



2025 APPLICATION PACKET

JAMES E. COOK

NATURE'S CLASSROOM GRANT

ENRICHING K-12 EDUCATION THROUGH NATIONAL PARKS

AUGUST 1, 2024

Expanding Access, Inspiring Minds: **A Guide to the James E. Cook Nature's Classroom Grant**



James E. Cook

Established in 2022, the *James E. Cook Nature's Classroom Grant* is named in honor of Western National Parks Association's Chief Executive Officer from 2011 to 2022. This grant is dedicated to enhancing access to national parks for underrepresented K-12 youth by providing essential funding for educators to bring the wonders of national parks into classrooms and offer transformative park experiences. Reflecting Jim Cook's commitment to educating youth and expanding access for underrepresented communities, the grant supports efforts to make national parks more accessible. Through this initiative, Western National Parks Association (WNPA) and Jim's legacy continue to foster a deep passion for our natural and cultural heritage in the next generation of park stewards.

We invite you to learn more about this grant opportunity. Detailed information and eligibility criteria are provided to guide your application and help us support educators in fostering the next generation of park advocates, while promoting accessibility and inclusion.

To learn more, visit [WNPA | Awards, Grants, and Scholarships](#),
or meet our [Past Honorees](#).

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General Information_____

APPLICATION PREPARATION

Before you start your application, here's what you need to know.

- **Where:** Select the WNPAs-affiliated park you want to collaborate with to create your experience. Refer to page 9 or visit [WNPA | Discover Our Parks](#) for a list of these parks.
- **Who:** Contact the park visitor center to get the name and contact information of the National Park Service staff member who will work with you to create your experience.
- **What:** Discuss the types of experiences offered by the park with the park representative.
- **How:** Choose your park experience type: Virtual Classroom, In-Classroom, or In-Park.
- Now you are ready to apply!

AWARD

Applicants may apply for one of the following funding awards:

- Up to \$750 for a virtual classroom experience that connects the park ranger to the classroom via Zoom or another video conferencing tool.
- Up to \$750 for an in-classroom experience that brings the park ranger to the school.
- Up to \$2,000 for an in-park experience that takes the classroom to visit a park.

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must
 - Create their experience with a **WNPA-affiliated park**. For a list of these parks, refer to page 9 or visit [WNPA | Discover Our Parks](#).
 - Have students who meet the WNPAs definition of underrepresented youth: groups of individuals that have limited access to participation in outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., hiking, biking, fishing, and skiing) or in-park interpretive/educational programs and may face barriers to participating in those activities (e.g., income, physical access, social economic factors).
- Experiences must take place between March 10, 2025, and May 30, 2026. Funding expires May 31, 2026.
- Applications must include
 - Park-themed learning outcome focused on the environment, history, or outdoor recreation/healthy lifestyles. [Examples](#)
 - Emphasis on park stewardship. Park stewards support ways to preserve and improve national parks for everyone. This can be a part of an activity or lesson at a park, in the classroom, or virtually. [Examples](#)

While not a requirement for submission, **priority will be given to applications from Title 1 schools.**

ELIBILITY

- K-12 public, private, parochial, or home-school educators may apply.
- More than one application per school can be submitted. Only one application per class will be accepted.

QUALIFIED USE OF FUNDS

Funding can be used toward transportation costs, program fees, park entry fees, educational supplies, park-steward component supplies, materials for arts and crafts, scientific equipment for gathering nature-study data, and supplies for citizen-science projects; in addition, virtual classroom equipment rental fees and Zoom access, provided complimentary by WNPA if needed, supplies for pre-visit and/or post-visit activities, and other materials needed for a powerful learning experience will be considered.

Examples: Books, maps, science kits, materials for a letter-writing campaign or posters, bulletin board supplies, journals for each student to write about their park experience, fishing gear, camping gear, iPad, LCD projector/screen rental, trail camera (with advance permission from the park), microphones, and tripods.

RECIPIENT REQUIREMENTS

Grant awardees

- Are required to submit a final report to WNPA within 60 days of the experience date noted in the application. Refer to page 6 to review a copy of the report form and required elements.
- Will receive 95 percent of the grant award in advance, with the remaining 5 percent paid upon fulfillment of the final report requirement. Failure to meet the final report requirement within the allocated time frame will result in a forfeiture of all unpaid funds.
 - When creating your budget, you may allocate your post-experience activities and reflections with this 5 percent or more.
- Are responsible for meeting all school and park safety and health, including but not limited to COVID-19, guidelines, and regulations.

