

17041

Parks As Classrooms Updated Funding Criteria, Beginning FY06

Background

The June 2003 Report to the National Leadership Council, "Renewing our Education Mission," reminds us of the powerful and transformative nature of place-based learning experiences. We are challenged to rededicate our efforts to support a clearly defined set of guiding principles and a vision of the parks "as a significant resource for learning, where people and organizations collaborate on learning about the interconnections of human culture and nature, natural systems, the values of Americans diverse heritage and the principles of democracy."

You can find a copy of the report at this address (on InsideNPS):

<http://inside.nps.gov/programs/divisioncustommenu.cfm?menuid=1407&div=43> or look for it under the Interpretation and Education Program, In Depth menu link: Renewed Education Mission Report.

National Park Service educational programs are designed to enrich lives and enhance learning, to nurture people's appreciation for parks and other special places, and thereby helping preserve America's heritage. Learning takes place in many settings, through diverse means and involves people of all ages and backgrounds. The learning may encompass a broad range of opportunities – a classroom, an informal visit to a park, or sitting at home in front of a computer. The learning is always place-based and learner-centered. The Parks As Classrooms (PAC) program was created to encourage this larger educational effort and provides grant opportunities for the development and presentation of eligible educational activities. These include curriculum-based programs, formal and informal interpretive programs, volunteer projects, life-long learning activities, publications, exhibits, films, electronic projects, public outreach, and research.

The Intent of the Parks as Classrooms Program

The stated goal of the PAC granting program is to:

"supplement other park interpretive activities by funding (1) in park, resource-based activities for school children, adult groups and teachers using park study areas and other facilities to enhance understanding of critical resource issues; and (2) offsite programs given at schools and community organization centers near parks, [web sites and through place based distance learning].

"Funds may also be used to develop educational curricula for parks to use with schools [local and distant] and to transport children from local schools into the park for special programs."

Today the PAC program supports programs, activities, and products that allow students and the public to become involved in resource-based learning (both actual and virtual) in such a way that they become better informed about scientific, historical and cultural processes and research, and can apply this knowledge toward the formulation of their

own personal decision-making and stewardship ethic. Parks as Classrooms supports programs for youth groups, clubs, home school groups and others. The emphasis is not on the design of individual projects, but toward the development of a life-long stewardship and democratic ethic in the general public through participatory educational resource programs.

As of FY 2003 the "Parks as Classrooms-50% Natural Resources Match" is no longer available as a funding source. See the FY 2005 Comprehensive Call Guidelines for the NRPP-Funding Guidelines for Interpretive Components.

Eligible PAC proposals:

- May not exceed \$25,000 per individual request, though a park or office may submit more than one proposal as long as each is for \$25,000 or less.
- Must be *resource-based* though this does not necessarily mean that the program or activity must physically take place in a park.
- Need not be formal, curriculum-based programs, but may also include informal park programs, Internet offerings, public outreach, and other educational opportunities.

CRITERIA

PAC proposals will be rated and assigned points based on the following criteria:

Project Narratives (0-25 points)

Project Description (0-5 points)

(2,000 characters or less)

Your description should:

- Begin by clearly and concisely defining **what** the project is, and the **intended audience**. Example:
"This program will create a teacher's guide for grades 3-4."
"This program will fund the transportation of 2000 school students from Community X to the park to participate in a specific education program"
- Include the **total amount of the grant** for which you are applying (a detailed cost estimate will appear later in the appropriate section).
- Give an expected project **completion date**
- Indicate the **number of visitors** who can reasonably be expected to participate in the program
- Clearly define the desired **educational outcome** of the project – the outcome you will be evaluating.

Example:

"Participants will understand their role in the process of historic preservation"

"Participants will discover the diversity of life in the park while creating an all-species database."

"Park education programs will serve 3,000 additional participants"

Please limit the text in this section to description, and save cost estimate and justification information for the appropriate sections. Highest ratings will be given to proposals describing all these areas clearly and concisely.

Justification (0-5 points)

(This PMIS field allows more than 6000 characters)

The project justification should clearly explain how the proposed program / product / activity will:

1) Provide an opportunity for the audience to learn about critical scientific and/or historical or cultural resource-based:

- issues,
- processes, and/or
- research methods

2) Allow students/public to practice or actively engage in resource stewardship and/or research activities based on critical park issues (sound scientific, historical, and cultural methods and research).

Successful programs will introduce students and the public to sound professional concepts of scientific, historical, and cultural processes, research, and analysis; and allow them an opportunity to learn about these concepts through active engagement by means of a program, website, activity, publication, etc. For example, a traveling trunk that uses artifacts as a medium for students to conduct their own original research in order to discover what the items were used for, would be rated more highly than a traveling trunk program that mainly provides specimens to illustrate a lesson. In the same way, a website that allows the users to enter data on the quality of their local rainwater and correlate their data with that gathered from other locations would receive a higher point total than a website that simply presented data on rainwater research and samples from a park.

Curriculum based programs should indicate how the content relates to formal curriculum for the intended audience.

3) Involve partners (0-2 points)

What partners will be involved and what specific contributions do they propose making?

4) Have a specific intended impact (0-2 points)

What impact is the program designed to have? Is it designed to engage a small audience in an immersive learning experience or a larger audience in a more general way?

How does it support/enhance existing park or national programs?

5) Be sustainable (0-2 points)

How will the project be supported in the future? How will this seed money “grow” a new educational opportunity? Be specific.

