**New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation**

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

RANDY SIMONS
Commissioner Pro Tempore

ZOOS, BOTANICAL GARDENS and AQUARIA OPERATIONAL SUPPORT GRANT PROGRAM (ZBGA OS)

Request for Applications & Guidance for a
One-Year Contract Term
April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026

ZBGA OS webpage:
https://parks.ny.gov/grants/zoos-botanical-gardens/default.aspx

All SFS guidance can be found in the Grantee SFS Handbook: Grantee User Manual

SFS Help Desk: Contact SFS | Grants Management

Application DUE DATE: July 18, 2025, 4pm EST

Revised May 2025

OVERVIEW

This is a request for applications for the Zoos, Botanical Gardens, and Aquaria Operational Support Grant Program (ZBGA OS). These grants provide eligible local governments and not-for-profit organizations with timely and stable annual funding to maintain, operate, and secure permanent collections of natural specimens, and to offer robust educational programs interpreting those collections. Applicants will be evaluated based on the administrative and fiscal strength of their organization, the quality and care of its collections, and the level of service to the public.

The ZBGA Program is funded through annual appropriations from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and is administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP or Agency).

APPLICATION CYCLE

Applications will be for a 1-year agreement, the final period (5) entrance into a five-year grant program. Contracts timeframe will be April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026, being active for the period from State Fiscal Year SFY 2025-26.

Contract Period/Year	SFY – 5-year cycle	
1	2021-22	April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022
2	2022-23	April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023
3	2023-24	April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024
4	2024-25	April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025
5	**2025-26**	**April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026**

The deadline for new applicants seeking admission in year five of the grant program will be **July 18, 2025, 4pm EST**

FUNDING

Amount of funding is based on the ZBGA budget appropriation, the number of eligible participants and their associated budgets and reimbursable expenses. Overall funding is determined during the New York State's budgeting process and approved by the New York State Legislature. OPRHP **does not** guarantee support in any succeeding year.

Awardees who are new to the program will receive an introductory rate of $15,000 annually or one-third of the organization's total operating budget for the NHC, whichever is less. This grant program is administered on a reimbursement basis. No match is required.

Organizations that participated in previous grant cycles but did not apply in the current 5-year cycle will be funded at the base rate tier or calculated rate tier based on submitted budgets and reimbursable expenses.

Regardless of the results of the grant award calculations, in no case will an institution receive an award more than one-third of the organization's total operating budget for the NHC, nor will the maximum award to any applicant/parent organization amount to more than one-third of the annual appropriation.

ELIGIBILITY

To be determined eligible, applicants must be a municipality or not-for-profit organization that owns, houses, cares for, and interprets for the public living or systematically organized collections of biological specimens of natural origin. Such collections are defined as:

(a) preserved and systematically organized biological objects such as vascular and nonvascular plants, vertebrate and invertebrate animals and fossils that are interpreted in conjunction with living collections

(b) living animals and plants that are cared for and interpreted for the public in artificial or substitute habitats as captives or transplants

(c) natural habitats of New York State that are formally dedicated in perpetuity to be maintained as viable, natural ecological associations for wild animals and plants, and that are interpreted for the public

For narrative purposes within this program, organizations that meet at least one of the above criteria may be referred to as Natural Heritage Institutions or Institutions. This category may include, but is not necessarily limited to zoos, botanical gardens, arboretums, aquariums, bird sanctuaries, natural habitat preserves, natural science museums, and nature and environmental centers. The collections they own, manage and interpret for the public may be referred to as Natural Heritage Collections **(NHC)**.

In addition, each applicant must meet **ALL** of the following criteria:

