



2006  
Guidelines

Grants for Model Programs in  
Geography Education



## Education Foundation

Dear Colleague,

The National Geographic Society Education Foundation is maintaining a strong focus on promoting geographic literacy for all children:

- Advancing federal geography education policy
- Improving public understanding of the importance and relevance of geographic literacy

Specifically, we hope to achieve the following goals:

- New federal funding for state-based professional development and research on what works in geography education
- Development and growth of best practices and model programs
- A supportive public atmosphere

We believe model programs that prove the power of geographic literacy are essential to achieving these aims. Through “Grants for Model Programs in Geography Education,” the Foundation provides funding to nonprofits to conduct innovative programs that:

- Focus on geographic literacy
- Incorporate a strategy for replicating and scaling up
- Conduct high-quality evaluation of impact
- Make creative use of educational technologies, such as geospatial information technologies, to enhance the learning process and to reach a broad audience

We look forward to supporting strong model programs that advance our agenda to ensure quality geography education for the 21st century.

Best wishes,

Barbara Chow  
Executive Director

## **A Word About Geography**

Geography—literally “describing the Earth”—is a powerful perspective for examining and understanding our world. Geographic education includes learning about people and places, understanding human-environment interaction, and exploring connections as well as applying a set of interdisciplinary skills. Geography is a big field—National Geographic’s second president, Alexander Graham Bell, referred to it as “the world and all that’s in it.” Today, the Society places a special emphasis on advancing the knowledge and appreciation of cultures and on the interrelationship between human aspirations and our planet’s natural and cultural resources. For more information on geography, please visit [www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions).

## **About the Education Foundation**

The National Geographic Education Foundation (NGEF) was established in 1988 to celebrate National Geographic’s centennial and as a direct outgrowth of the Society’s charge to “increase and diffuse geographic knowledge.” The Education Foundation awards approximately five million dollars annually in support of its mission “to motivate and enable each new generation to become geographically literate.” The Foundation is a part of the Society’s Education & Children’s Programs division, which conducts education outreach, hosts the National Geographic Bee and World Championship, and other educational programs.

Since its inception, the Education Foundation has worked in programmatic partnership with state governments, university-based “geographic alliances”—state-wide partnerships between academic professors and K-12 teachers to provide professional development, networking, and more—as well as with other nonprofits to amplify the status of geography in national education policy and state education standards, and to restore geography education to the classroom. The National Geographic Society has identified two key barriers that limit more widespread geographic knowledge and literacy among our nation’s youth:

- Lack of governmental prioritization of, and resources for, K–12 geography education—especially teacher professional development
- Insufficient public understanding of, and support for, the relevance of geographic literacy

To address these limiting issues, the Education Foundation has adopted a strategic plan that emphasizes three focal points:

- Public Policy  
NGS is conducting a public policy initiative dedicated to developing support for geography education as a national priority and long-term federal funding to be directed to state geographic alliances and other educational and research institutions
- Public Engagement  
NGS has launched a public awareness campaign—MyWonderfulWorld.org—aimed at inspiring parents and educators to expand geographic learning at school, at home and in the community.

- Model Programs

NGS will conduct both grantmaking and outreach that: prove the power of geographic literacy through model programs; support a grassroots network for local educational improvement; and offer world-class online professional development to educators.

It is our expectation that, together, these programs will lead to several key outcomes:

- Increased amount of geography education offered in schools
- Greater numbers of young people engaged in geography-related courses and activities in school and at home
- Improved parental and community engagement in geography education

Our ultimate objective is to inspire people to care about the planet and to give the next generation the skills and knowledge they will need to navigate and thrive in an interconnected global society.

### **Eligibility**

Applications will be accepted from invited organizations only. Institutions that would like to be considered for an invitation may **submit a letter of interest via email** to [kgibbs@ngs.org](mailto:kgibbs@ngs.org) **no later than July 28, 2006**. Your letter should include an outline of the programmatic idea, a list of partners committed to the project, and an estimate of the total funding sought. Your letter must not exceed the equivalent of three typewritten pages. Please note that an invitation to submit a proposal does not guarantee funding. Competition for funding is expected to be strong. The guidelines below, for writing full proposal, should inform your letter of interest; if invited, your full proposal must include a well-developed plan with partnership commitments and a workable timeline for completion, and be presented in significantly more detail.