6) Be evaluated (0-2 points)

How will you measure the impact of the program – how will you find out if your desired outcome has been achieved? Your evaluation should address the specific outcomes you describe in the “Measurable Results” section of PMIS.

Measurable Results (0-4 points)
(Maximum 4000 characters)

What benefits will be gained through the completion of this project? What quantifiable output will result from this project being completed? Does this project help the park achieve a GPRA goal? What means will you use to measure success?

A strong project probably has more than one measurable goal.

Examples:

“Incidents of Vandalism to park waysides will decrease by 20% as youth who hang out in the park after school participate in exhibit development.”

“The Park Partners program will increase overall membership by 1000, as participants successfully complete the Park Partners Resource Stewardship Quiz”

“1600 students from all over the state will know about the role of Native Americans in state and local history.”

“The park will be recognized as a reliable source for education programs for teachers, students and community groups.”

“10 teachers will earn continuing education credits as they learn to use park stories and data to teach math for grade 5.”

Cost Estimate (0-3 points)

Use the “Project Funding Component” section of PMIS to create a detailed cost estimate, indicating how the grant money will be spent to achieve project goals. A well-considered cost estimate will be more successful than entering one item for the component’s entire estimate. (refer to the examples below).

If other funds or contributions from partners will be supporting this project, briefly describe them in the “Funding Component Description” section.

In the cost estimate, fill in the estimated cost of each component. Note that the “Item” could be a supply needed to complete a kit, or the services of a designer or teacher required to complete the project. In the Description field, indicate how the item will be used

(See the examples on the following page).

Sample Cost Estimates:

A detailed cost estimate:

Item	Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Item Cost
Environmental Science Trekker (Tm) System	A comprehensive testing apparatus with probes for testing soil, ph, turbidity, and conductivity for students to use in the field.	2	Each	\$700.00	\$1,400.00
Dissolved Oxygen Probe	A testing probe to determine dissolved oxygen in water will allow students to chemically test in the field.	2	Each	\$400.00	\$800.00
Digital Cameras	Digital cameras with 2.0 mega pixel images are needed to photograph plants and animals for PowerPoint programs produced by the students. Enables students to see their shots immediately, delete and reshoot, and load quickly into a PowerPoint program.	2	Each	\$300.00	\$600.00
Lcd Projector	The Projector will be project dedicated and is needed to show PowerPoint presentations on the hands-on activities of the students who will, in turn, present programs for the community and elementary students.	1	Each	\$2,700.00	\$2,700.00
3x Magnification Lenses	Dual hand magnifiers will be used by elementary students hiking the nature trails.	200	Each	\$2.00	\$400.00
CD Burner	The CD burner will be used by the students to reproduce and store multiple individual PowerPoint presentations.	1	Each	\$100.00	\$100.00
Blank Cds	CDs will be used to mass produce the entire curriculum-based sections made by the students that will be sent to the science departments in the Santa Rosa School District.	100	Each	\$1.00	\$100.00

An incomplete / insufficient cost estimate:

Item	Description	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Item Cost
Design and print 30,000 teacher guides	Cost to hire designer, purchase graphics and print through GPO	1	Lump	\$25,000	\$25,000

A well-planned project breaks down estimated costs by task. In the estimate above, there is no indication of how much of the total will be spent on design vs. purchase of graphics and printing, or if any will be spent on developing content.

Quality Points (1-3 points for each of the following 5 categories)

Quality points should be addressed in the “Additional Criteria” data field of PMIS.

A proposal may be awarded quality points if it includes one or more of the following characteristics. The project justification must clearly describe how the item will be addressed in order to receive the additional points. It is NOT intended that one project attempt to gain ALL 15 quality points.

Thematic Approach – The proposal employs a broad thematic or geographical approach. (Examples: A presidential home site designs a scavenger hunt program on their website that includes other presidential sites, thereby encouraging the user to evaluate some of the continuities and differences related to presidential careers. A vulcanology exhibit at a park helps the viewer to comprehend the relationship between the dormant cone in the park and the active thermal springs hundreds of miles away.)

Peer-to-Peer Sharing – The proposal includes a mechanism for the students/public to share the new expertise or knowledge they have gained in a organized way in order to hone their own stewardship ethic and encourage it in others. (Examples: Students organize a mini science fair in their school to share what they’ve learned. Participants in an informal leaf walk record the plants they’ve identified and share their list with the rest of the group after the walk.)

Physical Activity – The proposal includes incentives to have people engage in physical activity and exercise. (Examples: Organize a “Travel the Underground Railroad Day” in the park during which participants actually walk a pre-determined route with educational activities and stops along the way. Have students incorporate math, science and PE requirements into a single program by having them physically recreate the journey of a mountain raindrop down to the sea on a course laid out on a school playing field. Similarly, a class sets out to “Climb the Chilkoot Trail” stopping at appropriate distances along a local trail or play area to open packets of “updates” about their progress and surroundings.)

Underserved Audiences – The proposal deliberately reaches out to underserved audiences. (Examples: Initiating a research program that seeks to gather the oral history of former residents of the park. Park designs an educational brochure that respectfully presents the opposing views of the NPS and the local timber industry workers. Students collect oral histories from Civil Rights activists)

Information Sharing – The proposal uses technology and other appropriate means to make the educational opportunities of the program/product/activity accessible to as wide an audience as possible. (Examples: A video of a snowshoe track-identifying program is broadcast on a local access cable channel. A group of parks designs a website that enables the public to research and enter their own photos of historic homes in their town. Student products are shared with other students via the web, who can compare results and discuss issues.)