

Outdoor School Funding and Application Overview for Teachers

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GENERAL INFORMATION

What is outdoor school?

Outdoor school is an immersive outdoor education experience for Oregon's 5th and 6th grade students. Outdoor school is part of school and takes place during the academic year and school week. Districts and schools choose a program length appropriate for their students, including if the program will be an overnight or day program.

What are OSU Outdoor School funds?

In 2016, Oregon voters approved public funding for outdoor school, which dedicated funds from the Oregon Lottery to support outdoor school for all Oregon public school students. These OSU Outdoor School funds are distributed by the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service Outdoor School program.

Which students are eligible to use OSU Outdoor School funds to attend outdoor school?

Every 5th and 6th grade student enrolled in an Oregon public school is eligible to use OSU Outdoor School funds a single time (in either 5th or 6th grade). Schools and Districts determine the appropriate grade to participate in outdoor school. Funds are available to support the full participation of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 plans.



What are the benefits of outdoor school?

Oregon students who attend outdoor school show improved school engagement, interest in learning, positive school behaviors, environmental attitudes, 21st century skills (such as problem solving), and many other positive outcomes. What's more, the growth students experience at outdoor school is greater than what they experience in a typical week of school. The OSU Extension Service Outdoor School program's [student outcomes evaluation](#) is contributing to a growing body of evidence locally and nationally that outdoor school is making a difference in the lives of children and youth.

Who develops and leads an outdoor school program?

Schools have a choice between developing their own outdoor school program or contracting with an outdoor school provider, such as a camp or environmental education organization that offers outdoor school programming during the school year. [Here is a list of outdoor school sites and providers.](#)

Where does outdoor school take place?

A district/school is able to choose where they would like to host their program to best meet their students' needs. OSU Outdoor School funding can only be used for programs that take place within Oregon.

How long is an outdoor school program?

Outdoor school programs that qualify for funding must be a minimum 3-day and maximum 6-day, 5-night outdoor learning experience that happens in Oregon, over consecutive days, during the school year, and during the school week. We consider a school day to be approximately 6 hours, which makes the minimum outdoor school program length approximately 18 hours.

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This publication will be made available in an accessible alternative format upon request. Please contact us at 541-737-4391 or outdoorschool@oregonstate.edu



FUNDING AND APPLICATION INFORMATION

What do OSU Outdoor School funds cover?

OSU Outdoor School funds cover:

1. **Personnel/stipend costs**, including stipends for teachers participating in outdoor school (only hours beyond the typical compensated hours of the school day), one-on-one aides or translators, and substitute reimbursements
2. **Unreimbursed transportation costs** are the portion of bus costs that are not already covered by the Oregon Department of Education for transportation between the school and the outdoor school site(s).
3. **Provider fees** are the funds a district pays to an outdoor school provider for programming (if the district uses an outdoor school provider).
4. **Program costs**, such as costs to a district for organizing their own outdoor school program (if they don't use an outdoor school provider) and/or miscellaneous costs incurred by the district, such as snacks or equipment/gear for use during outdoor school.

For more information about costs covered in each of these categories, please view the [Budget Categories and Fiscal Policies](#).

How do districts apply for funding?

Each spring/summer, a district submits a single application for funding for the upcoming school year. This single district application includes requests for funds for all schools within the district that plan to participate in outdoor school. Schools/teachers who wish to apply for Outdoor School funding should contact their district's outdoor school coordinator. If you do not know who to contact in your district, reach out to outdoorschool@oregonstate.edu for assistance.

How do I know how much to ask for?

As of 2024-2025, the application process will require each school to provide their best estimate of costs in the four cost categories (see above). Please use the Estimating Costs for Outdoor School Applications tool for guidance on estimating costs for your outdoor school application.

We strongly encourage those schools or districts using a provider to contact them for a quote prior to applying, and to initiate a contract to lock in your quoted price. Cost estimates and planning should also take into consideration any needs of the students. If you are new to outdoor school planning or have concerns that the past costs will not be enough, feel free to contact your regional coordinator for help in developing costs.

Can a district request additional funds after they have submitted their application?

In limited circumstances, a district may be approved for additional funding above the amount they originally requested. The district must have a reasonable justification for the request, such as costs associated with a weather-related cancellation of their outdoor school program or unexpected costs to support full inclusion of students with disabilities. Generally, requests are not granted for additional funds for costs that could have been anticipated and estimated prior to submitting the original application (such as an increase in provider fees). No change order is necessary for additional students attending. Districts requesting additional funding must contact their Regional Coordinator and submit a change order. Upon receipt of the district's request and review of their justification and cost estimating documentation, the OSU Extension Service Outdoor School team will review the request and determine if funds are available to support the increase.

How are Districts/ESDs reimbursed for costs incurred?

Districts/ESDs are required to submit one report annually for all participating schools. As soon as a school finishes their outdoor school experience, they can begin their report. Once all schools in the district have completed outdoor school and all reporting details are collected, the district/ESD will submit the report to OSU Outdoor School. While there is one district designate/account owner responsible for submitting the report, each school's report can be 'delegated' to other individuals for collaboration.

In addition to quantitative and qualitative questions about the program, each school's report must include an uploaded program summary. A program summary must include a) a daily agenda and b) a curriculum summary. We have examples and templates for reference.

Once the report has been reviewed and approved by OSU Outdoor School, a reimbursement will be issued to the school district.

Read more about the application and reporting process on our webpage.

How do I learn more about outdoor school?

The [OSU Extension Outdoor School Program](https://outdoorschool.oregonstate.edu) website (outdoorschool.oregonstate.edu) is a great first stop for additional information about outdoor school. The [Frequently Asked Question](#) page has lots of information! If you have other questions about outdoor school and/or would like to setup a meeting to learn more, contact your [Regional Coordinator](#) (click on your county on the map) or email outdoorschool@oregonstate.edu. Please consider signing up for our [email list](#) to receive communications related to outdoor school.

