The Future of Learning, The Future of Our Planet Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Application Process Questions

Q: What is the application process?

A: To be eligible, all candidates must submit an application by the deadline of Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 11:59 PM EDT. These grants are highly competitive and reserved for select projects **All candidates will receive a notification by May 30, 2026 with either a declination or acceptance.**

To start a new application, visit the "[Grants and Investments](#)" page and select the "Apply now" button under The Future of Learning, The Future of Our Planet RfP.

If you already started an application for this opportunity, return to the grants

portal and login to continue your application:

https://grants.nationalgeographic.org

Q: Where can I find the full application template? And where can I find the character limits for each application question?

A: The full application template is located [here](#). In the template, you can find the character limits for each application question.

Q: What Primary Focus Area do I select in the pre-application (Land, Oceans, Wildlife, Space, or Planetary Health)?

A: All topics related to our [focus areas](#) - Ocean, Land, Wildlife, Human Histories and Cultures, Planetary Health, and Space - are encouraged and will be considered. Your proposed project should be well aligned with at least one of the six Primary Focus Areas ([Land](#), [Oceans](#), [Wildlife](#), [Human Histories & Cultures](#), [Space](#), or [Planetary Health](#)). Please select the Primary Focus Area that best aligns with your proposed project.

Q: How will the applications be evaluated?

A: Applications will go through the National Geographic Society's standard grants evaluation process, which includes detailed reviews from a variety of stakeholders with relevant expertise. See information in the funding call for more information on application eligibility and components of competitive proposals.

Q: Can National Geographic Explorers with active grants apply for this RfP?

A: Explorers must close previous grants before applying for this RfP. This entails submitting the final report and media assets on the Society grants portal. Please note that this does not apply to most Explorer-exclusive funding opportunities such as Meridian Projects (formerly known as Explorer Community Collaboration Grants).

Successful Education Project Questions

Q: What is a Level I (LI) grant?

A: LI grants are designed for individuals who may be earlier in their career, those looking to establish themselves better in their field, or those who want to grow their network and enhance their impact by joining a global community of National Geographic Explorers.

LI grants are open to those who are not currently a National Geographic Explorer. Individuals in our network who are not yet Explorers, including team members on previous grants, Young Explorers awarded in 2019 or later, or recipients of discretionary funding opportunities such as the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for Journalists and the COVID-19 Remote Learning Emergency Fund, and grant recipients from the China Air & Water Fund may apply for a Level I opportunity.

Q: What are the eligibility criteria for LI?

- Applicant must have relevant education expertise (either formal or informal)
- Project must align to the Education primary focus
- Project must align to one of National Geographic's Focus Areas (Land, Ocean, Human Histories & Cultures, Space, or Planetary Health)
- Candidate must not be a current National Geographic staff member
- Candidate must be over the age of 18
- Project budget may not exceed $20,000
- Project must be completed within 1 years of receipt of funding
- Application materials must be complete enough to be able to assess candidate's skills and experience, as well as the project idea

Q: What is a Level II (LII) grant?

A: LII grants are designed for individuals who are more established in their field, have previously received a grant from the National Geographic Society, or are seeking a higher level of funding. You are not required to have previously received a grant from the National Geographic Society to apply for this opportunity.

Projects at this level should push the boundaries of the applicant's field or discipline and be designed to achieve significant and tangible impacts. LII grants are open to those who are already National Geographic Explorers, as well as those who are not Explorers.

Q: What are the eligibility criteria for LII?

- Applicant must have relevant education expertise (either formal or informal)
- Project must align to the Education primary focus
- Project must align to one of National Geographic's focus Areas (Land, Ocean, Human Histories & Cultures, Space, or Planetary Health)
- Candidate must not be a current National Geographic staff member

- Candidate must be over the age of 18
- Project budget is on average $50,000-$65,000 USD and may not exceed $100,000 USD
- Project must be completed within 2 years of receipt of funding
- Application materials must be complete enough to be able to assess candidate's skills and experience, as well as the project idea

Q: What is a National Geographic Society Education grant?

A: Education grants are for projects that use interdisciplinary approaches to build agency in a group of learners of all ages, in any educational setting, to take informed actions and find solutions to illuminate and protect our world.

Proposed projects may build capacity in a group of people, whether in a nontraditional or community education setting or in a formal classroom setting, to care for and take action to develop, maintain, and expand solutions to protect our world. Projects may also use educational research or tools to advance knowledge about how to effectively spark curiosity and inspire people of all ages to learn about, care for, and protect our world.

Q: What is considered outside of the scope of what you are looking for from education grant applications?

A: If your proposed project does not include a group of identified learners, learning activities, and learning outcomes, it will not be competitive. For example, a project that focuses solely on awareness-raising activities (e.g., sharing a paper or presentation at a conference, creating a social media campaign) will not be competitive. Similarly, a project that is focused on creating a resource such as a book or podcast without incorporating an identified group of learners, learning activities, and learning outcomes would be outside of the scope of our funding interests.

However, please note that we do fund projects focused on evaluating the effectiveness of an existing education program or resource. In these cases, there may not be an implementation component of a program/resource, but there are tangible outputs aligned to National Geographic's mission.

