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I. What is Hands on the Land?

America's national forests, parks, wildlife refuges, waterways, and other localized public lands comprise nearly one-third the area of the United States, and thus offer many unique teaching and learning opportunities. Hands on the Land (HOL) is a national network of field classrooms that connects students, teachers, families, and volunteers to these special places. The HOL community collaborates to customize hands-on field experiences using natural, historical, and archaeological settings that bring classroom learning to life.

Today, more than one hundred federal, state, and local public land and waterway sites participate in the HOL network, effectively making it "America's Largest Classroom."

The HOL website includes a directory of all participating HOL public lands and waterways, otherwise known as **field sites**. These field sites partner with a school and/or school district and oftentimes with community-based nonprofit(s) to administer educational programming. Each entity of the HOL partnership must [register with the HOL network](#) and complete the appropriate membership application located on the HOL website. For more instructions about the HOL registration and application process, see "[How do I register with the HOL Network?](#)"

In addition to this site directory, the HOL website also provides a platform through which place-based environmental programs, projects, and resources may be accessed, shared, or exchanged. Educational resources are often posted by HOL members and resources related to pressing environmental issues, or "Hot Topics," are also accessible to teachers and students. In addition, the HOL website hosts unique environmental monitoring databases and data collection programs.

II. How do I register with the HOL Network?

Each entity of an HOL partnership must [register with HOL network](#) and complete the appropriate membership application located on the HOL website. Each type of HOL application requires at least two representatives to be registered.

For a public land or waterway, the site manager and a HOL program person each need to register (create HOL user accounts) and then complete a single [Field Site Application](#). For each school, an HOL coordinator (usually a teacher) and an administrative contact each need to register (create HOL user accounts) and then complete a single [School Application](#). (Please note: We are requiring each school that participates, even if from the same district, to complete a separate application.) When a non-school organization is to have a role in the HOL program, a program person and the executive director each needs to register (create HOL user accounts) and then complete a single [Partner Application](#).

Please be reminded that all members of the HOL partnership must submit applications to the HOL network in order to be eligible for the 2018 HOL Mini-Grants. Please email Robert Sendrey at rsendrey@neefusa.org with questions about the HOL registration process.

III. Why join the HOL network?

Registering with the HOL network offers countless benefits, as these outdoor classrooms have been shown to:

- foster real connections to nature with conservation, environmental literacy and stewardship programs that are hands-on and place-based;
- support educational curricula that are correlated with educational standards;
- expose students to issues confronting 21st-century public land and waterways agencies;
- Provides service-learning opportunities;
- expose students to career paths in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) disciplines;
- advances health and wellness through outdoor activities or recreation;
- connects teachers and public lands and waterways agency personnel through professional development opportunities;
- provides a network to share agency resources with a broader educational community.

Registering with the HOL network also makes you eligible for additional funding via [NEEF's HOL Mini-Grants](#).

IV. What are the HOL Mini-Grants?

The HOL Mini-Grants are an opportunity for HOL network members to cover costs associated with delivering programs (i.e., curriculum/materials development, non-federal staff time, field trips, program supplies, transportation, etc.). This year, NEEF, in partnership with PRE (Partners in Resource Education) will award a total of \$65,000 to **federal** HOL Network sites to support their efforts to deliver high-quality

placed-based environmental education and STEM programming that is aligned with national K-12 education standards. To be eligible for these grants, all members of the partnership (school, public land site, and any additional programming partners(s)) must be registered members of HOL.

Award amounts will range from **\$500 - \$5,000** and will vary based on the scope and cost of work proposed by each applicant, quality of the submissions and the review and selection process.

V. How do I apply for the HOL Mini-Grants?

The application period for the 2018 HOL Mini-Grants will open on **February 1, 2018** and will only be accepted through NEEF's [online system](#). Follow these steps to apply:

1. Log in or create an account in our [online system](#).
2. To start your application, click **Apply** on the top of the screen. A grant titled "2018 Hands on the Land Mini Grants" will appear. Click **Apply** to begin your application.
3. Once you have completed the application, click Submit Form. If you do not click Submit Form, you will not have applied. You will be directed to a confirmation screen upon submitting.

Application Deadline: 11:59pm EST March 1, 2018

Grant Performance Period: April 23, 2018 - April 19, 2019

For more information about the HOL Mini-Grants, as well as the Request for Proposals, visit the [grant's webpage](#).

VI. When I create an account in the [online grants system](#), whose information should I provide in the User Information section? Whose information should I provide in the Organization Information section?

The information in both the user information and organization information sections should reflect **who is filling out the application**. This will be the person to whom NEEF's grants team will contact with any questions or issues during the application review process. It will also be the person who will be notified of their grant award status, and who will be assigned the Final Report via the online system, should they be awarded. **This grant application requires that a representative from the Field Site submit the application on behalf of the partnership. Therefore, when you create an account within this [online grants system](#), include the public land or waterway FIELD SITE REPRESENTATIVE'S information in both the User Information *and* the Organization Information section.**

Please verify that your organization does not already have an account in the grants system before creating a new one.

VII. My HOL partnership involves several entities - a public land site, school, nonprofit, and fiscal agent (who would be receiving the grant funds). Which entity should be the one to complete the application?

Although HOL partnerships involve several entities, applications should be completed and submitted by a representative from the public land or waterway field site. As a reminder, this year's HOL Mini-Grants are limited to federal sites only.

VIII. What organizational financials will I need to submit my application?

Federal public land or waterway sites cannot receive grant funds directly, therefore a registered HOL partner is required to act as the fiscal agent for grant funds, should they be awarded. Fiscal agents should be prepared to provide the following financial documents for their organization:

- 501 (c)(3) letter issued by the IRS;
- A List of the Board of Directors;
- Annual organization budget for Fiscal Year 2018;
- An Audit for Fiscal Year 2017 **OR** a Balance Sheet & Profit and Loss Statement for Fiscal Year 2017.

IX. I am a school/school district. Can I partner with a public land or waterway outside of my state?

Yes, a school or a school district may partner with a public land or waterway outside of their state, as long as there is a practical proposal for transporting student participants to and from the field site during the course of HOL programming.

X. I am a nonprofit organization that is acting as a fiscal agent for this grant award, but aside from accepting the grant funds, I will not participate in the HOL programming. Do I also need to register for the HOL network?

No, if an organization is functioning solely as the fiscal agent for the grant award, and will not participate in any of the HOL programming activities, they do not need to register for the HOL network. *But* the applicant will need to list the fiscal agent on their grant application, and be prepared to submit financial documents on their behalf.

XI. Who should I contact with questions about Hands on the Land Network? With questions about the Hands on the Land Mini-Grant?

Please contact Robert Sendrey, NEEF's Environmental Education Program Officer at RSendrey@neefusa.org([link sends e-mail](#)) with questions about the HOL Network and the NEEF Grants Department at grantsadmin@neefusa.org([link sends e-mail](#))with questions about the HOL Mini-Grant program, the online grants system, or the grant application form.

***Please review the [2018 Hands on the Land Mini-Grant RFP](#) for more detailed information about the grant program.**