



NCF-Envirothon

2024 Diversity Enhancement and Underserved Audience Grant Request for Proposals

Funded in partnership with the USDA Forest Service

The National Conservation Foundation (NCF), working in conjunction with the USDA Forest Service (FS) and the NCF-Envirothon, is pleased to announce the 2024 Diversity Enhancement and Underserved Audience Grant (Diversity Grant) program. The program was created to encourage students to expand their knowledge and explore the environment and natural resource conservation through participation in Envirothon and its five areas of study: Aquatic Ecology, Forestry, Soils and Land Use, Wildlife, and Current Environmental Issues.

Recognizing that historically underserved communities and students often face significant barriers to participation, NCF and USDA FS collaborate to offer Diversity Grants to U.S. state and Canadian provincial Envirothon programs to provide additional support and financial resources to recipients with the goals of:

- Increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion within local state and provincial Envirothon programs
- Improving access to hands-on, outdoor natural resource education opportunities
- Encouraging education exploration
- Educating young adults on the importance of conservation

Mini grants will be awarded to qualified Envirothon programs for projects that aim to expand the reach of environmental education and Envirothon programming to students who would not normally have access due to a variety of barriers, including but not limited to: socioeconomic status, geographic location, lack of school resources, limited educational opportunities, physical or mental disabilities, and learning differences.

U.S. state Envirothon program grant applicants can receive up to \$4,000 for a project. One Canadian provincial Envirothon program can receive up to \$2,000 (sponsored by NCF) for a project. *(Amounts awarded will depend, in part, on the number of applications received.)*

2024 Diversity Grant Major Dates:

- **November 1, 2023 – Application period opens.**
- **December 15, 2023 – Application period closes.**
 - ***Deadline to submit complete application and attachments is at 11:59 pm EST.***
- **February 1, 2024 – Anticipated 2024 Diversity Grant Awards announcement.**



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Applications for a wide variety of projects are encouraged. The following are some examples of broad categories of Diversity Grant projects*, but your project does not have to be limited to one of these categories:

- Participation Projects that provide travel and registration cost assistance to teams who have been prohibited from participating in Envirothon events in the past due to lack of funding.
- Outreach and Engagement Projects that initiate a training and/or outreach program for historically underserved communities and students currently lacking access to outdoor education or opportunities to learn about the Envirothon, conservation, natural resources, and more. These may also improve environmental literacy and provide students with access to hands-on learning experiences.
 - *“Passive” campaigns (e.g., a grant request to print posters, brochures, DVDs, etc., without a plan for onsite, virtual, or in-person interaction with target audiences) to reach proposed target audiences will receive lower consideration than “active” outreach proposals (e.g., in-person trainings, etc.).*
- Cultural Inclusion Projects that incorporate underrepresented cultures into state/provincial Envirothon competitions and/or programs (in the form of ceremonies, histories, oral traditions, indigenous systems of science, traditional ecological knowledge, etc.) or translation of education materials into languages other than English.
- Accessibility Projects that seek to adapt training and testing materials for hearing, visually, or mobility-impaired students.

** For any in-person events, please be sure to follow local health guidelines and regulations regarding COVID-19 safety.*

This document serves as a guide to the application process. Further questions should be directed to Stephanie Tolar, NCF-Envirothon Education Specialist, at 1-800-825-5547 ext. 4 or stolar@envirothon.org.

Sponsored By



In accordance with applicable civil rights laws, the National Conservation Foundation Envirothon (NCFE), its offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering NCFE programs are prohibited from and shall not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by the NCFE.



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Application Overview

Eligibility

State and Provincial NCF-Envirothon programs that are up to date on all membership dues may apply.

An individual school, organization, conservation district, or other entity may be the sole focus, or project participant, of a Diversity Grant Project, but the local state/provincial Envirothon program must support/approve the project and agree to act as the fiscal agent administering the grant funds for the life of the project (e.g., the grant funds will be sent to ‘XYZ State Envirothon’ program to be administered to ‘ABC Conservation District’).

