Manual 26

Outdoor Learning Grants

March 2025

Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

WASHINGTON STATE
Recreation and
Conservation Office

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At a Glance

Outdoor Learning Grants	
Purpose	Provide grants to develop and support educational experiences for pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade students in Washington public schools who are traditionally underserved in science and outdoor learning opportunities

Who may apply?	• Federally recognized Tribes
	• Outdoor education providers as noted below:
	    ○ Local governments (cities, towns, counties, port districts, park and recreation districts, etc.)
	    ○ Nonprofit organizations (501(c)3, 501(c)1, or 501(c)4 tax-exempt organizations)
	    ○ State agencies
	    ○ Federal agencies

What are the grant limits?	Tier 1: $10,000 to $50,000 Tier 2: $50,001 to $100,000 Tier 3: $100,001 to $175,000
How much funding is anticipated?	$3.7 million (based on current biennium)
What must I contribute?	No match is required for this grant program.
How is my project evaluated?	Advisory committee reviews and scores applications for Tiers 1 and 2. A Tier 3 applicant submits an application and participates in a question-and-answer session with the advisory committee.
When are applications due?	Applications are accepted beginning April 9, 2025. Pre-applications are due by May 20, 2025, and final applications are due by June 3, 2025.
When are grants awarded?	September 2025 (estimate)
When can programing occur?	September 1 (estimate), 2025 to June 30, 2027
How will the grant be paid?	A grant recipient is reimbursed after paying the costs and then submitting a bill in PRISM.
What costs are eligible?	Staff, stipends, supplies, transportation, contracted services, honorariums, equipment (see "Eligible Costs" for complete list)
Are indirect costs eligible?	Yes, at a fixed rate of 10 percent of the grant award

Outdoor Learning Grants	
What costs are not eligible?	Acquisition or capital construction projects; projects that do not include educational programming (see "Ineligible Costs" for complete list)

Section 1: Introduction

In this section, you will learn about the following:

- ✔ The purpose and history of the grants
- ✔ Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
- ✔ The Recreation and Conservation Office
- ✔ Where to get information
- ✔ The grant process and project management

Outdoor Learning Grants

All children deserve equitable access to outdoor spaces where they can learn, play, and grow, but access to outdoor educational opportunities is inequitable. In 2022, the Washington State Legislature funded the Outdoor Learning Grants program, with a goal to develop and support outdoor educational experiences for students in Washington public schools.

Grants are available for federally recognized Tribes and outdoor education providers to support existing capacity and to increase future capacity for outdoor learning experiences. A grant applicant must partner with at least one Washington public school or district or another public school partner, which may include publicly funded preschool programs, Tribal schools, public charters schools, Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs, institutional education programs, and Career and Technical Education programs.

The grant program is managed by the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and administered by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO).

Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Led by Superintendent Chris Reykdal, OSPI is the primary agency charged with overseeing public kindergarten through twelfth grade education in Washington State. Working with the state's 295 public school districts and seven state-Tribal education

compact schools, OSPI allocates funding and provides tools, resources, and technical assistance so every student in Washington is provided a high-quality public education.

Mission

Transform K-12 education to a system that is centered on closing opportunity gaps and is characterized by high expectations for all students and educators. We achieve this by developing equity-based policies and supports that empower educators, families, and communities.

Vision

All students prepared for post-secondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Values

- Ensuring Equity

- Collaboration and Service

- Achieving Excellence through Continuous Improvement

- Focus on the Whole Child

Equity

Each student, family, and community possess strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.

Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English Learner services, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and highly mobile student populations.

- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.

Recreation and Conservation Office

RCO is a small state agency that manages grant programs to create outdoor recreation opportunities, protect the best of the state's wildlife habitat and working lands, and help return salmon and orca from near extinction.

Manual Authority

This document provides basic information on procedures and policies used to administer this grant program.

This manual is created under the authority granted to RCO in the Outdoor Learning Grant enabling legislation and in Revised Code of Washington 28A.300.793.

Where to Get Information

Recreation and Conservation Office
Natural Resources Building   Telephone: (360) 902-3000
1111 Washington Street Southeast   FAX: (360) 902-3026
Olympia, WA 98501   Washington Relay: Call 711
Email   Website

Mailing Address
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

RCO outdoor grants managers are available to answer questions about this manual and grant program. Please feel free to call. In addition, manuals, forms, and most other materials referenced in this manual are available on RCO's website on the Outdoor Learning Grant page.

