

# Ohio Environmental Education Fund Mini Grant Program Guidelines 2016



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The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency is accepting grant proposals to be awarded funding from the Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF). Mini grants from \$500 - \$5,000 and general grants up to \$50,000 each will be awarded to statewide and local organizations for the implementation of projects that raise awareness and educate the public about important environmental issues that impact the state. Mini grants will be awarded for projects that can be completed within 12 months of the start date.

The OEEF is administered by the Ohio EPA and derives its funding from one-half of the civil penalties collected from violations of Ohio's air and water pollution control regulations. It is anticipated the OEEF will make available approximately \$1 million annually.

**Eligible Applicants:** Only Ohio-based entities may receive grant funding from the OEEF. Eligible applicants include:

- Schools and universities, outdoor education facilities, nature centers, zoos
- Municipalities, counties, townships and local government units such as health and park districts, soil and water conservation districts, solid waste management districts and regional planning agencies
- State agencies
- Watershed groups (with local government sponsorship)
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit groups
- Private companies and trade associations

**Target Audiences:** pre-school through university students and teachers, the general public, and the regulated community, including farmers. While projects may target more than one of these audiences, OEEF prefers to support projects that focus on a specific audience segment or limited range of ages.

In developing their proposals, grant applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the **OEEF's preferred characteristics** for regulated community, general public and pre-school to university audiences, posted at <http://epa.ohio.gov/oeef/EnvironmentalEducation.aspx>.

**Priority Funding:** OEEF grants are targeted to environmental issues in Ohio where there is a significant need for more education and awareness. Projects that heighten or improve awareness and educate the public about steps that can be taken to address these issues will score significantly higher in the review process and receive more favorable consideration.

For 2016, the OEEF has four targeted areas of focus where Ohio EPA has determined an immediate need for more educational and awareness outreach efforts due to significant environmental impacts in our state:

- Projects that demonstrate and encourage best management practices for nutrients, including, but not limited to, targeted efforts to reduce nutrient loadings to rivers and streams from urban and rural areas;
- projects that demonstrate and encourage the use of innovative storm water management practices;
- projects that demonstrate and encourage the reduction of air emissions, including, but not limited to, promotion of alternative modes of transportation; and

- projects that encourage and explain the importance of habitat restoration efforts to increase biodiversity and improve air and water quality.

All OEEF grants will be reviewed and awarded following a competitive process. Projects demonstrating the following **at the time of application** will receive more favorable consideration during the review process:

- A strong, well-documented cash and in-kind match from the applicant and their collaborators that greatly exceeds the minimum 10% match required by OEEF. (3-5 extra points will be assigned for projects documenting a match of at least 50%.) OEEF will only allow as match project-related expenditures planned and made after the grant application is submitted.
- Targets the Regulated Community audience. (5 extra points will be assigned.)
- Takes place in a county where fewer than two OEEF grants have been awarded. (3-5 extra points will be assigned.)

**Grant Amounts:** Mini grant applicants may request up to \$5,000 in OEEF grant funding.

**Multiple or Repeat Proposals:** An applicant may not submit more than one application during a grant cycle. **No organization will be awarded more than one grant at a time, or during a twelve-month period.** Grant recipients should complete all obligations of any current grant, including submittal of final reports, before applying for another grant. OEEF does **not** extend projects beyond the identified grant period. OEEF prefers to provide seed money to initiate new projects or to advance existing projects that are expanding in some significant way. No organization will be awarded more than three grants over a five-year period.

**Deadlines/Review Dates:** There are two grant application deadlines each year, one in the spring and the fall. (When these fall on a holiday or a weekend, the deadline moves to the next business day.) Awarded projects cannot commence until approximately four months from the deadline date due to the time required for review and fiscal administration of the grants. Applicants must incorporate the schedule below when planning project activities.

Letter of Intent Deadline	Completed Application Deadline	Ohio EPA Staff Review	Advisory Team Review	Advisory Team Meeting	Ohio EPA Director Decision	Earliest Start Date
January 8	January 15	January 18 – February 12	February 15 – March 11	Week of March 14	April 29	June 1
July 8	July 15	July 18 – August 12	August 15 – September 16	Week of September 19	October 31	December 2

### ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

OEEF supports innovative projects that increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues, and provide the skills to make informed decisions and take responsible actions. Environmental Education (EE) is based on objective and scientifically sound information, and does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. It teaches individuals how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking, and it enhances their problem-solving and decision-making skills. Proposals that simply disseminate information will not be funded. OEEF strongly encourages applicants to use and adapt existing high-quality EE materials such as Project WET, Project WILD and Project Learning Tree, rather than designing new materials. OEEF will consider funding curriculum development or new materials *only* where the applicant demonstrates that existing materials cannot be adapted well to a particular local environmental concern or audience.

