
NEW MEXICO OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION



NEW MEXICO
OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

OUTDOOR EQUITY FUND

FY26 PROGRAM GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

MISSION: To increase equitable access to the outdoors for all New Mexicans, ensuring healthy outcomes, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity.

The **Outdoor Equity Fund** was created in 2020 to help ensure that *all* New Mexico youth—regardless of income, location, or background—can access meaningful outdoor experiences. Built on the belief that outdoor access is a human right, OEF supports programs that connect young people to nature, culture, adventure, and opportunity.

Since launch, the fund has awarded \$6.5 million to 169 organizations, reaching over 83,000 youth in 23 counties and Tribal communities with activities like hiking, biking, conservation, cultural education, and outdoor leadership—many for the first time.

This guide will walk you through everything you need to apply for FY26 funding, including eligibility, funding priorities, examples of successful programs, and contact info for our team—we're here to help.

Fun Facts:

- Nearly 70% of OEF grantees serve rural or frontier communities.
- One program taught kids how to build and ride their own bikes—and they rode away with new skills and new wheels.
- Youth have explored everything from Tribal ancestral lands to the Continental Divide Trail.
- Participants have restored ecosystems through hands-on conservation work.
- Cultural programs include native language, traditional farming, and storytelling with elders.
- Some OEF-funded programs offer job training in outdoor careers like guiding, rafting, and conservation.

GRANT OVERVIEW

What is new for FY26?



\$3 million available for Outdoor Equity Fund grants in FY26



**Applications accepted in two rounds:
June 1 – July 31, 2025
January 1 – February 28, 2026**



All communication, including Progress Report and Final Reports must be submitted through the Submittable grant portal



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GRANT OVERVIEW

General Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations; municipalities; counties; nonprofits; K-12 schools/districts; colleges/universities.

Recreation Access: Applicant must have a well-developed written plan to engage youth in nature-based outdoor recreation activities.

Participants: Serve a population where at least 40% are low-income youth up to age 18.

Education: Applicant must include some type of education plan on the climate and environment.

FY26 Grant Cycle

Round 1: Grant opens June 1, 2025. Closes July 31, 2025.

Round 2: Grant opens January 1, 2026. Closes February 28, 2026.

Deadline

Round 1: July 31, 2025 at 5:00 PM MT

Round 2: February 28, 2026 at 5:00 PM MT

Award Range

\$5,000 - \$40,000

Match Requirement

Required **2:1 match** (e.g. a \$20,000 grant requires \$10,000 in matching funds). The match can include any combination of cash and/or in-kind (See FAQ page 8 for more details).

NO match required if you meet any one of the below criteria:

1. Tribal community – qualify for match waiver if a Tribe, Pueblo, or Nation is the direct applicant, or if you are a non-profit, school, etc. located on Nation/Tribal/Pueblo lands and serving Indigenous youth;
2. Rural community – "Rural" is defined as any part of the state other than Los Alamos County, Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Farmington, Las Cruces, Roswell, Santa Fe, and within a 10-mile radius around those cities;
3. Tell us your story – if you are concerned about meeting the match requirement and do not meet any of the above criteria but are serving a community that has historically had limited access to the outdoors you may still qualify for a match waiver.

Contract and Reporting Requirements

- Program must be completed within 18 months of the signed contract date.
- Grant money will be paid in full up front after grant agreement signing.
- Awardees must submit progress report at midpoint of grant-funded programming and final report at program completion. At ORD's request, awardees will participate in an in-person site visit or an update phone call.
- Applicant must submit photos and be willing to participate in marketing and promotional efforts.
- Grants will be split between tribal, rural, acequia/land grant, and urban communities.
- Each awardee is required to tag @NMOOutdoorRec in at least one social media post or mention "Outdoor Recreation Division's Outdoor Equity Fund" with a link to NMOutside.com within 18 months of the signed contract date.

ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

What type of programming can you apply for?

ELIGIBLE

- Services (recreational & educational)
- Materials (equipment & supplies)
- Transportation & Travel
- Administrative - up to 10%
- Billed labor (staff & youth interns for program)
- Miscellaneous (insurance, food, etc.)

Examples

- Insurance fees to cover program liability
- Meals for participants
- Bus fare
- Equipment rentals or gear purchases
- Ski or other access tickets

INELIGIBLE

- Programs without significant exposure to outdoor, nature-based environments
- Traditional organized youth sports played on developed fields (i.e soccer, football, etc)
- Infrastructure development
- Out-of-state travel

Examples

- Summer camps providing only organized sports opportunities
- Equipment-only projects (i.e. applications with no programming element)



ELIGIBLE OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

How we define outdoor recreation: Any activity that takes place outside, in a natural environment.

Examples of activities include, but are not limited to:



Adaptive outdoor recreation of all types



Trail activities: hiking, backpacking, trail running, horseback riding, hunting etc.



Camping: tent, RV, yurts, etc.



Off-road motorized activities: UTV, ATV, off-road motorcycles, etc.



Nature enjoyment: wildlife viewing, wildlife photography, birdwatching, nature walks, plant identification, etc.



Water activities: canoeing, kayaking, rafting, stand-up paddle boarding, fishing, etc.



Bicycling: road, mountain, gravel, bikepacking, etc.



Snow activities: snowboarding, all skiing types, snowshoeing, etc.

