



# Outdoor Classroom School Grants Program

## Funding Available up to \$2,500

The Outdoor Classroom School Grants Program sponsored by the Central Platte Natural Resources District provides funding for schools to promote water, soil, wildlife, forest and grassland resources conservation within the Central Platte NRD. The District boundaries include all of Dawson County and parts of Frontier, Custer, Buffalo, Hall, Howard, Nance, Merrick, Hamilton, Platte and Polk counties in Nebraska.

The Outdoor Classroom Program was developed to provide funding to promote the education of our natural resources through hands-on learning. Providing lessons in nature ensure that children are growing up with meaningful daily connections to nature. When children spend time in nature-filled outdoor learning environments, research shows that conflict is replaced by pleasant and positive exploration.

### Grant Uses

Funds can be requested by teachers and administrators for materials needed to create or improve an outdoor classroom on school grounds. Appropriate expenditures of funds may include: water projects, rain gardens, rain barrels, butterfly/pollinator gardens, seeds, bulbs, live plants, trees, native grasses, identification signs, wetland or pond habitat, bird/wildlife feeders, outdoor seating for students, or other conservation-minded projects.

### Judging Criteria

Outdoor Classroom Grants are non-competitive in nature. The grants are given on a first-come, first-serve process, based on the NRD's fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). Proposals should demonstrate a well-thought approach to meeting conservation education needs at your school.

A coordinator must be designated to maintain and to promote the site for a minimum of five years. A simple plan or paragraph explaining how the site will be maintained and how it will be promoted by the coordinator will be a high consideration of the Programs Committee when reviewing the application.

### Matching Funds and Amounts

Outdoor Classroom Grants totaling less than \$500 require no matching funds.

Grants totaling \$500-\$2,500 require matching funds amounting to 50% of the grant over \$500. For example: a \$700 grant request requires a \$100 match, a \$600 grant request requires a \$50 match.

While the NRD encourages finding other funding sources, schools and organizations may use their labor involved in the project to satisfy part or all of the matching fund requirement.

### Application Procedures

1. Complete application form stating the project purpose, objectives, methods, duration, maintenance, and itemized budget.
2. Submit the completed application form: to Marcia Lee, Information/Education Specialist, Central Platte NRD, 215 Kaufman Ave, Grand Island, NE 68803 at least three weeks before the funds are needed.
3. The Programs Committee of the Central Platte NRD board will review the application on the day of the monthly board of directors meeting. The Information/Education Coordinator will contact the Project Leader within two business days of the board's decision.

## **Applicant Responsibility**

Once the grant is implemented, the project leader must provide a brief written report and/or photo of the project. Following approval of the grant, the school will receive a small sign identifying the project as being partially funded by the Central Platte Natural Resources District. The sign should be displayed near the project site.

Copies of receipts for purchased materials must be included in your report. Unused funds exceeding \$25 must be returned to the NRD within 60 days. Permission to purchase materials other than those specified in the application (with NRD funding) must be approved by the NRD's information/education specialist.

Only one application per school/per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30) will be considered.

## **Include the following in your Outdoor Classroom Application**

1. **Organization Name, Address & Phone Number**
2. **Project Leader:** Include name of project coordinator and others who will serve as contacts. Include titles and phone numbers.
3. **Project Title and Description**
4. **Purpose and Goals:** Approximate number of grade levels, teachers, and students who will use the outdoor classroom and learning objectives for different grade levels.
5. **Methods and Activities:** Describe what will be executed to accomplish objectives including proposed lessons and/or activities to be used in the outdoor classroom.
6. **Results:** Include the overall benefits the outdoor classroom will provide for your school.
7. **Maintenance:** How will the project be maintained?
8. **Project Duration:** Provide timeline for beginning to end of site implementation. The summary and/or photos will be expected within three weeks after completion.
9. **Funding Request:** No funding in excess of \$2,500 per fiscal year will be considered.
10. **Itemized Budget:** Total of budget should show the match for funding requested.
11. **Date Funds are Needed:** Send application at least three weeks prior to project start date.
12. **Matching Funds:** List amount of matching funds from other sources and expected in-kind labor.
13. **Signatures:** Both Project Leader and the School Principal signatures are required.

For more information, contact Marcia Lee (308) 385-6282 or [lee@cpnrd.org](mailto:lee@cpnrd.org)