Other Grant Manuals Needed

- *Manual 8: Reimbursements* provides additional billing information.

The Grant Process and Project Management

Grant Process

The grant process, from application to grant award, spans about a year and is outlined below. While the order of steps in this process remains consistent, the exact timeline may change. For complete details about the timeline, application process, and step-by-step instructions, follow the Applicant's To-Do List.

Ongoing Project Management

Project Implementation

The sponsor must complete the project promptly. To help ensure reasonable and timely project completion, accountability, and the proper use of funds, the sponsor will do the following:

- Develop milestones for project implementation that ensures timely completion by June 30, 2027. RCO may terminate a project that does not meet critical milestones established in the grant agreement.

- Submit progress reports at intervals designated by the RCO grant agreement and participate in check-ins with the grants manager.

Project Completion

When a project is completed, the sponsor must submit final bills, final reports, and supporting documents needed to close the project as specified in the agreement.[1] If the bills and documentation are not submitted by the deadline, RCO may terminate the agreement without payment. Time extensions are not permitted in this grant program and requests for such will not be approved.

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[1]Washington Administrative Code 286.13.040(7)

Section 2: Policies

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

✓ Eligible applicants
✓ Eligible programs and costs
✓ Equipment policy

Eligible Applicants

The following organizations may apply for grants:

- Federally recognized Tribes

- Outdoor education providers

    o Local governments (cities, towns, counties, port districts, park and recreation districts, etc.)

    o Nonprofit organizations

    o State agencies

    o Federal agencies

Nonprofit corporations or associations must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Registered with Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)1, 501(c)3, 501(c)4 tax-exempt organization.

- Registered as a nonprofit corporation at the state level.

- Tier 2 and Tier 3 applicants must demonstrate at least three years of actively managing projects relevant to the types of projects eligible for funding in OLG. "Actively managing projects" means having relevant pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade experience.

If awarded funding, the grant sponsor must obtain a statewide vendor number through the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services and meet the standard terms and conditions of the grant agreement (link provided for your reference, RCO staff will issue completed agreement if the applicant is successful in receiving a grant).

Eligible Programs and Costs

Eligible Programs

Eligible programs provide pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, experiential, outdoor education program activities learning in, for, and about the outdoors. Programs must develop and support educational experiences for students in Washington public schools. Grants are available to support existing capacity and to increase future capacity for outdoor learning experiences.

Programs should have a focus on outdoor education aligned with Washington State learning standards including the development of social emotional learning skills. Programs are encouraged to review the *John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State* curriculum developed by OSPI's Office of Native Education and infuse traditional ecological knowledge into field experiences for students. In implementing student educational experiences, outdoor education providers should ensure equitable access for students in all geographic regions and high levels of accessibility for students with disabilities.

Eligible Costs

Eligible costs include the following and must be essential to the program purpose (See Budget Worksheet):

- Contracted services.

- Curriculum development (aligned with Washington State learning standards).

- Food and non-alcoholic beverages.

- Habitat restoration projects–Activities may not take place in archaeological sites.[2] The project sponsor must provide appropriate documentation before student involvement in restoration activities. Contact the RCO grants manager for more information.

- Indirect costs up to 10 percent.

- Lodging.

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[2] Revised Code of Washington 27.53.060

- Mileage.

- Mobile equipment and cargo trailers.

- Mobility devices.

- Outdoor or scientific equipment.

- Staff.

- Staff training and certifications, which may include first aid training; social emotional learning and trauma-informed care; diversity, equity and inclusion; lifeguarding, etc.

- Stipends, honorariums.

- Supplies.

- Training.

- Translation services.

- Transportation.

Required Costs

- Travel and per-diem for one in-person event to be held during the agreement period and to be included in budget worksheet (Cohort Workshop–See Required [Budget Worksheet](#))

Ineligible Costs

- Facility construction projects.

- Facility construction or improvements, such as raised beds, gardens, and rain gardens; decks and boardwalks; open-air shelters; permanent outdoor classroom infrastructure; outdoor kitchens and fish pits; ropes course facilities.