For examples of eligible programs, [read about past grant recipients](#) or [watch the videos below.](#)



Outdoor Academy



Albuquerque Sign Language Academy

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS

Meet a few past Outdoor Equity Fund awardees

Awardee: Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks

Award: \$20,000

Location: Las Cruces

Description: The Moving Montañas initiative connects youth to the outdoors through guided hikes, summer camps, camping trips, and other educational enrichment activities. It aims to educate users about the impacts of a changing climate on the Chihuahuan desert and the actions they can take to help solve our climate crisis.



Awardee: Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP)

Award: \$20,000

Location: Zuni Pueblo

Description: ZYEP recognizes the importance and impact of connecting Indigenous youth to culturally significant ancestral sites and how that can contribute promoting resilience in Zuni youth so that they grow into strong and healthy adults who are connected to their culture. The project will facilitate outdoor retreats that allow youth to visit ancestral sites from their migration story, while participating in outdoor recreational activities that are available at those sites.



Applicant: Global Opportunities Unlimited Inc.

Award: \$7,700

Location: Albuquerque

Description: Provides inclusive educational fishing and watershed education for disabled, disadvantaged, and low-income children, using adaptive technology to expand the availability of outdoor opportunities to people with disabilities. Participants will learn about aquatic ecosystems and the effects of climate change.



FAQS

How is "rural" defined for the match?

"Rural" is defined as any part of the state other than Los Alamos County, Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Farmington, Las Cruces, Roswell, Santa Fe, and a 10-mile radius around those cities.

How does my organization qualify for NO match requirements?

By meeting any one of the following criteria (see also page 4) as (1) a Tribal community (Tribe, Pueblo, or Nation) OR are located on a Nation/Tribal/Pueblo lands, serving Indigenous youth; (2) a rural community (any part of the state other than Los Alamos County, Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Farmington, Las Cruces, Roswell, Santa Fe, and within a 10-mile radius around those cities); or (3) a BIPOC lead organization serving BIPOC youth.

Does the match requirement have to be cash?

No. The match component can be any combination of cash or in-kind (i.e. volunteer hours or donated equipment, services, or materials). Some other state grants and federal grants can also be used as a match.

Are privately owned businesses or state agencies eligible to apply?

No. Neither privately owned businesses / organizations nor state agencies are eligible to apply. Only the following entities are eligible: Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations municipalities; counties; nonprofits; K-12 schools/districts; colleges/universities. However, private businesses can be OEF Ambassadors in support of the Outdoor Equity Fund.

Can my organization submit more than one application?

It depends. An organization/entity can only receive OEF funding once per fiscal year. If an you submit an application for Round 1 and your project is not awarded, you may be eligible to re-apply for Round 2. ORD staff will notify you whether your project is eligible for re-submission as-is, if edits are required, or if it is ineligible based on scoring and review. Depending on staff capacity, ORD staff may be available to provide additional feedback on your application. Please do not submit multiple applications from different partners for the same program (in an attempt to increase the odds of it being funded). Submit one application for the program, and include letters of support from your partners.

When can I expect to hear back about my application?

Applications will be reviewed by a volunteer committee, with reviews scheduled in the month following application closure. You will typically receive an email from the ORD team within a month of each review period to inform you whether your program was awarded funding. BOTH those awarded and denied funding will receive an email.

What are the requirements if I receive a grant?

Program must be completed within **18 months** of the signed contract date. The applicant - adhering to a template created by ORD - must submit **(1) Progress Report** at midpoint of grant period, **(1) Final Report** at program completion, AND at ORD's request, complete **(1) in-person site visit or or have (1) update phone call** halfway through the grant period. The applicant **must submit photos and be willing to participate in marketing and promotional efforts**. Each awardee is encouraged to like and follow @NMOutdoorRec and is **required to tag @NMOutdoorRec in at least one social media post or mention "New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division's Outdoor Equity Fund" with a link to the ORD website (NMOutside.com)** within this reporting time frame. Additional OEF/ORD mentions and promotion is encouraged and will be reciprocated. Videos that demonstrate the OEF program should be shared through the Submittable grant portal via link or upload.

APPLICATION TIPS

- For more information and to access the application, visit the [New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division website](#).
- Be concise with responses; there is a word limit for each question. You will be prevented from submitting if any answer exceeds this limit.
- Pay close attention to additional instructions in the application notes. Some requirements, if not completed correctly, will disqualify you from receiving funding or significantly delay the funding process.
- Double-check the award amount, budget, and match to ensure they are accurate.
- Confirm the account the application is submitted from is the primary contact. ORD will send all grant updates to the account that submitted the application for the entire duration of the 18-month grant contract and the application process.
- Save your work in the online application frequently. Connection errors can lead to a loss of data that is not recoverable. Do not rely on autosave.
- Take advantage of the "Collaboration" option in the online application. This allows organizations to select multiple users to work on a submission. This will appear in the top right-hand corner of the page after you log in to your account.
- To avoid technical difficulties, submit early. If you do run into technical issues with login, application, or submission, contact Submittable [here](#).
- Stay up to date on grant info and deadlines by [signing up for our newsletter](#).



APPLY NOW

GRANT OPENS JUNE 1, 2025

[NMOUTSIDE.COM](https://nmoutside.com)

CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS



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Photo by: Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte

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