SELECTION AND NOTIFICATION

- Criteria for this program has been established by WNPA.
- Submissions will be reviewed and scored by a committee comprising WNPA board members and/or the WNPA executive leadership team.
- Recipients will be notified the week of February 10, 2025.

WNPA fully supports diversity, equality, and inclusion. The selection process respects all individuals and ensures equal opportunity for all applicants.

SUBMISSION

- All applications must be completed through the WNPA web portal.
[WNPA | Grants](#)
- To properly prepare your submission, refer to the sample application form on page 4.
- The information supplied is limited to the space provided and submitted on the electronic form.
- Applications received in any other format will not be accepted.

If you do not have access to a computer and would like to submit an application, contact the Program Administrator.

TIMELINE

- Submissions open on August 4, 2024.
- Deadline for submission is December 31, 2024, end of day.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Please address questions regarding this grant to Julie Tainter, business support manager, via email at julie.tainter@wnpa.org.

Sample Application

The application sample outlined below is a guide. All applications must be submitted electronically—[WNPA | Grants](#). The information supplied is limited to the space provided and submitted on the electronic form. Applications received in any other format will not be accepted. If you do not have access to a computer and would like to submit an application, contact the Program Administrator.

PART ONE: School Information

1. Name of school
2. Mailing address, city, state, zip code, main phone
3. Principal name, phone, email
4. For the entire school, what percentage of students qualify for free or reduced lunch?
5. Is your school a Title I school?
 - While not a requirement for submission, priority will be given to applications from Title I schools.

PART TWO: Teacher Information

1. Teacher first name, last name
2. Direct phone, email

PART THREE: General Information

1. Name of the WNPA-affiliated park you are partnering with to create your experience.
2. Contact information for the person you are working with at the park to create your experience.
3. Approximate date of your experience.
4. Estimated number of students participating.
5. Grade level(s) of participating students.
6. Total amount of funding requested.
 - This amount must match the budget total stated in Part Five.
7. Select the type of experience you are planning: Virtual Classroom, In-Classroom, or In-Park.

PART FOUR: Tell Us More about Your Proposed Experience

1. Provide an overview—be sure to include your learning outcomes. [Response up to 250 words.](#)
2. Expand on the park-themed educational elements. If a National Park Service program, include the program name, and what state requirement(s), if any, it meets. [Response up to 300 words.](#)
[Examples](#)
3. Outline how this experience will teach your students about park stewardship. [Response up to 250 words.](#) [Examples](#)
4. Share any pre- and/or post-experience activities/lessons you are planning for the students. If not applicable, insert N/A. [Response up to 250 words.](#)
5. Explain how your class and school would benefit from this grant. [Response up to 250 words.](#)
6. Describe how your students meet the WNPA definition of underrepresented youth: a group of individuals that have limited access to participation in outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., hiking, biking, fishing, and skiing) or in-park interpretive/educational programs and may face barriers to participating in those activities (e.g., income, physical access, social economic factors). [Response up to 250 words.](#)

PART Five: Your Experience Costs

Provide a detailed budget for your experience. Please note that WNPA does not fund salaries, tips, food/beverages, or park memorabilia. The total budget amount **must** match the funding request amount stated in Part Three. If there is a discrepancy, WNPA will use the total budget amount.

Sample Application

Category	Funds Requested from WNPA	Brief Explanation of Each Expense
Transportation	\$	
Program fees	\$	
Park entry fees	\$	
Educational supplies	\$	
Park-steward supplies	\$	
Materials to support pre-experience activities/lessons	\$	
Materials to support post-experience activities/lessons	\$	
THE ONLINE FORM HAS SIX BLANK LINES FOR ADDITIONAL EXPENSES.	\$	
BUDGET TOTALS		\$ This amount MUST match the amount of the funding request stated in Part Three.