- be a municipality or a not-for-profit organization
- exist on a permanent basis to act as or for a NHC
- must have had annual operating expenses of at least $15,000 in the last STATE fiscal year (April 1, 2024-March 31, 2025), and must expect to maintain such for SFYs 2025-2026
- have — as a primary purpose — an ongoing and robust education program that:
  - services children and adults, and
  - interprets the ecology of the NHC
- support a facility from which to operate these programs and interpret the NHC that:
  - is open to the general public on a regular and predictable basis for at least seven consecutive months, and
  - has a continual full schedule of programs and services for the general public that interpret the NHC
- have well-defined program goals
- support an organized and systematic program for care of the collection, in accordance with State and Federal standards
- have proven financial, administrative, and public service stability for a minimum of two years (not-for- profits must have maintained their status as a 501(c)(3) for the two State Fiscal Years preceding their application)
- conduct all institutional operations in accordance with requirements of Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and of the Rehabilitation Act of 1963, as amended, which bar discrimination on the basis of race, age, color, nationality, handicap or place of residence
- hold all captive animals and plants in accordance with State and Federal laws and maintain them in accordance with current professional standards of humane treatment and conservation
- comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
- adhere to applicable provisions of the:
  - Sexual Harassment Prevention in the Workplace Policy
  - Non-Discrimination Policy Related to Executive Order 177
  - Executive Order 16 Prohibiting State Agencies and Authorities from Contracting with Businesses Conducting Business in Russia
- if affiliated with a larger organization, the applicant must also have a separate budget

PROGRAM RESTRICTIONS

The following entities, programs and activities **are not eligible** for funding under the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria Program:

Ineligible Entities include:

- for-profit organizations
- public school districts or their components
- Federal agencies and their programs
- New York State agencies and departments
- cemeteries (501(c)(13))

Ineligible Collections and Programs include:

- natural history collections
- historical, archaeological, or anthropological collections
- art collections
- science-technology collections
- astronomy collections
- gardens and plantings that are primarily decorative, ornamental, or commercial
- programs primarily concerned with horticulture, i.e., the culture of plants for food, comfort, or beauty
- programs primarily concerned with genetically domesticated plants and/or animals (i.e., petting zoos, farms)

Ineligible Activities include:

- research projects
- land acquisitions
- program activities solely restricted to or directed towards an organization's membership or clients
- lobbying or political activities
- fundraising activities
- collection acquisitions
- primarily commercial activities
- rescue and rehabilitation
- food services
- overhead and other indirect expenses.

NOTE: Institutions with collections or programs that include both eligible and ineligible categories and otherwise meet all program eligibility criteria are eligible **ONLY** for assistance in areas **relating to the natural heritage portions** of their collections and public service programs.

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APPLICATION

The State Financial System (SFS) Registration

On the NYS Grant Opportunities Application website: https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/register-your-organization-sfs see the section "How to Register". You will be directed to download & complete a copy of the form *Grants Management Registration Form for Statewide Financial System (SFS) Vendors* and accompanying documentation where required and send by email to grantsmanagement@its.ny.gov.

Registration help: Help Desk: https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/contact-sfs for assistance with the registration form.
Register now to allow time for processing!

Prequalification

In addition to registering with the SFS, not-for-profit organizations **must** also complete the **Vendor Prequalification** process in the SFS to be considered eligible to apply for this grant opportunity. Government entities and public authorities do not need to complete the Vendor Prequalification Process. A not-for-profit must be prequalified and maintain their status to receive funding.

Pursuant to the New York State Division of Budget Bulletin H-1032, effective January 16, 2024, New York State instituted key reform initiatives to the grant application and contract processes. These initiatives require not-for-profit organizations to complete the Vendor Prequalification process to be considered eligible to apply for a grant. All information and helpful guidance regarding becoming and maintaining prequalification status can be found on the NYS Grants Management website at https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/get-prequalified.

Again, start now to allow time for processing!

> *Disclaimer: New York State reserves 5-10 business days from the receipt of complete Prequalification applications to conduct its review. If supplementary information or updates are required, review times will be longer. Due to the length of time this process could take to complete, it is advised that nonprofits Prequalify as soon as possible. Failure to successfully complete the Prequalification process early enough may result in a grant application being disqualified.*

SFS Roles Needed to Apply

Prospective grantees interested in responding to a grant opportunity must have credentials to access the SFS Vendor Portal.

The *SFS Delegated Administrator* within each organization is responsible for managing SFS Vendor Portal account changes, designating roles for User IDs within their organization, and managing address and contact information. Roles control what an individual has access to do and the tasks they can perform in the SFS Vendor Portal.