Funding Availability

- United States Applicants = up to \$4,000
- Canadian Applicants = up to \$2,000

Budget Requirements

- Applications must reflect, at minimum, a 25% match of the Total Project Budget
 - *No additional points will be awarded for matches in excess of 25%*
- The match amount can be from either Monetary (cash) or In-Kind (such as staff or volunteer time/labor) sources, or a combination of the two.
- Applications without the minimum match amount will NOT be considered.
- Documentation of the match will be required at time of application (letters from Boards or partner organizations verifying the match will suffice for in-kind matches).
- Match Calculation: Reminder, the match should be at least 25% of the **Total** Project Budget (not the award amount).

For Example: If the total project budget is \$5,000, of which \$1,250 was provided by matching funds (cash) or in-kind sources (volunteers), then:

$$\frac{1250}{5000} \times 100 = 25\%$$

Allowable vs Unallowable Budget Expenses

Diversity Grant funds are restricted funds that are to be used for the specific purpose of expanding the diversity of student participation in Envirothon. As such, certain activities or components are designated as Unallowable expenses for Diversity Grant funds (e.g., *you can't use Diversity Grant funds to pay for it*), while others are allowed **but** have strict guidelines or



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limitations that should be considered during the budget development process (see footnotes to the below sample budget items). Examples of allowable and unallowable grant expenses are on the following page:

ALLOWABLE	UNALLOWABLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipends for teachers to attend Envirothon trainings ¹ • Substitute teacher pay (allowing advisor to travel to event) ¹ • Team registration fees and/or travel funds to local/area/regional, and state/provincial Envirothon competitions • Materials specifically purchased for Envirothon trainings ³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating and/or maintenance expenses of organizations, including salaries, fees, rents, and honorariums • Most travel/lodging for grantee (e.g., project manager) ² • Equipment (including computer software/hardware, digital cameras, tablets, and other electronics) and/or supplies not specifically related to the intent of the grant ³ • Virtual or online testing programs for state/provincial Envirothon competition • Project activities that are in-process/completed or components that were purchased prior to the official Project Start Date.⁴ • Competition team awards and/or scholarships
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expenditures for educator stipends/substitutes cannot exceed 40% of total request. 2. No more than 15% of the total grant funds may be applied toward lodging, meals, or mileage for grantee travel in fulfilling the proposed project (<i>e.g., project manager milage to travel to oversee project components</i>). 3. The grant application must show: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. A <u>clear need</u> that demonstrates how the materials/supplies will directly and primarily benefit the increased diversity of student participation in Envirothon. ii. A <u>clear implementation plan</u> explaining the use of the materials/supplies during the grant project that will increase the diversity of student participation in Envirothon. 4. Larger projects or on-going projects may be broken into <u>phases</u>, with the phase coinciding with the proposed 2024 Diversity Grant project scheduled to start in mid-spring 2024 or later. 	

Application Process

Application and Required Budget Form

1. Download the [Diversity Grant Budget Template](#) [MS Excel] and complete.
2. Go to the [2024 NCF-Envirothon Diversity Grant Application](#) online form.
3. Fill out online form, upload Budget to form, and submit your application!



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Online Application Form – *Saving/Submitting Your Work*

You will have the ability to **save your application**, allowing you to open and edit your draft application. If you select to save your application and resume later, you will receive an email with a link to your draft application. This email may end up in your spam folder. Please check your email spam or quarantine folders to view email. Please do not delete this email!

Once your application is complete you must click the ‘Submit’ button to officially submit it! Once submitted, you will get an on-screen confirmation that your entry was received and an email notification.

Incomplete Applications

All information requested in the application is required. Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible for funding.

Important Considerations

- Proposals must be DETAILED. Make sure that your target audience and location are fully described and that the goals and steps of your plan are clear and thorough. Would you be able to accurately recreate your Diversity Grant project using only the information you have supplied in your application? If not, more information is needed.
- Budgets must be ITEMIZED. Don’t just list “supplies” – Name which type of supply and how much each cost. If you are purchasing educational materials, list out each material, how many will be acquired, and the total. Example: 5 tree identification books at \$10 each for a total of \$50.
- Timelines must include the discrete steps of your plan of action, including all preparatory work, implementation, and outreach. Please include a specific timescale (i.e., a month or range of months, not a season) for each step. Be sure to factor in additional time for ordering/shipping/printing/outreach/other preparations.

