



Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program Guidelines

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Introduction

Program Background

The Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program connects New York’s school age children with nature, outdoor recreation, and history by reimbursing eligible costs for field trips to eligible locations. This is a reimbursement grant program funded through the Environmental Protection Fund and administered by The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) since 2016. In Fiscal Year 2025, \$3 million was appropriated to Connect Kids.

Purpose of Funding

The Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program connects New York’s school age children (pre-K through grade 12) with nature, outdoor recreation, and history by reimbursing qualifying transportation costs incurred by eligible entities for travel to eligible field trip locations in New York State. For the purpose of these guidelines, the terms “qualifying transportation costs” and “eligible costs” have the same meaning.

Eligible field trip locations for this program are facilities in New York State that are operated by New York State agencies as described herein or by the National Park Service. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis in the order they are received, while funding is available.

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply for a Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant

Applicant must be:

- a public school (including public charter school), BOCES, non-public school (including non-public charter school), municipality, public library, or a not-for-profit organization that serves underserved, environmental justice, and/or inner-city communities in New York State, and
- physically located within a New York State school district that receives Title I funds

Ineligible entities include:

- any entity that does not meet the eligibility criteria for Applicants
- for profit entities
- Federal or State agencies
- Individual persons

Note: you must answer all required application questions to be considered for this funding opportunity.

Eligible vs. Ineligible Use of Funds

The Applicant must cover all upfront-initial costs related to the approved field trip. **Please note that only eligible costs may be reimbursed.**

Eligible Costs	Ineligible Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ the rental, use or service cost for a contract, charter, or private carrier of passengers by motor vehicle. Such qualifying motor vehicles are equipped for 15 or more passengers including the driver.¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Any travel that is not related to transportation to and/or from the eligible field trip location
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ gas and tolls for transportation to and/or from eligible locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Any travel to privately-owned, for-profit facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vehicle use fees or “VUFs” (charged by OPRHP for vehicles entering its facilities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Costs associated with the use of a personal vehicle and/or private passenger vehicle (no exceptions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parking fees at other eligible locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Swimming instruction fees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fees listed on the appendix document '<i>Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program- Eligible Fees List</i>' relate to facility entry or facility tours that are charged by and/or conducted at OPRHP-owned facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Concert or sporting event tickets
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wages or stipends for Applicants’ staff, chaperones, or student aides. When an eligible applicant owns the transportation resource, we acknowledge that personnel costs may be a factor when calculating the “Cost per Mile” (CPM) to determine transportation costs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See '<i>Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program- Estimating Eligible Costs for Transportation when Owned or Existing Contract</i>' for more information.

¹ For more information, please refer to page 8 of this document: subsection header, ‘How to Estimate Costs in the Application’

	➤ Lodging, including camping and cabin reservations
	➤ Equipment purchases, pavilion rentals and/or fees
	➤ Cost of emergency and/or first aid support
	➤ Food
	➤ Any costs not described on the submitted Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant application, even if it would otherwise be eligible

Eligible Trip Locations

Eligible field trip locations in New York State include:

- Public lands and historic sites owned by State agencies (that may be operated by a partner)
 - [OPRHP](#) facilities including but not limited to state parks, historic sites, nature centers, and marinas
 - [Department of Environmental Conservation](#) facilities including but not limited to day use areas, education centers, recreation areas, fish hatcheries
 - [New York Power Authority](#) recreation areas
 - [Canal Corporation](#) recreation sites at Canal Locks
 - [Olympic Regional Development Authority](#) venues
 - [Whiteface Mountain](#)
 - [Olympic Center](#)
 - [Olympic Museum](#)
 - [Olympic Jumping Complex](#)
 - [Mt Van Hoevenberg](#)
 - [Gore Mountain](#)
 - [Belleayre Mountain](#)
 - State-owned waterbodies, even if the access point is in a non-eligible location.
 - [National Park Service](#) facilities including parks, historic sites, and monuments in New York State
 - Please see appendix document '*Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program- Potential Destinations*' for more information.

Application Process

The Statewide Financial System (SFS)

Effective January 16, 2024, all not-for-profit organizations seeking State grants, including the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant, must prequalify in SFS, unless explicitly exempted by the Division of the Budget (DOB), by submitting a Prequalification Application. Not-for-profit

organizations are required to submit a Prequalification Application on an annual basis and are responsible for keeping all submitted information current throughout the annual period.

