NEW MEXICO
Public Education Department

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

RFA Released: June 2, 2025
Final Date to Submit RFA: July 18, 2025, by 4:00 p.m.
RFAs received after the final date will not be considered for funding.

This RFA is designed to promote innovation in the critical area of outdoor learning by expanding access to outdoor learning programs for New Mexico students. Up to two hundred twenty-five thousand dollars ($225,000.00) in competitive grants are available to New Mexico PreK–12 public school districts or state-chartered charter schools, a group of public schools (consortium of schools), regional educational cooperatives, and single public schools in partnership with a community outdoor learning or environmental organization to operate, expand and sustain outdoor learning programs, and to:

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

Applicants may apply for up to thirty thousand dollars ($30,000.00).

Application Checklist

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

_____Cover Page [PDF]

_____Assurance Forms [PDF]

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

_____Electronic Budget Information Sheet [Excel]

_____Subcontractor or Equipment Forms [if applicable] [PDF]

Applications must be uploaded to Canvas no later than 4:00 pm, July 18, 2025.

For program questions contact:
Patricia Gharrity Patricia.Gharrity@ped.nm.gov | 505-469-1665
Kristy Reale kristy.reale@ped.nm.gov | 505-670-8596
Outdoor Learning Initiative Outdoor.Learning@ped.nm.gov
For fiscal/budget questions contact:
Valerie Padilla (Valerie.Padilla@ped.nm.gov | 505-827-7353)

PURPOSE

The outdoors is a resource for enhancing learning, social engagement, and health and is available to all New Mexico students in every community. Experiences in nature and access to the outdoors are associated with greater health, well-being, and academic success.

In New Mexico, children are experiencing higher rates of stress, depression, obesity, diabetes, and other health risks. These health risks, which increase with health inequity, have been further exacerbated by the pandemic; utilizing outdoor spaces as a classroom for academic learning and incorporating **environmental education** into school curricula can help reduce these risks and inequities.

The most effective **outdoor learning** is student-centered, culturally, and linguistically relevant and responsive, multidisciplinary, and supports physical, emotional, and social, health and well-being. **Community and place-based education** engages New Mexico land and cultures as the starting point for learning within all academic subjects, ensuring that the curriculum is deeply connected to the local community and students' identities, cultures, and experiences. This approach provides community-connected instruction that infuses high-level content, inquiry-based learning, and problem-solving with real-world learning opportunities, increasing academic achievement and engagement, improving individual and collective health, and building pride in oneself and in the State of New Mexico.

This RFA is designed to promote innovation in the critical area of outdoor learning by expanding access to outdoor learning and environmental education programs for New Mexico students. Up to two hundred twenty-five thousand dollars ($225,000.00) in competitive grants are available to New Mexico PreK–12 public school districts or state-chartered charter schools, a group of public schools (consortium of schools), regional educational cooperatives, and single public schools in partnership with a community outdoor learning or environmental organization, to operate, expand, and sustain outdoor learning programs to:

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

Goals

The PED's goals for this investment are:

1) Support initial planning and creation of outdoor learning programs.
2) Promote and/or expand existing outdoor learning professional learning programs to reach more New Mexico PreK–12 students
3) Increase student attendance in participating grant programs

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible entities are New Mexico PreK–12 public school districts or state-chartered charter schools, a group of public schools (a consortium of schools), regional education cooperatives, and single public schools in partnership with a community outdoor learning or environmental organization to operate, expand, and sustain outdoor learning programs.

A school district that wishes to apply does not have to include all schools within the district in its application to be eligible for funding. Similarly, not all schools included in a school district's or consortium of school's applications may be funded.

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

All eligible entities awarded grant funding must sign and adhere to follow all assurances outlined in the assurance form.

Application Requirements

The application must include:

1. Completed “Cover Page”.
2. Completed “Assurances Form” with all signatures.
3. Electronic submission of narrative, explaining your plan, no more than 8 pages, double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, inclusive of the following sections [PDF]:
    a. Justification- Detailed narrative that exemplifies how the program meets the eligibility criteria, student demographics, and how the proposal aligns to the PED Comprehensive Strategic Plan.
    b. Narrative Summary – A detailed summary of how your proposal will benefit PreK–12 students and teachers in accessing outdoor learning, including how it will support socio-emotional and academic learning; major goals for robust professional learning or need for establishing an NM outdoor learning program; and any evidence-based justification for your plan.
    c. Program Timeline – Detailed outline of expected program benchmarks and milestones through at least June 2026.
    d. Budget Overview – A detailed overview of the amount of funding requested to carry out your plan, connected to the electronic budget information sheet, and that will not supplant any federal, state, local, or other non-federal funds, through June 30, 2026.
    e. Sustainability – Describe a clear and well-conceived plan for how this project will be funded and sustained once the grant award period has ended. Include how the continuing initiative is/will be aligned with the entities’ NM DASH or EdPlan, if applicable. Include any and all additional funding streams that may be used to continue or improve the grant project/proposal after the grant award period.
4. Electronic submission of completed “Electronic Budget Information Sheet” [Excel Sheet].
5. Electronic submission of completed Subcontractor or Equipment forms, if applicable [PDF].