Eligible applicants include geographic alliances, or consortia of alliances; non-profit education organizations; state or multi-state education agencies; universities able to work in multiple states; school districts, and museums. Applicants should be seeking to expand their service to teachers and students and demonstrate a passionate commitment to improving geographic literacy. Priority consideration will be given to applicants who address opportunities for underprivileged children in underserved urban and rural communities.

### **Deadlines & Awards**

Grants for Model Programs in Geography Education will provide up to \$125,000 per year for up to two years; grant periods may be up to two years in duration. Rare exceptions in funding amount and duration may be made for smaller or larger programs.

In 2006, NGS expects to make four to six grants on a competitive basis to invited applicants. If chosen to submit a proposal for the 2006 funding cycle, a letter or email will be sent to you by **August 7, 2006**. Proposals from selected organizations are submitted online by **September 29, 2006**. Final decisions will be made by **December 18, 2006**, and funds will be available after January 1, 2007. All programs must be completed by December 31, 2008.

Each letter of interest and proposal will be reviewed by the Foundation's staff against the requirements outlined in these guidelines and for clarity. Follow-up telephone interviews and site visits to potential project leaders may be conducted. At the full proposal stage, expert advisors drawn from the fields of geography, education, government, business, and the National Geographic Society will assess applications against the criteria outlined above and make recommendations for funding. The Foundation's Board of Directors makes all final funding decisions. Announcements will be made December 18, 2006. Letters of agreement will be issued to grant winners.

### **Priority Funding Areas and Guidelines for Applicants**

The Grants for Model Programs in Geography Education are designed to enhance the Foundation's goals in geography education improvement and expansion by providing funding for innovative, high-quality programs that prove the power of geographic learning. Our primary goal is to improve geographic literacy and inspire people to care about the planet by stimulating children's curiosity, knowledge, and skills through an exploration of cultures and human-environmental interaction, including physical environments, economies, and political systems—all geographic concepts. We define a geographically literate person as one who understands the relationships between people, places, and environments, and sees the connection to his or her own daily life. We believe that children who are energized by these issues and equipped with such skills will have a lifelong love of learning, a dedication to stewardship of world resources, and an appreciation of and respect for many cultures. Partnerships among groups with similar goals are essential in designing a model program.

Your proposal should not exceed 15 pages (exclusive of the cover sheet, budget, signed letters of support from partners, and short biographies of leadership). Please submit the following information in the following order:

I. Proposal Cover Sheet

On the cover sheet form provided, provide basic contact information, including project director, the amount of your request from NGEF as well as an overall program budget, and a one-paragraph summary.

II. Proposal Narrative

Your proposal narrative should address each of the following three (3) priorities and how they relate to your proposed program, and include appropriate supporting documents, as indicated. Your narrative must not exceed 4,500 words, not including supporting documents. Please avoid the use of professional jargon.

A.) *Focus on Geographic Literacy*

In particular, all programs must focus on one of the following areas:

A.1.) Teacher Capacity: Content and methods training for teachers or other efforts to improve teacher capacity.

A.2.) Technology: Use of new media and geospatial technologies (such as GIS).

A.3) Interdisciplinary Education: Development of cross-disciplinary opportunities for geography.

Whatever approach you suggest, all proposed programs must lead ultimately to a greater geographic literacy.

Provide an explanation and evidence that there is a need for the program you propose. The reasons for the program must relate to national priorities for education rather than local topics or those of limited relevance. Please cite specific research findings. Additionally, explain how the past project successes of your organization and leadership relate to the proposed program, placing particular emphasis on success in replicating and scaling projects.

B.) *Replication, Scale, and Sustainability Strategies*

All programs must be implemented in at least two states. The project must also include a specific plan to scale the number of participants (e.g., how will the program grow, what is the potential market or audience, what is the per capita cost, is the per capita cost consistent with national trends?) The intent must be to build partnerships that allow for replicating the program during the course of the grant. Please address your plans for sustaining the program after the NGEF grant funds are expended.