Projects are also considered out of scope if they are led by an individual without experience using education as a means to create change and part of a deliberate strategy to achieve goals. Applicants should not rely on team members in their application to solely provide expertise in education.

Proposed projects must reflect some level of innovation, which we are defining as a new idea of an idea that is scaling up an existing successful idea to reach different groups or learners and/or a new geographic area. We will not consider projects that are straightforward continuations of an applicant's current initiatives.

Below are examples of projects we would consider OUT OF SCOPE and would NOT FUND:
- Projects without a clearly identified group of learners, learning activities, and learning outcomes. Illustrative example:
  - A project that focuses solely on awareness-raising activities (e.g., sharing a paper or presentation at a conference, creating a social media campaign) will not be competitive.

- A project focused on creating a resource such as a book or podcast without incorporating an identified group of learners, learning activities, and learning outcomes would be outside of the scope of our funding interests.
- A project focused on conservation or storytelling (e.g. a documentary) outcomes **without** any description of what knowledge, attitudes, or skills learners will develop would be outside the scope of our funding interests. *However, projects that combine education with conservation, science, research and/or storytelling outcomes are welcomed.*
  - Projects where the final outcome focuses on learners developing skills WITHOUT any connection to how those skills will lead to actions on behalf of our planet and its people. Illustrative example:
    - A project engages a group of learners of any age in an educational experience with the only intent to develop and test a curriculum, lesson plans, or learning activities.
  - Projects where the focus is on the tool - for example geospatial information systems (GIS), Artificial Intelligence (AI), etc. - instead of leveraging an educational solution that enables people to act on behalf of our planet and its people. Illustrative example:
    - A project teaches learners of any age how to use AI for predictive modeling in geospatial platforms (ESRI, Google maps, etc.). The end goal is that learners know how to use AI to expand the power of geospatial analysis.

Q: What are the budget guidelines for the RfP?

A: The budget request may not exceed $20,000 for LI projects and on average $50,000-$65,000 USD, and may not exceed $100,000 USD, for a Level II grant. Please refer to the [Budget Guidelines for Level I and II Grants](#) for more details on what can be included in the budget request.

Future of Learning Funding Opportunity Specific Questions

Q: Why is the National Geographic Society interested in the future of learning?

Our world is facing big, complex, and rapidly changing environmental and societal challenges. Regardless of what the future may hold, learners will need support to develop capacities to learn about, care for and take action to protect our world. Building the future we want for our planet and its people involves designing for that future today. What we have learned from across disciplines is likely to inform successful teaching and learning approaches to these complex, rapidly changing, and interconnected challenges. To meet this future we will need to develop and scale models of what effective learning looks like – not just in formal education but also in informal and community education spaces, through career-connected learning, and with learners of any age from young children to adults.

Q: Which Primary Focus do I select in the pre-application (Storytelling, Science, or Education)?

A:This funding opportunity will fund education projects. Please see Q: [What is a National Geographic Society Education grant](#)? You MUST select "Education" as a primary focus.

Q: What are inclusive methodologies and how are they defined by the National Geographic Society?

A: The National Geographic Society seeks to support and fund work that embraces inclusive methodologies. Inclusive methodologies are those that seek to embed concepts of inclusion, fairness, access, and multiple perspectives into the supported work.

Potential methodologies might include: creating, fostering and supporting teams with different perspectives; conscientiously enhancing the safety and wellbeing of team members and collaborators in the field; actively co-creating projects with local communities; embracing observational, traditional or Indigenous knowledge systems; developing local capacity through capacity sharing initiatives; creating opportunities for local community members; and/or ensuring assets and data are shared fairly with community members and collaborators.

This does not represent an exhaustive list of potential inclusive methodologies or approaches, and not all of the methodologies enumerated above will be relevant or feasible for every project or consistent with every discipline.

Where applicable, successful projects will demonstrate how they have included local communities impacted by the work and/or in which the work is taking place and integrate local collaborators and interested parties into their work from planning, to implementation, and ultimately impact. If your project/research will engage communities, please be sure to explain:

Any involvement with the local community(ies) or groups you plan to work with during the entire timeline of your project or research, from start to finish;

How the project or research may positively or negatively impact the community. Include plans to mitigate the potential negative impacts or risks of the project/research;

How you will assess whether the communities' needs or interests have been met at the conclusion of the project or research.

Q: How does the National Geographic Society define 'community' for this request for proposal?

A: Community in this context is any group of people living in the same place **and/or** who are connected to each other through a shared history, interest or characteristic even if the group of people is not living in the same place.

Q: How should applicants present evidence in their full application that project methods are inclusive and ethical?

A: Evidence can be described in the "Methodology" section of the full application. In addition, evidence may also be provided as an attachment (ex: letter of support) to supplement the description in "Methodology." Candidates will need to provide sufficient

detail for the reviewers to understand the project methods and the applicant's connection to the communities they propose working in. See criteria for more detail.

In your application, we recommend you include information about how you will identify and reach the group(s) of learners you plan to engage as well as any other stakeholders who might be impacted by your work. Please consider how you will plan for risks and challenges to stakeholders of the project.