- Gift cards.

- Indoor equipment such as televisions or furniture.

- Land acquisition.

- Out-of-state student travel, except for bordering counties and cities in Oregon and Idaho.

- Post agreement costs–Costs for eligible activities must be incurred in the grant agreement period. Reservations for facilities or activities after the agreement period are ineligible.

- Pre-agreement costs–RCO will pay only for work performed after a grant agreement has been signed by both RCO and the project sponsor.

- Preparation of this grant application.

- Projects that do not include direct youth outdoor education programming.

- Purchase of motor vehicles or motorboats.

- [Religious activities](#).

Equipment Policy

Equipment

Buying equipment necessary to implement an approved program is permissible when included in the agreement. "Equipment" means capital equipment[3] and small and attractive assets[4] necessary for program implementation, as determined by RCO.

Capital equipment: Equipment that costs $5,000 or more per unit (including ancillary costs[5]) and has a useful life of more than one year.

Small and attractive asset: An item that costs less than $5,000 per unit (including ancillary costs[6]), has a useful life of more than one year, and is vulnerable to loss. RCO has determined that the following shall be considered small and attractive assets and are subject to the following equipment requirements and management:

- Laptops, notebook computers, and tablets with unit costs of $500 or more.

- Binoculars, telescopes, microscopes, underwater remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), drones, cameras and photographic projection equipment, etc. with unit costs of $500 or more.

- Recreation equipment or mobility devices with unit costs of $500 or more.

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[3]Office of Financial Management State Administrative and Accounting Manual Chapter 30
[4]Office of Financial Management State Administrative and Accounting Manual Chapter 30.40.20
[5]Costs that are attributable directly to asset acquisition, such as freight and transportation costs, site preparation costs, and professional fees, that are necessary to place a capital asset into its intended state of operation
[6]Costs that are attributable directly to asset acquisition, such as freight and transportation costs, site preparation costs, and professional fees, that are necessary to place a capital asset into its intended state of operation

Management and Use

A sponsor must maintain a record of all equipment purchased with grants. The sponsor, not RCO, always takes title. This inventory record begins with the list of any equipment purchases proposed in the grant application. Upon approval of the project, this listing is entered into the grant agreement.

A sponsor's equipment records shall include, at a minimum, the following:

- A description of the equipment

- Manufacturer's serial number (model, stock, vehicle identification, or other unique number securely affixed to the equipment)

- Source of the equipment, including grant or other agreement number

- Acquisition date and cost

- Location, use, and condition of the equipment and the date the information was reported

- Ultimate disposition data, including date of disposal and sale price, including the method used to determine current fair market value when a sponsor compensates RCO for its share, if sold

The sponsor shall establish adequate maintenance procedures to keep the equipment in good condition. The sponsor also shall institute a control system to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent loss, damage, or theft of the equipment. Any loss, damage, or theft shall be investigated and fully documented. The sponsor shall promptly notify RCO of any such occurrence.

The sponsor may use the equipment for the purposes authorized in the agreement for as long as needed after the agreement ends, whether or not the program continues to be supported by RCO. After the grant agreement ends, the equipment may be used for continued or similar outdoor educational or recreational activities supported by the grant applicant's organization without liquidation. The equipment is subject to periodic inventory reporting requirements until the equipment is liquidated.

The sponsor may make the equipment available for use in other projects as long as such use does not interfere with the work on the originally authorized project. The cost or use value of equipment acquired with a grant may not be included in other or subsequent grants.

The sponsor may not use the equipment for personal use or to provide services for a fee to compete unfairly with private companies providing equivalent services.

Inventory

For grant-assisted equipment, the sponsor shall conduct a physical inventory of equipment and reconcile the results with previous records at least once every two years. This should continue until final liquidation has been made and inventory records must be maintained for audits.

Any differences in this physical inspection and those shown in the accounting records shall be investigated by the sponsor to determine the causes of the difference. In connection with the inventory, the sponsor shall verify the existence, current use, and continued need for the equipment. A detailed written report on the results of this inventory shall be provided to RCO upon request.

Equipment Liquidation and Disposal

When the sponsor discontinues use of the equipment (assets) for the purpose for which it was funded, the following liquidation procedures shall apply:

The sponsor wishes to retain the equipment. It may be used for other activities as follows:

- Original cost of $5,000 or less: The sponsor may use the equipment for other activities without reimbursement to RCO.