OEEF recommends that applicants consider the *Guidelines for Excellence* series developed by the North American Association for Environmental Education with U.S. EPA funding. These materials are available at [www.naaee.org](http://www.naaee.org). Ohio's *Best Practices for Environmental Education: Guidelines for Success* is also available on the Environmental Education Council of Ohio Web page at <https://eeco.wildapricot.org/>

Note that any **K-12 education projects** in formal settings **must** provide specific examples showing how student learning activities align with the Ohio Department of Education's New Learning Standards, posted at <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Ohio-s-New-Learning-Standards/Ohios-New-Learning-Standards>

**Applicants must explain how the alignment was or will be conducted and by whom, and provide at least three examples of student learning activities that meet a specific state standard by grade band.**

For the **regulated community** audience, OEEF is not able to fund mandatory training required by regulation, or routine recertification classes, such as to maintain certification or licensure as wastewater treatment plant operators. OEEF is very interested in funding opportunities to help regulated entities understand and comply with environmental regulations, or take actions to voluntarily protect the environment. OEEF prefers to support training that is open to the employees of more than one company, for example to a company and its upstream suppliers, or a number of companies in a targeted sector where compliance problems have been identified.

***OEEF Does Not Fund:***

- basic research such as data collection, surveys, and/or stipends for researchers
- beautification projects or landscaping
- fund raising or membership drives
- food or beverages
- grants to individuals
- grants, scholarships, or fellowships to be given by the OEEF grant recipient to a third party. Grant funds may be used to pay up to \$100 a day for either substitute teachers or teacher stipends to enable teachers to participate in OEEF-funded programs. Grant funds may also be used to provide classroom supplies to enable teachers to implement new programs, but not to provide cash payments to teachers for these supplies. Grant funds may not be used to pay for graduate credits that participants may earn at these events.
- pass-through of cash or incentive prizes to project participants, e.g. grant funds may not be used to provide services (such as septic system cleanouts) to project participants at a discounted cost.
- indirect costs, general operations, or overhead charges: e.g., rent, utilities, monthly phone or Website hosting charges.
- political advocacy, campaigning, legislative lobbying, or litigation programs. Applications that advocate for a particular policy position or appear biased will not be considered.
- real estate acquisitions or due diligence research related to such acquisitions

- construction activities including building construction, improvements to existing structures, pond or wetland construction, or the rental or purchase of heavy equipment
- reimbursement for the expense of any time, supplies or equipment purchased prior to the effective start date of the signed grant agreement
- staff salaries greater than 35% of the total amount of grant funds requested. Grant funds requested to pay staff benefits and contractual salary/benefits will be included in calculating this 35% cap.
- travel expenses greater than 10% of the total amount of grant funds requested. Mileage can only be reimbursed at the current State of Ohio rate of 52 cents per mile. OEEF discourages the use of grant funds for travel outside the state of Ohio. OEEF will consider funding the cost of bringing expertise to Ohio from another state.
- applications from entities who have defaulted on the performance of grant commitments on prior OEEF-funded projects.

OEEF prefers not to fund disposable or promotional items such as pins and refrigerator magnets, or t-shirts as giveaways for students unless a clear case can be made that the shirts are needed for safety or identification purposes during student activities. Grant funds may be used for appropriate safety equipment such as goggles and gloves for students participating in OEEF-funded activities.

### **Expense Reimbursement and Working Capital Advance Payments**

Payments to grantees may be made on a reimbursement basis or in the form of working capital advance payments. Requests may be submitted quarterly, or less frequently if costs are not incurred during a given period of time. Ohio EPA will hold 10% of the award amount until the project is complete and final reports and deliverables have been submitted and approved.

### **FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION**

Applications are submitted to the OEEF through a two-step process. The applicant first fills out an electronic **letter of intent** (LOI) to apply for a grant. This letter is a short online form in Ohio EPA's eBusiness Center <https://ebiz.epa.ohio.gov/> requesting contact information, the amount of funds requested, and a few questions about the target audience, location, and content of the proposed project. The LOI allows the OEEF staff to make a preliminary determination of whether the proposed project is eligible for funding before the applicant has made the effort to develop a complete proposal. Once the LOI is submitted, the applicant will receive an e-mail saying whether or not it is approved. If it is approved, an application number will be assigned, and the applicant can begin the second step, filling out an application in the online Grant Management Service.

Please direct all inquiries regarding OEEF's grant program policies and procedures, or the status of a grant application, to the OEEF staff at (614) 644-2873 or [oeef@epa.ohio.gov](mailto:oeef@epa.ohio.gov).

### **PRE-REVIEW OF DRAFT APPLICATIONS**

Applicants are encouraged to call the OEEF office to discuss project ideas early in the application process. OEEF staff members are happy to provide a formal pre-review of applications to ensure that the application meets the guidelines, and to offer suggestions.