C.) *Evaluation Plan*

To understand both successes and challenges, grantees are required to implement an evaluation of program effectiveness. All programs must include measurable outcomes in the geography content to be gained by teachers and/or students, measurable outcomes for any other purposes the program may seek to accomplish, and measurable outputs, such as target numbers for teachers/students expected to be served by this project (including an estimated per capita cost). In addition, a detailed plan must be developed for evaluating the extent to which the program accomplishes its stated outcomes (e.g., improvement in student achievement, improved teacher quality, etc.). A professional evaluator must be included in the project team and a thorough evaluation plan must be attached to your application. Please review the attached summary of the U.S. Department of Education's standards for evaluation as an introduction to the topic found at <http://nationalgeographic.com/foundation/pdf/ModelPrograms2005-EvaluationComponent.pdf> Your specific evaluation needs may vary but should meet strong criteria for alignment with your program outcomes, objective measures, and validity.

III. Proposal Budget

Detailed budget requests must accompany each proposal. Most awards will be made to programs that have secured additional funding partners.

A budget template will be provided online. In addition, please provide a short narrative explaining the requests and additional budget detail. Please note that keeping institutional overhead and personnel costs to a minimum will give your proposal a competitive advantage. The Foundation will support neither indirect costs nor the fringe benefits of salaried administrators and faculty. Requests for hardware will be considered on a case-by-case basis; you are advised to secure partners who donate these items.

#### IV. Attachments

Your proposal must also include the following attachments:

- Description of the program evaluation with a signed letter of commitment from the program evaluator
- Identification of site partners in multiple states with signed letters of support from partners that include specific funding commitments
- Timeline for the program with a detailed implementation plan
- Plan for raising public awareness of the program
- Identification of leaders and each leader's qualifications, demonstrating prior success (no academic CVs, please)

#### **Project Reporting and Evaluation**

Directors of projects that are awarded funding are required to submit reports and other deliverables on a schedule to be outlined in the grant agreement letter. In addition, NGEF staff may conduct periodic assessments of progress during the course of the project. NGEF reserves the right to engage an outside evaluator, in addition to the project evaluator, to assess the impact of the project in meeting the goals outlined in these guidelines. Please note that additional meetings (with the Education Foundation staff or annual grantee meetings) may be required and that applicable travel expenses must be covered by the grant budget.

#### **To Submit a Proposal Online**

We accept online applications only. **The online submission process will be open to invited applicants from August 7, 2006, through September 29, 2006, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.**

Invited applicants apply online by visiting the URL sent in an email from the Foundation by August 7, 2006. A copy of this document can be found by visiting [www.nationalgeographic.com/foundation](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/foundation) and clicking on "Apply for a Grant." Your proposal narrative must not exceed 4,500 words. We advise that you write your answers in Microsoft Word (or other word processor) in order to monitor the word count. Avoid any special formatting (e.g. bold, italics, underlining, bulleted lists, etc.) that may be transferred incorrectly. Copy and paste your work into the fields of the online application.

The following technical recommendations will assist you in applying online:

- The following browser versions have been certified for use with this application: Internet Explorer 5.5 SP 2, Internet Explorer 6, Netscape 4.76, Netscape 6.2.3, and Internet Explorer 5.14 for Macintosh OS X.

- The total size of all attachments must be no larger than 10 MB. Only files with the following extensions will be accepted as attachments: “doc,” “xls,” “pdf,” “jpg,” “tiff,” “rtf,” “ppt,” and “gif.”

### **For More Information**

In addition to Model Program grants, the Education Foundation also awards the following grants and endowments:

- Education Network Grants—Support for an active grassroots network that promotes improved geography education
- State Endowments—Restricted state-based funds created for the support of geography education
- Teacher Grants—Support for innovative classroom projects in geography

For information about the Education Foundation’s policy initiative, public engagement campaign, grantmaking programs, sample projects, and application guidelines for any funding category, or to learn how to set up an endowment in your state, please visit [www.nationalgeographic.com/foundation](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/foundation).