by the National Park Service to participate in our 2020-2021 Open Outdoor for Kids Hybrid Learning Grant program.

Grant Applications Due: November 20, 2020

Overview:

COVID-19 created mass disruption across all facets of life, but perhaps nowhere has that been more acutely felt than within the education system. Teachers, students, and families had to respond overnight, transitioning from classroom in-person learning to individual learners logging on virtually. With the 2020-2021 school year in full swing, the common theme emerging is the variance in how schools are operating—whether remotely, in-classroom, or a hybrid approach. In response to the uniqueness of this learning environment, the National Park Foundation is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to support fourth through eighth grade teacher and student connections to national parks and partners during this year of hybrid learning. Hybrid learning, in this context, implies a broader view than distance or digital learning, as it also includes solutions that can occur in parks as well as schools, homes, and neighborhoods. Specifically, this grant will support rapid-piloting of new modes of engagement ranging from screen-time to green-time activities and will help existing distance learning programs strengthen their effectiveness. Successful applicants will help guide a new facilitated, learning network based upon this revised initiative. This grant is offered instead of the traditional Open Outdoors for Kids field trip grant for the 2020-2021 school year, given the likelihood that in-person field trips will not be widely and uniformly implemented.

Guiding Principles:

This Request for Proposals to connect students, teachers, and families to parks via digital or in-person (park, school, neighborhood, or home-based) learning experiences is funded by the National Park Foundation. The below are to be considered the guiding principles for this grant initiative.

- 1) **Adaptation:** Pilot, test and implement hybrid learning modules. Programming should envision something different than a single park visit or uploading an in-park activity into a static online experience. Adaptation suggests bringing forward program elements that we know are fundamental to place-based learning, while being free to revise elements that do not resonate with teacher or students audiences, or are not clear in their effectiveness. Discover what can be achieved through multiple opportunities for teacher, student, and at-home engagements - not just one interaction. Parks are encouraged to create multiple learning modalities based upon a combination of interactive live or pre-recorded videos, stand-alone activities, and in-person engagement (where possible), that when experienced together, prolong engagement and help teachers, students, and families discover that parks offer personally relevant and fun education resources. Creativity is welcomed. See suggested activities under the RFP Contents, Section A.
- 2) **Inclusion:** Create space for all. Students should see themselves reflected in the experiences and stories preserved through our national parks and successful applicants will ensure that personal relevancy is paramount to student engagement. Additionally, this grant encourages parks to envision education impacts beyond curriculum alignment, including addressing social and

emotional learning as paramount to children’s development. Accessibility, both as it applies to in-person as well as digital engagement, is fundamental to the Inclusion principle and results in a more robust experience for all.

- 3) **Co-creation:** Engage partners to meet their needs. Applicants are strongly encouraged to co-create programming with input from teachers, students, families, and/or other relevant partners. Prioritizing partnerships within the community will ensure local teacher and student needs are considered and incorporated, at the onset. Accessibility, both as it applies to in-person and digital engagement, should be incorporated from the start of the co-creation process.
- 4) **Shared Learning:** Help chart the future of NPS hybrid learning. This inaugural cohort of grantee’s will—through systematic monitoring and subsequent adjusting of programs—promote learning and ‘failing forward’ across the service. This collective and collaborative learning will be an invaluable resource to the national park education community as we collectively strive to build an expanded distance learning presence that is as immersive, relevant, and engaging to the multitude of audiences served through in-park or remote classroom visits. Successful applicants will be invited to join a Learning Network to analyze activities, learn what works and what is less successful, and collaboratively develop adjustments so that the NPS and park partners can document learnings from this pilot initiative and further develop a culture of iteration.

Proposals should:

- Outline how success will be defined and measured
- Describe the community this grant will support
- Identify initial efforts to adapt due to COVID that this grant may leverage and that could be improved, adapted or scaled with additional funding
- Identify what staff will commit to the learning network

Applications are due no later than **Friday, November 20, 2020**.

Informational Call: Optional informational calls to discuss this RFP and the proposal process will be held at **3:00PM on Thursday, October 29th and Monday, November 2nd**. All parties interested in submitting a proposal are encouraged to attend a call, but it is not a requirement. Information on how to join the call will be available at <https://www.nationalparks.org/grant-applications>.

Award Amount: Applicants can apply for up to \$30,000. Only one application per NPS unit or program office is allowed. Open Outdoors for Kids Field Trip grant recipients with roll over funds from the 2019-2020 program year may apply for this grant and should demonstrate why additional funds are needed to pilot desired projects and how additional funds will elevate results.