PART SIX: Submit Your Application

Terms and Conditions

- Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is the grantor, and the school is the grantee.
- By submitting your application, you give WNPA consent to use the name and information you provided for public relations and fundraising in any media now or hereafter known, including, but not limited to, digital and print. If you provide photos and/or videos, all applicants grant an irrevocable perpetual, worldwide, nonexclusive license to WNPA, to reproduce, distribute, display, and create derivative works of the image in connection with WNPA, in any media now or hereafter known, including but not limited to digital and print.
- If this application is approved for funding
 - WNPA will issue the 2025 Nature's Classroom Grant agreement outlining all funding terms and conditions. For WNPA to proceed with funding, the agreement will require the signatures of the school principal and teacher responsible for creating and executing the experience stated in Part Two of this application.
 - Grantees are required to submit a final report to WNPA within 60 days of the experience date stated in the grant agreement.
 - WNPA will release 95 percent of the grant award to the grantee upon receipt of the fully executed WNPA grant agreement. The remaining 5 percent will be paid upon fulfillment of the final report requirement. Failure to meet the final report requirement within the allocated time frame will result in a forfeiture of all unpaid funds.
 - Grantee is responsible for meeting all school and park safety and health, including but not limited to COVID-19, guidelines, and regulations.

Check to accept and confirm: _____ I have read and understand the stated terms and conditions. On behalf of the school, I attest that I am authorized to submit this application to Western National Parks Association for consideration.

How did you hear about this grant? Select all that apply: WNPA website, National Park Service, WNPA staff, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, WNPA email, State/National print or digital article, Other.

Submitting Name and Contact Information

If the submitter is not the teacher listed in Part Two of this application, please check the box to insert your contact information—name, title, phone, email.

Sample Recipient Final Report

This final report form is a guideline. All final reports must be submitted through the WNPA web portal—recipients will be given directions to access the online form. The information supplied is limited to the space provided and submitted on the electronic form. Final Reports received in any other format will not be accepted.

PART ONE: Awardee

1. Name of school, mailing address, city, state, zip code, main phone
2. Principal name, phone, email
3. Teacher who created and executed the experience: name, phone, email
4. WNPA grant number (refer to your grant agreement)

PART TWO: Share Your Experience

1. Date your experience took place.
2. Number of participating students.
3. Specify the type of your experience: Virtual Classroom, In-Classroom, or In-Park.
4. Amount of your award.
5. Name of the WNPA-affiliated park you collaborated with to create your experience.
6. Expound on your experience working with your NPS partner at the park to create your experience. [Response up to 250 words.](#)
7. Teacher:
 - Briefly restate the plan outlined in the original application. Were any modifications to the plan necessary? Did you achieve your goals and objectives? [Response up to 250 words.](#)
 - Share a story that was a highlight of the experience. [Response up to 250 words.](#)
 - Explain any plans for post-experience activities and/or learnings. [Response up to 150 words](#)
8. Student Responses: Provide three to five age-appropriate responses from your students. Use the following questions as your guide and modify them for your varying age groups and abilities.
 - What did you learn during the experience? [Response up to 300 words.](#)
 - What was your favorite part of the experience and why? [Response up to 300 words.](#)
 - Based on what you learned during your experience, how will you be a park steward and help care for and protect our parks in the future? [Response up to 300 words.](#)
 - For direct quotes, please provide the student first name and last initial.

PART THREE: Required Upload

Six pictures that capture the experience events. Maximum 20 MB.

- Photo captions not to exceed 25 words.
- Photo credit not to exceed 25 words.
- Before uploading, name photos in the following sequential format:
WNPAGrantNumber.photonumber | Example: JEC24-04.1

Sample Recipient Final Report

PART FOUR: Optional Upload

Three to-five-minute video that tells the story of your experience.

- Be creative, a professional video is not necessary—a cell phone video will suffice if the picture and audio are clear.
- Who participated in creating your video, and what roles did they play?
 - Name of narrator
 - Name of videographer
 - Others and their role(s)
- Before uploading, name the video in the following format:
WNPAGrantNumber.video | Example JEC24-04.video

PART FIVE: Confirm and Approve

On behalf of the school, I declare the

1. Information provided herein is accurate.
2. Nature's Classroom Grant experience has been completed to the satisfaction of the school.
3. Submitter of this final report is either the teacher noted in Part One, who created and conducted the experience, or the school principal.

I approve this final report for submission to Western National Parks Association.

Name, Title, Date

Learn More About

Western

National Parks
Association

OUR MISSION

In partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) since 1938, Western National Parks Association (WNPA) advances education, interpretation, research, and community engagement to ensure national parks are increasingly valued by all.

OUR COMMITMENT

National parks tell the story of America, and WNPA helps share that story. By uncovering the diversity of the landscapes' natural beauty, culture, and heritage, WNPA remains committed to discovery—new knowledge, new understanding, and new ways to engage with humanity.