An electronic copy of the completed application packet must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. MST on July 18, 2025. Facsimile copies will not be accepted. The completed application packet must be uploaded in its entirety into the Canvas Assignment. Requests for an extension of this date will not be granted. The PED reserves the right to deny an application if they do not meet the application requirements for cause.

NM Outdoor Learning Grant Application Cover Page

School Information:			
School Name			
School District Name			
Type of Education Provider (check box below that best describes your organization or authorizer)			
☐ Consortium of Schools		☐ Local Charter School	
☐ Public School District		☐ Regional Educational Cooperative	
☐ State Charter School		☐ Single Public School with Outdoor Learning/Environmental Education Partner	
Applicant Information:			
Primary Person Applying or Responsible for Grant			
Name, Last Name			
Title			
Email		**Phone**	
School Principal			
Name, Last Name			
Email		**Phone**	
School District Superintendent/Charter School Leader			
Name, Last Name			
		Phone	
Amount of Funding Requested:			
Recipient Schools (List all partnering schools, if applicable)			

New Mexico Outdoor Learning Grant
Assurances Form

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

On _____(date) , 2025, _____(school awarded), accepts the state funds requested in this application. In consideration of the receipt of these grant funds, the entity agrees that the General Assurances form for all state funds and the terms therein are specifically incorporated by reference in this application. The entity also certifies that all program and pertinent administrative requirements will be met. In addition, grantees that accept New Mexico Outdoor Learning Grant Program funding agree to the following assurances:

1. ___ Selected awardees will provide the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) the evaluation information required, including student and school participation (attendance) and student achievement data in the End-of-Year Program Report (Appendix A) of the Request for Application.
2. ___Selected awardees must participate in seven out of eight monthly Outdoor Learning Community of Practice during the school year. At a minimum, participants should include the school's principal and/or identified program manager, and teachers implementing outdoor learning programs.
3. ___Selected awardees must send teachers implementing outdoor learning to Wilderness First Aid training (provided by PED).
4. ___Selected awardees may be selected for a school site visit by PED to support compliance monitoring with the grant requirements.
5. ___Selected awardees must provide the PED sustainability data up to two years after the grant performance period ends.
6. ___The schools/entities will not discriminate against anyone regarding race, gender, national origin, color, disability, or age.
7. ___PED requires monthly RfRs to support timely and thorough review of all grant expenditures.
8. ___At least 50% of funds must be expended by January 31, 2026 to avoid funds reverting back to PED.
9. ___Funded projects will maintain appropriate fiscal and program records and fiscal audits of this program will be conducted by the grantees as a part of their regular audits.
10. ___All records of the program will be retained for five years and access to those records will be available for the purposes of review and audit.
11. ___If any findings of misuse of these funds are discovered, project funds will be returned to the PED.
12. ___If any portion or component of these Assurances are not followed or have violated, project funds will be returned to the PED.
13. ___The selected awardee will maintain sole responsibility for the project even though subcontractors may be used to perform certain services.

Name of District Superintendent/REC Executive Director/IHE Executive Director	Date	Signature of District Superintendent/REC Executive Director/IHE Executive Director	Date

Name of Program Contact	Date	Signature of Program Contact	Date

Note: If grant is approved, funding will not be awarded until all signatures are in place. Please attempt to obtain all signatures before submitting the application. Complete and attach after the Cover Page. If needed, additional copies of this page should be attached to include each participating school.

Appendix A:

End-of-Year
Program Report

Report Template Example

To be completed after award is received, due by July 6, 2026.

Each successful grantee awarded funding through the NM Outdoor Learning Start- Up Grant is required to report, at a minimum, the following information to the NewMexico Public Education Department on or before **July 6, 2026**, **that includes but is not limited to**:

- a summary of what planning occurred leading to next steps entity will take;
- a timeline of program implementation;
- agendas from all planning meetings with attendance marked;
- the number of teachers who attended planning meetings or participated in professional learning;
- the number of administrators who attended each planning meeting;
- names of stakeholders, coaches, and/or mentors who assisted with planning and participated in the community of practice;
- the number of teachers who implemented outdoor learning and participated in the community of practice;
- the number of students who participated in outdoor learning;
- the gender, racial, and socioeconomic diversity of those students;
- agendas from training or events with attendance marked;
- a summary of which schools were represented at training or events; and
- a narrative showcasing the impact on students, teachers, community engagement, school culture, and any other aspects that you have noticed, including artifacts and quotes;
- attendance data which highlights the number of student and teacher participation.
- student achievement data from the beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year.