Notification: Applicants will be notified of award selections in December 2020. Grant runs from January 2021- June 2022.

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: Have a creative idea, but uncertain if it qualifies? Contact Karen Lee klee@nationalparks.org.

RFP Contents:

- A. Overview/Project Examples**
- B. Criteria**
- C. Requirements**
- D. Timeline**
- E. Evaluation**
- F. Proposal Instructions**
- G. Application Template**

A. Overview/Project Examples

The National Park Foundation recognizes the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and opportunities it creates for experimenting with new hybrid learning modalities to reach teachers, students, and families. To maintain vital connections and seek ways to strengthen relationships despite social distancing, this grant will support activities that align with (but are not limited to) the following examples:

- Live remote visits for small groups (10-25 students)
- Live remote experiences for large groups (100 or more students from multiple classes)
- Online videos or other stand-alone resources not duplicated elsewhere (scientific, social and historic)
- Activities that promote social and emotional learning
- Home or neighborhood-based activities that connect students and teachers
- Home or neighborhood-based activities that amplify student connections (i.e. student groups create digital story that relates to personal connection to their history, environment, culture, etc.)
- Park-based activities that support social distancing (transportation funding is allowed)
- Activities that showcase student creations for NPS staff and other authentic audiences, such as families or peers
- Activities that link students or teachers located in different parts of the country
- Activities that tie together NPS interpretive themes across multiple sites
- Teacher workshops that facilitate teacher understanding of, and increase confidence in using, school-yards as a learning resource
- Teacher networks that support learning and center educator voices in community with each other
- Activities that culminate in ‘jamboree-style’ online presentations of student group projects for each other and park staff
- Activities that envision distance learning as a first touch before an in-person visit
- Activities that provide an opportunity to deliver a “far away visit” to schools across the nation
- Activities that recognize the nine-minute online attention span of elementary school students
- Activities that facilitate teacher, student or family engagement in multiple online, in-class or at-home events such as: live Ranger remote-to-class, student group projects, and student presentations to park staff and partners
- Activities that celebrate student achievements

B. Program Criteria

The best proposals will:

- Clearly identify needs, pilot strategies, and the anticipated impact of robust hybrid learning for your park. Why does this matter to your park and how does hybrid engagement with teachers, students, and families solve a mission-critical issue for your team?

- Pilot multiple modalities—synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.
- Include accessibility from the beginning of the adaptation, co-creation, and/or assessment process.
- Help expand duration of teacher and student engagement beyond downloading a single video or attending one remote Ranger visit. Best proposals will envision what can be accomplished over multiple interactions with target audiences, helping to build and sustain relationships as well as increase awareness of how parks serve the many needs of communities.
- Divest of the “build it and they will come” model – demonstrate how activities will serve education community needs and allow your team to experiment/gain experience that grows your ability to conduct iterative interpretation (build it, break it, fix it, test out the new version) so your park is better equipped to maintain a dynamic relationship with your audiences —and learn to make course corrections quickly based on feedback, monitoring of how new activities are used, and in fulfillment of education audience needs. Fail forward!
- Center personal relevance for their intended communities.

C. Requirements

1. Grant requests cannot exceed \$30,000. Only one request per park or regional program office may be submitted.
2. Intended audience should fall within fourth to eighth grade.
3. Projects are not required to include in-kind or partner match but if you have a match, please describe.
4. Funding will support project activities between January 2021-June 2022.
5. Reporting requirements will be sent to successful applicants in advance of program implementation.
6. Selected projects or partners will need to collect project content (videos, photos, participant biographies, impact stories, etc.) and work with NPF and partners to collaboratively amplify programmatic activities through social media, media inquiries, and other opportunities as available.

D. Program Timeline

October 19, 2020 RFP open

November 20, 2020: RFP submission closes **please submit Fluxx registrations two-days prior*

December 2020: Successful applicants notified of final decisions

January 2021: Grant agreements sent out for signatures and payments issued

January 2021-June 2022: Program implementation; Ongoing participation in the learning network

July 2022: Final reporting and evaluation complete

E. Program Evaluation

Grantees will be invited to participate in a learning network, which will be facilitated by NPF and an external partner with proven experience in supporting national park, place-based learning. As part of this, we anticipate grantees will be required to provide information to aid future NPS and NPF hybrid learning activities as well as provide annual reporting information for NPS and NPF. In addition, we anticipate hosting two formal evidence-based learning exchanges to promote iterative thinking and to embrace a “fail forward” mentality.