Roles with the following permissions can apply in SFS:

- *Bid Response Initiator (NY_GM_VENDOR_EVENT_INITIATE)*
    - Note: This role allows you to initiate a bid response to a bid event **but not** submit the bid response to the agency.

- *Bid Response Submitter (NY_GM_VENDOR_EVENT_SUBMIT)*
    - Note: This role allows you to both initiate a bid response and submit a bid response to the agency.
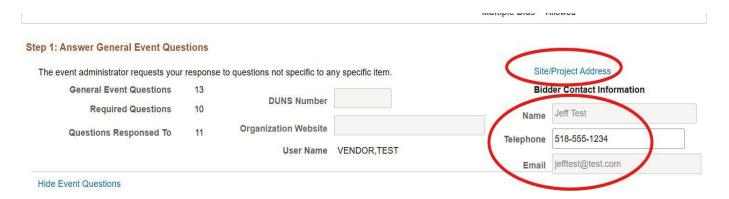
How to apply in SFS

Applications and required documents will be accepted in the Statewide Financial System (SFS) which is the NYS government's accounting and financial management system used to manage contracts and payments.

To apply from the [SFS Vendor Portal](#);

1. Sign in using the Bid Response Initiator or Submitter roles mentioned above.
2. Click on the tile "Grants Management- State", then search under the tile "Bid Event search": **ZBGA-OS-25**

Once an application is started an applicant **cannot save a bid response (application)** until they fill out at a minimum **both the contact info AND the Site/Project Address** in step 1. Once saved an applicant will be able to come back to an application as needed during the apply timeframe.

Sections within the Application

The ZBGA application in the SFS contains two sections.

1. **Eligibility Questions** - a series of program-specific questions that will be used to evaluate an organization's eligibility. All questions in this section must be answered. Some questions provide an opportunity to include an attachment. Organizations may respond to these questions solely using an attachment, or they may supplement their answer with an attachment. Organizations that choose to not use the upload function will not be penalized. In no case should language be duplicated between the text answer field and the attachment.

2. **Budget and Expenditure assessment (2 parts) -** this information will be used alongside other publicly available financial information—to determine an organization's capacity, which will be compared alongside the budgets of all other eligible organizations. This assessment will also be used to determine the percent of the total ZBGA budget appropriation that an organization is eligible to receive.

   Organizations **should only include those expenses that fit the definition of** *direct, recurring costs for care and interpretation of the NHC.* Include eligible NHC expenses that incurred during the completed NYS fiscal years of April 1, 2022, through March 31, 2024, please use the *ZBGA Expense Guide for Award Calculation and Reimbursement* for guidance provided on our [ZBGA Operational Support](#) webpage. All capital expenses are prohibited, as are those expenses noted in the Program Restrictions above. NHC expenses incurred and paid outside of this two-year period, are not eligible. NHC expenses paid after this two-year period, but incurred during the two-year period, may be included. The expectation is that the bulk of an organization's eligible NHC expenses will be staff (or contractor) wages.

   a) The first part of the budgeting and expenditure assessment is to fill in the **SFS Budget properties** section in the application (click the *Budget properties* link in the application). Here you should enter the added total of your organization's eligible historical expenditures for the 2-year period of SFY 4/1/2022-3/31/2024. (See page 60 of the [Grantee SFS handbook](#) for detailed instruction on how to enter this information into the SFS module.)

   b) Part two of the budgeting and expenditure assessment is to fill out and upload the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet provided on our [ZBGA Operational Support](#) webpage known as the *Historical Expenditure Detail Report*. This spreadsheet should match the expenditures you outlined in the SFS Budget properties section mentioned above; it allows the applicant to show the expenditures broken out by each year in more detail.

      i. You will also need to **upload backup documentation** to support the expenditures. **Every line of the** *Historical Expenditure Detail Report* **must reference a page or section of the backup documentation upload(s).** Forms of eligible documentation include, but are not limited to copies of receipts, invoices, payroll registers, IRS form 941, employee signed and approved time sheets, check registers, bank statements and cancelled checks.