- Prequalification information can be found here:
 - [Get Prequalified | Grants Management](#)
- You can also find SFS resources here:
 - [Resources for Grant Applicants | Grants Management](#)
 - [Register Your Organization in SFS | Grants Management](#)
- Please reach out to the helpdesk if you need further assistance with SFS:
 - **Email:** helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov
 - **Phone:** (518) 457-7717 or (855) 233-8363 (toll free)

New York State Vendor ID

Prior to applying, Applicants must be registered in SFS with a New York State Vendor ID Number (NYS VIDN), and not-for-profit organizations must be prequalified. A NYS VIDN is a 10-digit number that corresponds to each organization in the SFS. Reimbursements are electronic and will only be made using the organization's NYS Vendor ID Number as submitted on the application. The NYS VIDN is **not** the organization's Tax ID Number/EIN.

For Applicants that are public schools or BOCES, the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip grant application provides a menu listing all public-school districts in NYS. By entering your affiliated school district or BOCES, the NYS VIDN will be automatically filled on the application form.

Applicants that are non-public schools, municipalities, or not-for-profit organizations are required to submit the organization's NYS VIDN. The Applicant's administrative or finance offices should be contacted for specific information about the organization's NYS VIDN.

How to Apply

Once you have obtained your NYS VIDN and prequalify if needed, you're ready to apply. You can access the grant application on the OPRHP website: [Connect Kids - NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation](#).

Please consider these factors before preparing your application for submission:

- **Applications must be submitted six (6) weeks before the field trip is planned to occur, and no earlier than six (6) months prior to the field trip.**
 - **Applications received before April 11, 2025 may be submitted four (4) weeks before the field trip is planned to occur.** After April 11, 2025, applications must be submitted six (6) weeks prior to the date of the field trip.
- The Applicant is solely responsible for planning the field trip including making arrangements at the eligible destination and for scheduling and paying for transportation services.

- Applicants should be aware that transportation companies and eligible field trip destinations may have their own governing policies and rules that are separate from and additional to these grant program guidelines.
- Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis in the order they are received, while funding is available.

You must answer all application questions to be considered for this funding opportunity.

Please be prepared to answer the application questions below:

Applicant Information

- Title I status of the school district wherein the applicant is physically located.
- Applicant Name and physical address.
- NYS Vendor ID Number (VIDN).
- Applicant Chief Financial Officer name and email.
- Applicant’s authorized representative and contact information.

Field Trip Information

- Number of school age children to attend the field trip.
- Class Grade
- Name and address of eligible field trip location.
 - Including the site’s URL
 - Point of contact staff member at the field trip location (name, email, phone number)
- Field Trip Date(s), if applicable, provide total number of days for transportation to and/or from field trip location (i.e., round trip).
- Fees charged by OPRHP for entry and/or tours at OPRHP sites.

Transportation Information

- Starting location physical address.
- Destination (eligible field trip location) physical address.
- Round trip mileage between departure location and eligible field trip location.
- Whether the carrier of passengers by motor vehicle is owned by Applicant or retained by contract or charter
- Mode of carrier of passengers by motor vehicle to be used, i.e., public school bus, private/charter, multi-passenger van.
- Cost estimate(s) for mode of transportation to be used. *See section below “How to Estimate Costs in the Application”* for details about when written cost estimates are required.
- Whether the transportation company includes staffing (e.g., driver), fuel, and toll costs in the price for services.
- Estimated costs for vehicle use fees and/or parking.

Applicants will have to attest that all eligibility requirements are met and that the information on the application is true and correct, as well as that they agree to comply with the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program Guidelines.

Once all application questions have been answered, the Applicant will see a message appear that includes an Application ID #; this is a unique identifying number generated for each completed application. The Applicant must then click '**Submit**' to ensure the application is received and reviewed by the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program team. The message does not represent approval for grant funding or reimbursement.

There is no guarantee that a grant application will be approved.

How to Estimate Costs in the Application

Applicants are required to submit their estimated eligible costs in the application. In all cases, including when the applicant intends to use transportation already owned or under an existing contract, please follow the guidance in the appendix document '*Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program- Estimating Eligible Costs for Transportation when Owned or Existing Contract.*' If the Applicant is awarded a grant, the maximum value for reimbursement will consider whether or not estimated costs are reasonable and customary

In addition, if an Applicant seeks to newly retain a transportation company exclusively for the field trip, the Applicant must submit three (3) written price estimates (i.e., price quotes) for the service. The '*Request for Quote Form*' must be used and should be completed, in part, by the transportation company prior to applying. **The Applicant shall enter the information from the three (3) price estimates on the application.** After the field trip, the Applicant shall submit the completed '*Request for Quote Form*' with the Reimbursement Request Form.

Award Process

Within three (3) weeks after applying, the Applicant should expect to receive an email (to the email address provided on the application) with an attached notification letter indicating the status of the application.