- Original cost of more than $5,000: The sponsor may retain the capital equipment for other uses provided compensation is made to RCO. The amount of compensation shall be computed by applying the percentage of program participation in the cost of the original project, as specified in the grant agreement, to the current fair market value of the equipment.

- The sponsor does not wish to retain the equipment. If the sponsor has no need for the equipment but it still has value, the sponsor shall request disposition instructions from RCO. When the sponsor disposes of the equipment, procedures that provide for fair competition, to the extent practicable, and result in the highest possible return, shall be established. RCO may instruct the sponsor to transfer title to a third party named by RCO who is eligible under existing statutes. In such cases, the sponsor will be compensated in the amount equal to its share of the current fair market value of the equipment.

  o Original cost is $5,000 or less: The sponsor may sell the equipment and return the proceeds to RCO.

  o Original cost of more than $5,000: The sponsor shall sell the equipment and reimburse RCO an amount computed by applying to the sales

proceeds the percentage of program participation in the cost of the original project as recorded in the signed grant agreement.

- The equipment has no value. This occurs when the equipment has lost value or has outlived its useful life, not due to lack of maintenance. The sponsor may notify RCO and if RCO concurs, the equipment may be removed from equipment inventory reporting requirements.

Section 3: Money Matters

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

✔ Grant Limits
✔ Match
✔ Important things to know

Grant Limits

Tier One: $10,000-$50,000 per project

Tier Two: $50,001-$100,000 per project

Tier Three: $100,001-$175,000 per project

Match

Matching Share

No match is required

Important Things to Know

Number of Grant Proposals Allowed

In general, RCO does not limit the number of grant proposals from a single applicant during the biennial grant cycle. However, each proposal must be for a different scope of work. Each application must stand alone on its own merits with a viable, outdoor experience and not be dependent on other projects or future phases of work.

Grant Sponsors Must Pay First

RCO pays grants through reimbursement. A sponsor may request reimbursement in PRISM only after paying employees and vendors. RCO does not provide money before

vendors are paid. RCO will pay only at the percentage identified in the grant agreement after the sponsor has presented an invoice documenting cost incurred and compliance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

RCO will not pay more than the sponsor's out-of-pocket costs.

Billing procedures are explained further in *Manual 8: Reimbursements*.

Audits and Keeping Records

All records relevant to projects funded by RCO must be on file with the grant sponsor and are subject to audit by the State and inspection by RCO. If the auditor's inspection of the records discloses any charges incorrectly claimed and reimbursed, cash restitution of the incorrect amount must be made to RCO.

Public Disclosure Rules

RCO records and files are public records that are subject to the Public Records Act.[7] More information about RCO's disclosure practices is available on its website.

Statewide Vendor Number

A grant sponsor must have a statewide vendor number to receive payments. Payments can be paid by check or electronic fund transfer (EFT). Visit the Department of Enterprise Services website to register.

Tax-related Information (1099-MISC)

Federal tax regulations may require RCO to issue an annual 1099-Miscellaneous Income Tax Form to all individuals, partnerships, sole proprietors, and attorneys who receive more than $600 a calendar year in RCO funding.

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[7]Revised Code of Washington 42.56

Section 4: Project Evaluation

In this section, you'll learn about the following:

✔ How project evaluation works
✔ Advisory committee
✔ Evaluation criteria

How Project Evaluation Works

Every applicant prepares written responses to Evaluation Criteria 1-6 in the PRISM application and submits all required application materials in PRISM for evaluation. Advisory committee members individually review the written responses, summary application materials, and attached supporting materials to score the project.

A Tier 3 applicant also participates in a question-and-answer session with the advisory committee. Should Tier 3 receive more applications than anticipated, RCO and OSPI may implement a pre-score process to narrow down the applications advancing to the question-and-answer session.

The resulting ranked list is the basis for funding recommendations that RCO submits to OSPI for final approval.

Advisory Committee

OSPI approves people to serve on an advisory committee to evaluate each grant proposal. In recruiting members for the committee, OSPI and RCO seek to appoint people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their diverse experiences and knowledge of youth outdoor recreation and education in Washington. Visit RCO's website for [details on the committee](#).

Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Maximum Points Possible
1. School and Student Information	15 Points
2. Outdoor Education Program	10 Points
3. Field-based Curriculum	10 Points
4. Program Evaluation & Student Engagement	5 Points
5. Staff	5 Points
6. Budget	5 Points
Total:	**50 Points**

The applicant must address all the factors under each of the following evaluation criteria:

1. **School and Student Information**

   Describe the students who will participate in this program.

   Discuss the specific Washington State public schools supported by the program. Are the schools in communities historically underserved in science and outdoor education? These communities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

   o Tribal nations (including State-Tribal Education Compact Schools, schools on or near Tribal reservations, and schools required to consult with the nearest federally recognized Tribe through section 8538 of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Please visit the Office of Native Education's web page for more information.)

   o Migrant students.

   o Schools with high participation in the free and reduced-price meal program.

   o Rural and remote schools.

   o Students in alternative learning environments.

   o Students of color.

   o Emergent multilingual learner students.

- Students receiving special education services.

Refer to RCO's OLG School Explorer Map to find specific school information and links to the Washington State Report Card and the Washington School Improvement Framework when applicable.

Describe the relationship that the program has with participating schools and the grant applicant's organization's experience working in collaboration with the schools (this may include partnership agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, etc.). Please also provide specific examples and attach letters of recommendations, commitment from participating schools or districts, and/or letters of consultation for State-Tribal Education Compact Schools and Tribal schools.

Attach an OLG Supported School(s) spreadsheet using the supplied template.

▲ Point Range: 0 to 5 points, which are multiplied later by 3.

2. **Outdoor Education Program**

What is the outdoor education experience this program will provide to students? Information should include the following:

- Is this proposal funding existing capacity, expansion of a program, or a new program?

- Grade or age of students.

- Number of students served.

- Number of hours of outdoor education per student.

- Activity types.

- Program locations.

- Schedule of program events.

- Community partners and co-facilitators.

How will this program meet the needs of students in communities historically underserved by science and outdoor education, including culturally responsive teaching practices? Please be specific.

How will this program ensure equitable access and opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in outdoor education experiences? Please include specific examples.

▲ Point Range: 0 to 5 points, which are multiplied later by 2.

3. **Field-based Curriculum**

How will the program framework be integrated with the [Washington State learning standards](#) and the [development of social emotional learning skills?](#)

How will traditional ecological knowledge and [Tribal sovereignty curriculum](#) be infused into the planned instruction? How will the grant sponsor consult or collaborate with Tribal nations? Please attach consultation letters from Tribal leadership, if applicable.

What specific existing curriculum or lesson plans will be used? This may be the name of lessons developed by the applicant's organization (ex. *[Salmon in the Classroom](#)*; *[Salmon, Cedar, Canoe: Stewards of the Ecosystem](#)*), or sourced curriculum (e.g., *[Clime Time](#)*; *[John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State](#)*; *[Washington Pest Watch](#)*; *[Project Learning Tree](#)*; *[Tend, Gather & Grow](#)*, *[Project WILD](#)*, *[Project WET](#)*, *[Explore the Salish Sea](#)*). Please describe any new curriculum that will be developed.

Will this program provide mentorship opportunities or career-connected learning? Please describe.

Useful resources:

- o [OSPI's Career and Technical Education](#)

- o [Career Connect Washington](#)

- o [Washington STEM](#)

- o [Pacific Education Institute's Resources page](#)

▲ Point Range: 0 to 5 points, which are multiplied later by 2.

4. **Program Evaluation and Student Engagement**

How will the impact and success of the program be assessed? How will the curriculum and effectiveness of instruction be evaluated? How will student voices be incorporated into programming?

▲ Point Range: 0 to 5 points

5. **Staff**

   Describe the experience of the staff and team members who will facilitate the outdoor education activities and their experiences serving Washington's diverse students.

   ▲ Point Range: 0 to 5 points

6. **Budget**

   Please provide a detailed narrative description of the program's budget and how the grant will be used. Grants must be spent by June 30, 2027. Describe in detail how this will be achieved. Attach a [Budget Worksheet](#) using the supplied template.

   ▲ Point Range: 0 to 5 points