In summary:

1. Answer all **Eligibility questions**
2. Complete the **SFS budget properties** section showing the historic expenditures of the past 2 State fiscal years. (reference the ZBGA Expense Guide for Award Calculation and Reimbursement)
3. Complete and upload the *Historical Expenditure Detail Report* to add detail to break out year and detail the expenditures (provided in the SFS application or on our ZBGA OS website https://parks.ny.gov/grants/zoos-botanical-gardens/default.aspx
4. **Upload backup documents** into SFS to support the all the historic expenditures - If an organization has backup documentation that is more than the maximum required size, such documents may be e-mailed to ZBGAGrants@parks.ny.gov and must state in the emails subject line "Backup Documentation for ZBGA 2025-26 RFA: [Organization Name]".

All SFS guidance can be found in the Grantee SFS Handbook: Grantee User Manual

For SFS system technical help: SFS Help Desk: Contact SFS | Grants Management

SUBMISSION

All required components of applications must be entered in the SFS by the below date and time for consideration. Reminder, the person submitting the application needs to sign in as the role of "Bid Response Submitter (NY_GM_VENDOR_EVENT_SUBMIT)".

Applications are due not later than: **July 18, 2025, 4pm EST**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Awards will be announced after the application review period.

CONTRACTING

The Agency will establish a contractual agreement with each awarded organization. This will define the relationship between the Agency and the awarded entity for the duration of the contract period, subject to amendments and formal modifications.

The process of establishing this contract will not begin prior to formal Agency award announcement and notification to the awarded organization. Contracting will occur in the SFS and will entail the provision of various documents to the Agency that may include but is not limited to certificates of workers' compensation and disability insurance, certifying compliance with executive orders, a municipal resolution accepting funds, organization by-laws, proof of registration with the NYS Attorney General's Charities Bureau, completion of a Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire, and documents to establish vendor responsibility.

DISBURSEMENT

Each organization must submit all necessary materials to allow payment within 60 days of the end of that fiscal year. Reimbursement requests comprise of a State Aid Voucher, Expense Summary Report, and Grantee Certification. Backup documentation for all expenses must be readily available to be provided electronically within two business days upon request but should not be submitted with reimbursement requests. Backup documentation can take various forms including, but not limited to, copies of receipts, invoices, payroll registers, IRS form 941, employee signed and approved

time sheets, check registers, bank statements and cancelled checks. Reimbursement requests should be submitted by e-mail to the Agency, unless directed otherwise.

The Agency preferred payment schedule is as follows. Organizations should adhere to this schedule insofar as possible.

> **Annual Reimbursement:** Payments may be submitted in January or February of the SFY for which reimbursement is being requested
>
> **Or**
>
> **Quarterly Reimbursement:** For SFY Q1-Q3, reimbursement should be requested within 30 days of quarter end. For Q4, reimbursement should be requested February or early March.

PROCUREMENT

All goods and services required for this project must be procured in a manner so as to assure the prudent and economical use of grant moneys, to facilitate the acquisition of goods and services of maximum quality at the lowest possible cost under the circumstances, and to guard against nepotism, favoritism, improvidence, extravagance, fraud and corruption.

1. If the Contractor is subject to General Municipal Law, documentation of the Contractor's compliance with the procurement and bidding requirements of General Municipal Law shall be included with the applicable request for reimbursement.

2. If the total amount of the goods or services is less than the dollar threshold for competitive bidding, or **if the Contractor is not subject to General Municipal Law, the Contractor must follow procurement procedures designed to achieve the purpose of this clause.** Such procedures may include, but are not limited to, competitive bidding, the solicitation of three price quotes, written requests for proposals, etc. When submitting a request for reimbursement, the Contractor must include a copy of the organizational procurement policy applicable to the relevant expenditures and/or documentation of the specific procurement process used for those expenditures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All materials, public information and publications developed with funds from the ZBGA grant must acknowledge funding assistance by inclusion of the phrase; *"This project was funded by the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria Operational Support Grant Program which is administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation."*

FOIL

Applications to the State, including their accompanying documents, are subject to the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) found in Article 6 of the N.Y. Public Officer Law. FOIL provides that certain records are exempt from disclosure, including those that contain (1) trade secrets, (2) information that, if disclosed, would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of your organization, or (3) critical infrastructure information. All efforts should be made to provide such Information in the questions marked "restricted".

CONTACT

ZBGAGrants@parks.ny.gov