OUR ROLE

As a nonprofit education partner of the NPS, WNPA supports more than 70 parks across the West, developing products, services, and programs that enrich the visitor experience, understanding, and appreciation of national parks.

The most visible expression of this mission is the operation of park stores in national park visitor centers, with many of the offerings developed and published by WNPA. Each store is unique, presenting products that give guests a tangible and enduring connection to the park's unique themes and diverse purposes—its majestic scenery, biodiversity, fascinating natural and cultural history, and stories of struggle, triumph, and justice. Visitors find a variety of educational materials, from trail and field guides to in-depth academic studies, along with authentic arts and crafts, collectible park logo items, and even food products that connect with the park's diverse cultures, communities, and ecosystems. Young guests can discover children's books, educational toys, and popular Junior Ranger merchandise. Award-winning books and products extend visitors' experiences far beyond their time in the park.

The National Parks Store in Tucson, Arizona, offers a variety of educational programs. Past topics include Native basketry, flute making, pottery techniques, and Navajo rug weaving, with attendance exceeding five thousand people annually. The premiere community event of the year is the sponsorship of The National Park Experience Pavilion at the Tucson Festival of Books. The Pavilion provides the opportunity for 20 national parks from the western United States to connect with more than 140,000 festival attendees, bringing national parks to the people and the diverse communities they serve.

Along with educational programming, WNPA provides direct financial aid to the national parks, supporting cultural, historical, and educational activities developed by park rangers. These activities enhance visitor experiences, create opportunities to inclusively connect with youth, and engage diverse local communities. Thousands of events have been funded, including an international youth Indigenous cultural exchange, living history demonstrations and encampments, several cultural festivals, Junior Ranger camps, art exhibitions, and archaeological and geographical surveys.

Historically, WNPA has funded a broad range of research projects, all of which help advance the management, preservation, and interpretation of our national parks. Supporting research is more than just a way to amplify the efforts of National Park Service partners; it is a means to help reveal and share the important stories parks hold to advance equity, diversity, inclusivity, and justice for all park visitors and their communities. To learn more about Western National Parks Association, visit www.wnpa.org.

Affiliated Parks by State

Arizona

[Canyon de Chelly National Monument](#)
[Casa Grande Ruins National Monument](#)
[Chiricahua National Monument](#)
[Coronado National Memorial](#)
[Fort Bowie National Historic Site](#)
[Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site](#)
[Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
[Montezuma Castle National Monument](#)
[Navajo National Monument](#)
[Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#)
[Saguaro National Park](#)
[Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument](#)
[Tonto National Monument](#)
[Tumacácori National Historical Park](#)
[Tuzigoot National Monument](#)
[Walnut Canyon National Monument](#)
[Wupatki National Monument](#)

California

[Channel Islands National Park](#)
[Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site](#)
[John Muir National Historic Site](#)
[Mojave National Preserve](#)
[Pinnacles National Park](#)
[Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial](#)
[San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park](#)
[Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)
[Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#)

Colorado

[Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site](#)
[Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
[Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
[Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve](#)
[Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site](#)

Kansas

[Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Park](#)
[Fort Larned National Historic Site](#)
[Fort Scott National Historic Site](#)
[Nicodemus National Historic Site](#)

Montana & Wyoming

[Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
[Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument](#)

Nevada

[Great Basin National Park](#)
[Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
[Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument](#)

New Mexico

[Aztec Ruins National Monument](#)
[Bandelier National Monument](#)
[Capulin Volcano National Monument](#)
[Carlsbad Caverns National Park](#)
[Chaco Culture National Historical Park](#)
[El Malpais National Monument](#)
[El Morro National Monument](#)
[Fort Union National Monument](#)
[Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument](#)
[Pecos National Historical Park](#)
[Petroglyph National Monument](#)
[Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument](#)
[White Sands National Park](#)

Oklahoma

[Chickasaw National Recreation Area](#)
[Washita Battlefield National Historic Site](#)

Texas

[Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument](#)
[Big Thicket National Preserve](#)
[Chamizal National Memorial](#)
[Fort Davis National Historic Site](#)
[Guadalupe Mountains National Park](#)
[Lake Meredith National Recreation Area](#)
[Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park](#)
[Padre Island National Seashore](#)
[Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park](#)
[San Antonio Missions National Historical Park](#)

Utah

[Golden Spike National Historical Park](#)
[Timpanogos Cave National Monument](#)

Trails

[Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail](#)
[Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail](#)
[Santa Fe National Historic Trail](#)
[Trail of Tears National Historic Trail](#)