If approved, the notification letter sent via email will provide:

- the maximum value for reimbursement to cover eligible costs described in the application
- instructions on submitting a Reimbursement Request Form after the field trip.

If denied, the Applicant will receive an explanation for the denial. The Applicant may have an opportunity to submit a new application if the reason for the denial is remedied by the Applicant within an appropriate timeline.

Reimbursement

After the approved field trip has occurred, the Applicant may request reimbursement for the actual costs of its eligible expenses provided the Applicant submits valid proof of payment. The Applicant's authorized representative shall follow the instructions provided in the approval letter **and submit the Reimbursement Request Form with accompanying documentation and proof of**

payment within ninety (90) days after the last day of eligible travel to avoid forfeiture of the grant award. Reimbursement of eligible expenses only occurs after proof of payment and the Reimbursement Request Form are submitted via email to parksbusgrant@parks.ny.gov.

OPRHP shall reimburse the Applicant for the actual cost of eligible expenses up to the maximum value for reimbursement amount stated in the grant notification letter/email. For example, if the Applicant was notified in the award letter/email that a maximum value for reimbursement was \$5,000, but the actual cost of eligible expenses as evidenced by submitted receipts and paid invoices was \$4,000, OPRHP shall reimburse the Applicant in the amount of \$4,000.

The reimbursement will be transferred electronically to the Applicant's account via their approved NYS VIDN. OPRHP does not send paper checks. Reimbursement payments cannot be divided and sent as partial payments to multiple NYS VIDNs; there are no split payments. Reimbursement for expenses for a grant occurs one time; after reimbursement is processed, the associated grant is considered closed.

Information required to complete the Reimbursement Request Form:

- The maximum value for reimbursement indicated on grant approval letter
- Date on approval letter
- Applicant Name
- NYS VIDN
- Application ID # indicated on approval letter
- Field Trip Date
- Destination Name

Additional documents required to process reimbursement include:

- Valid proof of payment for eligible costs incurred by the Applicant, including but not limited to paid invoices, dated receipts, cancelled checks, wire transfers. In the case of wire transfer, a screenshot of the transfer can be submitted and must include: "To" (name and account number), "From" (name and account number), date, and amount.
- Three (3) "Request for Quote" forms from different transportation companies if the Applicant is not using their own or previously contracted transportation resources.

Applicants should retain original receipts and/or paid invoices for all eligible expenses. The Applicant's authorized representative shall certify the validity, truth, and accuracy of all submitted documents and details of the eligible travel.

General Terms and Conditions

The Applicant and its field trip participants shall comply with the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program Guidelines including the general terms and conditions below:

- Failure to comply with these program guidelines may result in the denial of an application, full or partial withholding of the reimbursement, and other legal penalties or consequences.

- Applications submitted for the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant are solely for the grant program and do not constitute a reservation for transportation services or for the field trip itself.
- Applicants must directly contact the transportation company and the Park or Historic Site facility’s staff prior to applying.
- The Park/facility owner reserves the right to cancel the field trip at any time due to failure to comply with the facility’s regulations or policies. The Park/facility owner further reserves the right to exercise any controls over the field trip that are felt to be in the public interest.
- Areas or facilities used by the Applicant must be left in the same condition that existed upon arrival.
- The Applicant understands that it will be held responsible and billed for any and all damages done to the property/facility during the field trip, as determined by the property owner. New York State is not liable for such damages.
- Applicant shall be responsible, at their own expense, for the wages of their own personnel which may be considered necessary during the field trip (i.e., applicants’ staff, chaperones, or student aides.)
- The Applicant may be required to provide or obtain appropriate emergency and/or first aid support during the field trip. Any costs incurred shall be borne by Applicant and not covered by the reimbursement grant.
- OPRHP reserves the right to amend the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program Guidelines.

For further questions regarding this program please contact: parksbusgrant@parks.ny.gov

Initialisms (Acronyms) and Definitions

Authorized Representative	Individual duly authorized by Applicant to conduct official business, including submitting grant applications and reimbursement requests.
Entity	Formally established organization with a NYS Vendor ID Number
Proof of Payment	Includes, but is not limited to paid invoices, dated receipts, cancelled checks, wire transfers.
Title I	Described at ESSA Programs New York State Education Department (nysed.gov)
Transportation Company	Company that provides transportation by contract, charter or private carrier of passengers by motor vehicle equipped for 15 or more passengers
SFS	Statewide Financial System
OPRHP	Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
NY VIDN	NYS Vendor ID Number
DOB	Division of Budget
BOCES	Board of Cooperative Educational Services
VUF	Vehicle Use Fee