SMART Goals

When drafting your goals and objectives, please follow the SMART Goal format. This type of goal setting encourages a more comprehensive implementation plan for your project, and helps the Diversity Grant review panel to get a more holistic idea of what you intend to do and how you intend to do it.

SMART goals are:



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- **Specific** – Goals need to be specific. “Increase awareness about the Envirothon program” is vague and difficult to quantify. “Provide outreach at five underserved high schools” is more concrete and descriptive.
- **Measurable** – Goals should include some metric that can be used to evaluate success. “Five new teams from underserved communities will participate in the state Envirothon competition” is a goal that can be measured.
- **Achievable** – Goals should be realistic to set your project up for success. Recruiting 50 new teams is likely out of reach for any single Diversity Grant project. A goal of five teams is more achievable, and this ensures your efforts aren’t spread too thin.
- **Relevant** – Goals must relate to the overall mission of your project. Goals that do not relate to environmental education and the Envirothon should not be included in Diversity Grant applications.
- **Time-Bound** – All applications should include a detailed timeline, and individual goals should have a time in which they will be achieved. “An Envirothon Training Day at XYZ High School will be held in October of 2024.”

For more information on SMART Goals and how to write them, please see this resource:

<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/smart-goals/>

2024 Diversity Grant Selection Criteria

The NCF-Envirothon Diversity Grant Subcommittee will consider the following factors when selecting projects to fund:

	Maximum Points
Audience: Has the target audience been described? Does the project reach a diverse and underserved audience?	20
Needs Addressed: Is the project clearly outlined? Does the project fulfill an environmental/natural resource/conservation education need? Is the project consistent with the goals of the NCF-Envirothon?	20
Timeline: Has a realistic timeline been developed? Are tasks sufficiently outlined? Is there sufficient time to do the project?	10
Benefits: Are the goals clearly stated? Is there a full description of the plan of work?	20
Budget: Is the project cost effective? Is the budget detailed and itemized? What are the extent and sources of other matching funds being raised for the proposed project?	20
Additional Partners: Are partnerships developed within the targeted audience? If so, who are key partners and how are they involved with the proposed project?	15
Sustainability of the project: How will the project be sustained upon competition of the NCF-Envirothon Diversity Grant period?	10
Evaluation: How will the success of the proposed Diversity Grant Project be measured?	5



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Awards Announcement and Contracting Process

- I. The 2024 Diversity Grant Awards announcement will be made by email in early February (tentative date February 1, 2024).
- II. Following the award announcement, Award Recipients (**Grantees**) will receive a Diversity Grant General Condition of Acceptance Agreement. Upon receipt, they are required to sign and return within 30 days.
- III. Grantees will not receive any funds until a signed agreement is on file. Failure to return a signed contract within 30 days of award notification may result in the project application being canceled and funds being reallocated.

Grant Fund Disbursement

- Upon the return of the signed Diversity Grant General Condition of Acceptance Agreement, Grantees will receive 75% of awarded funds.
- The remaining 25% of funds will be paid to the Grantee upon successful submission of the final project report.

Project Timeline

- Project Start Date – Work to accomplish project goals and objectives must begin within 60 days of grant award announcement.
- Project End Date - All project components should be completed, and grant funds spent in full within 14 months of the Project Start Date.

Project Reports

- An Interim Report will be due at the 7-month mark of the project.
- A Final Report is due 30 days after the competition of the project.



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Project Revision or Extension Requests

All requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. **Please note that not all requests will result in approval.**

- Project Revisions - If an unexpected issue or complication arises during the Project that requires a revision to a project component, timeline deliverable, expected outcome, etc. (*e.g., a teacher workshop has to be canceled due to COVID-19*), the Grantee should **contact NCF-Envirothon staff immediately** to discuss the situation and any requests **BEFORE** proceeding. All grant project revisions must receive prior approval in order to be in compliance!
- Extensions – For Reports or Project End Date:
 - Any extension requests for either the interim report or the final report must be made in writing at least 30 days prior to the set deadline.
 - Any request to extend the project beyond the original 14-month period must be made in writing 60 days prior to the Project End Date.

Questions

If you have questions about the application process or wish to discuss potential project ideas, please contact Stephanie Tolar, NCF-Envirothon Education Specialist, at stolar@envirothon.org or 1-800-825-5547 ext. 4.