



NEEF BioBlitz Grant Announcement

*Connecting Diverse Communities to US Forest Service Resources for
Education, Conservation, and Health Promotion*

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The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), with major funding support from US Forest Service (USFS), is offering a little over \$17,000 through mini-grants to facilitate Bio-Blitz activities. Awarded grantees will be expected to facilitate the development of educational and conservation activities on local Forest Service lands, other partner public lands, local and municipal public lands or on lands within urban communities that seek to connect to urban forests and nature-based spaces to meet people where they are. These activities will be accomplished by mobilizing community volunteers and educating participants about the importance of their actions and their relationship to long term sustainability of the lands.

Background

Over the past decade, concern for the environment and healthier communities has translated into significant progress toward protecting the resources we all depend on—from technological progress to policy shifts. Environmental education has also grown dramatically throughout society and now takes place in doctor's offices and boardrooms, in church basements and town hall meetings, and in schools, community colleges, universities, and vocational institutions. Despite these significant advances, the planet's resources are under increasing pressures, from climate change and loss of biodiversity to shortages of clean water, wetlands, mangroves, fisheries, minerals, forests, and topsoil. According to the Economist, by 2030, the world population of 7 billion "will demand twice as many resources as the planet can supply."

All of these challenges are taking place against the backdrop of massive and rapid societal change, from technology shifts to changing demographics. The scale and pace of change demands systems to provide citizens, young and old, with the information, skills, and tools they need to navigate a far more uncertain world than anyone predicted even a decade ago. Everyone must understand and experience that they can be part of the solution.

NEEF recognizes the need to secure a safer and healthier world for ourselves, our children and for generations to come. Environmental education is the key to giving people the understanding and skills needed to best address many of our most complex 21st century problems. It is pertinent that people of all ages learn about their relationship to the environment, learn how to be environmentally responsible and become inspired and motivated to act on this knowledge.

Over the years, NEEF has made considerable strides engaging and moving individuals along the continuum of taking daily actions to improve the environment and recognizing the interconnectedness of human health and forest health. Through our grant making efforts and strategic programming NEEF demonstrates a stronger more cohesive infrastructure to advance environmental education through the integration of nature and health. For example, NEEF has leveraged resources to address serious health conditions like obesity and diabetes by connecting children to nature promoting physical activity,

healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship. In similar efforts our Pediatric Asthma Initiative educates children with asthma and their families on the importance of creating asthma-friendly environments and understanding how to identify environmental triggers through the promotion of guidelines-based health care.

Environmental education challenges us to recognize our dependence on the natural world and to think in terms of how our actions impact the larger system. Transformation of behavior is central to ensuring a robust sustainable future. It is imperative that Americans adopt healthful stewardship in order to positively impact the trajectory of human health and forest health.

What is a BioBlitz?

For this particular grant, NEEF is seeking out grantees that can conduct BioBlitz activities in their community. A BioBlitz is a citizen science activity where people--no matter their scientific background--work together to record the biodiversity of a particular area during a focused "blitz." This can happen across an hour, a morning, or even 24 hours, and can take place anywhere, from a national park to a school yard. Participants work within an established perimeter to record as many species of plants, animals, fungi, etc. as they can find, in order to both learn about the importance of these species in the ecological landscape and to get a better understanding of the species richness of a particular location.

Participants can decide ahead of time how they want to document their findings, whether it's through drawings, field identifications, or photographs, and whether they want to indicate exactly where on the search site they found the species. Participants should not attempt to gather or remove any of the flora or fauna, but instead should document the species in place. Some BioBlitz activities include the involvement of scientific experts to help participants make identifications of their findings, but this is optional. There are many free, online tools where participants can upload photographs of their findings, and flag any that they would like the help of the online community with in identifying. An example of such a tool is [iNaturalist](#).

Depending on the scope of the project, the information collected during a BioBlitz can be helpful in scientific, policy, and educational settings. This data can be used by land managers to understand the health of the land, by lawmakers and community leaders to make informed decisions about land use, and by educators and the general public to learn more about their local environment.

Health Impact of BioBlitz

Research has proven there are scientific benefits of spending time in nature. Physical, mental, and spiritual health and well-being is paramount to the sustainability of healthy living. Exposure to the natural environment can yield significant psychological and physiological impacts. These inherent restorative elements are compromised when we do not recognize the importance of protecting and enhancing the health of the planet and its vast resources. Supporting a natural functioning ecosystem, boosted by an array of robust species lends for resilient and positive benefits for human health.

NEEF is interested in partnering with recipient organizations who engage in environmental education and stewardship, meaningful conservation, and healthy living. Collaborative efforts will impart educators, families, and communities with promising techniques to ensure that individuals have the critical opportunity to learn about safeguarding the health of the land and its people.

Successful applicants will demonstrate their ability to use innovative concepts to integrate health into conservation projects.

Eligibility

- Open nationally (including US territories) to 501(c)3 with a documented connection to a USFS agency. These include federal, state, and local Forest Service agencies. A current partnership letter from a USFS partner agency must be provided to show support of proposed project.
 - Please note that NEEF will not assist applicants in developing these partnerships.
- Applicants must incorporate a human health and forest health component to the proposal.
- Applicants must facilitate long term sustainability of our nation's forests and grasslands through conservation activities while connecting diverse audience, primarily youth and families from Latino/Hispanic communities, in events that are designed to restore and protect America's forests.
- While activities do *not* have to occur on USFS property, they should be tied to USFS interests. This might apply to areas where USFS has invested money, perhaps through a [NUCFAC](#) grant.
- Those who received a NEEF BioBlitz grant in 2017 are ineligible for this grant.

Grant Guidelines

- Applicants can request up to \$1000 in grant funds.
- Although not required, those who organize activities during Environmental Education (EE) Week (April 23-29) will receive special attention.
- Applicants are not required to have past experience in running a BioBlitz project.

Timeline

- Application Opens: Open: Tuesday, January 30, 2018
- Application Closes: Monday, February 26, 2018
- Grant Period: April 2018-August 2018
- Final Report Due: September 28, 2018

Strong Applications Will Include the Following

- Describe the project team, including partnerships with community-based organizations, schools, health care organizations, or others involved in the proposed project. Detail the roles and involvement of each organization cited in the application. Include plans for establishing a new, or engaging an existing, cross-sector network of partners to participate actively in the implementation, and evaluation, if applicable.
- Use innovative concepts to integrate health into conservation projects. Use evidence-based support to describe the interconnection of nature and health. Advances in the field of environmental health have taught us much about the positive influences exposure to the natural environment has on human health; such as, increased physical activity and exercise, improved nutrition, reduced risk of chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, cancer, heart disease, etc.) and positive mental and emotional health. Describe how the applicant will educate and engage the population on the healthful benefits of nature.
- Describe the area in which the project will be located and the population to be served (demographics), including population size, and other characteristics.
- Distribution and collection of evaluation forms for project activities. These can include pre/post surveys.

If you have any questions or problems, please contact us at grantsadmin@neefusa.org.