F. Proposal Instructions:

NPF has recently transitioned to a new grants management system, Fluxx. All 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 by Wednesday, November 18, at the latest, to ensure ample time to finalize and submit grant proposals.**

Fluxx Registration

- To register for an account in Fluxx, please go to NPF’s Grantee Portal and click on “Create an Account Now” to fill out the form: <https://nationalparks.fluxx.io/>
 - **Reminder:** Please register for Fluxx at least **two-days in advance** to avoid technical delays and ensure timely submission of all grant proposals.
- Once NPF has reviewed and approved a registration request, grantees will receive an email and link to set up an account password. *The registration email will come from Do-not-reply.grants07-us-east-1@fluxx.io (please check your junk/spam folders).
- Please log into the grantee portal, navigate to the left-hand menu, and click on “Apply for Funding”. On this webpage, select “Open OutDoors for Kids Hybrid Learning 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.
- For assistance using Fluxx, please contact: applications@nationalparks.org

Proposals are due no later than midnight (ET) November 20, 2020.

G. Application Template

See below

APPLICATION STATEMENTS:

Read and answer each question below.

1. Program Title

Program title should capture the essence of the program.

2. Program Description

Please explain how this grant will help your park pilot new, or refine existing, modalities of engaging 4th-8th grade teachers, students, and their families. Please address the four guiding principles, including how you are building off of previous efforts, if applicable.

A. Adaptation: Pilot, test and implement hybrid learning modules

Describe and how your proposed program will expand engagement blending NPS screen and green time. Will you deploy programming to prolong engagement over multiple activities over time (deeper engagement) or connect with a wider number of audiences (multiple schools, teachers, etc.) over shorter duration? Why do you believe this grant to “make it, break it, fix it and try it again” will help your park deliver stronger interpretation approaches? What

fundamentals of place-based learning are you bringing forward and what are you adapting, and why, that this funding will support?

B. Inclusion: Create space for all

In what ways will your program support the vision that “all students see themselves in our national parks?” Will you support youth development and/or social and emotional learning and if so, how? What challenges and potential solutions do you anticipate with regards to accessibility – both in-person and online – and how will this grant help support this program element?

C. Co-creation: Engage partners to meet their needs

Under-resourced communities and schools are the primary audience for this grant yet with students more engaged in home-schooling and hybrid learning as a result of the pandemic, it will be more difficult to cultivate student and teacher audiences as the concept of the ‘classroom’ continues to evolve. How will your team identify, engage and sustain relationships with teachers, students and potentially families throughout the duration of this grant – leading to multiple engagement opportunities? If your goal is to engage audiences at state-wide and national levels, how will you build relationships with teachers and students much farther away?

D. Shared Learning: Help chart the future of NPS hybrid learning

How will participation in a learning network during this grant help your park develop, or increase, the effectiveness of your education programming? What new insights does your team seek to emerge from this pilot experience with? If your team already has basic experience with things like formatting video for accessibility compliance or delivering live remote activities, are you willing to mentor one park that is just starting?

3. Program Audience

Please describe the community you will be supporting including estimated number of, and grade ranges of, teachers, students, and/or households. Please be specific.

4. Program Success

How are you thinking about what success might look like and what tools can you put in place to capture that success? How will your park engage partners, teachers and/or students in co-creation of the conceptualization and implementation of draft assessment and final impact tools and narratives?

5. Program Timeline

Include a timeline for how you envision the project to proceed, including planning, piloting, redesign, and audience recruitment at each of these phases? What are the major milestones? You may attach your schedule as a Word or Excel document to the online application.

6. Program Staff

Identify who will be able to commit to participating in the learning network, including any relevant experience and/or background. Staff can either be NPS or partner organization. Up to three staff per grantee will be invited to participate.

7. Other

What else do you wish to tell us about your project? Given that funding is limited, why should your project be one of just a few that might be selected?

8. Budget Amount Requested

Please identify the total amount requested from NPF.

9. Project Budget

Please provide an overall budget for the project including high level categories-- i.e. equipment, staffing/interns, transportation, etc. If NPF funds won't fully cover the full budget, how will you accomplish the remainder of the project or use funds to get the project to a higher level of completion? You can attach an Excel or Word document in the attachments section.

10. Superintendent/Program Manager Certification

All applications must have NPS Superintendent or program equivalent before submitting. A Superintendent Letter of Approval will be required for all applications.