

Explore the Coast Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Sheet



Application

How often is the Explore the Coast grant available? We have this grant opportunity every year; however, the funding amount is subject to change.

How many applications do you receive per grant solicitation? We receive an average of 100 applications per year and can typically fund 20-25% of the applications received.

Can I apply if I received a grant the previous year? Eligibility will depend on when your current grant award ends. Check the current year RFP instructions for more details.

Can we submit more than one grant proposal for different projects? Yes, you can submit more than one project proposal, but you are unlikely to get funded for more than one. Therefore, we recommend that you only submit the most competitive proposal.

Would it be beneficial to provide letters of support with our application? No. Support letters are not reviewed since they are not part of the scoring criteria.

Do you award more points for applicants with matching funds? Matching funds are not part of the project selection criteria. But, we do like to see if you have other funding for your project and we certainly do not discourage matching funds.

Can our organization apply with a fiscal sponsor? Yes, you can apply with a fiscal sponsor. Please note that on the application, the fiscal sponsor organization should be listed as the applicant.

We are a California Native American tribe without federal recognition. Can we apply for an ETC grant? Federally-recognized tribes and/or tribal organizations with 501(c)3 status can apply for grant funding. If your tribe does not fit either of those definitions, you will need to apply with a fiscal sponsor.

Should I submit a project application with the costs of all our organization outings i.e., our participants go to inland mountains and the coast? Applicants with broader project recreation goals should only include coastal exploration expenses in the application. For example, if your organization takes participants snowboarding and coastal kayaking, we only want to see budget details for kayaking costs.

How should I structure an application where ETC funding is only paying for a portion of a program costs (such as transportation or scholarships)? In your project description, be sure to explain the overall program experience as well as the specifics of what ETC funding will go towards. For example, an application can say “This program will bring high school students from Hunters Point on daytrips to locations such as Angel Island, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, and Stinson Beach. ETC funding will pay for the bus rentals to transport students to and from trips.” In your budget narrative and tables, you can further demonstrate what costs ETC funds will cover and who or what will cover the remainder of the program costs.

Do you recommend submitting a one- or two-year grant proposal? A one year vs. two-year grant proposal does not affect your project scoring. We base it off the project components as a whole.

How many years of programming can the funding cover? It is somewhat up to applicants to determine how many years of programming they will provide with the amount of funding requested in the application. However, projects must conclude by the date given in the current year RFP instructions, so please do use that as your upper limit for project length.

Is it preferred to offer a program to a smaller group of people with repeated visits or offer a program to a larger group of people for a one-time coastal visit? We look for quality of experience rather than quantity, so either project could potentially score high depending on how it satisfies the other scoring criteria. Please note, however, that we do score for long-term positive impact, and multi-touch experiences are one way to achieve long-term impact. For a one-time visit, other ways to achieve long-term positive impact might include skills building, opportunities for leadership development within the project or organization, engaging families or support systems as part of the visit, or others.

Is geographical location or distance from the coast considered a barrier to accessing the coast for this grant? Yes, we recognize the participant’s distance from the coast as a potential barrier.

Our first application was not accepted. Can we get feedback on areas that we can improve on this round? Yes, you can. Please contact the explorethecoast@scc.ca.gov to request application feedback.

Projects and Programs Jurisdiction

What is the Explore the Coast jurisdiction? Projects must involve visiting the outer coast of California (meaning, the Pacific Coast for the whole length of the state) or the shores of bays (such as the San Francisco Bay). The Conservancy is very interested in supporting programs that bring participants to the coast from throughout the state. Channel Island exploration is eligible.

Do bays (other than SF) and lagoons count as outer coasts? Coastal bays and lagoons are eligible. If you want to double check on your specific locations, please email explorethecoast@scc.ca.gov with your inquiry.

[Can programs take place in watersheds, e.g., LA River?](#) No. The program is focused specifically on bringing participants to the coast and the shores of bays.

[What if the program is about the watershed and estuary education heading into the coast and lands near the coast?](#) Programs can include educational components ranging from coastal watershed, climate change, environmental stewardship, outdoor etiquette, to marine wildlife; however, all programs must provide physical coastal exploration at the coast.

Explore the Coast Priority Communities

[What qualifies as an ETC Priority Community?](#) ETC Priority Communities may include but are not limited to lower-income individuals and households, people with disabilities, people of color, California Native American communities, immigrant communities, foster youth, and other historically excluded communities who face societal challenges or barriers to accessing or enjoying the coast. You can use [the Outdoor Equity Program Community FactFinder Mapping Tool](#), [CalEnviroScreen Mapping Tool](#), or [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) or other resources you know of to help determine if you are serving low-income communities (please note the tools linked will refer to these as a “disadvantaged” or “severely disadvantaged community”). These tools are not required, but you may consult them to help describe the community that you aim to serve.

[How do I estimate the ETC priority communities served by my program?](#) For examples of how to calculate the priority communities that your program serves, see the example tables in the current year RFP instructions. Please also include the source for your estimates, whether that is school district data, free & reduced lunch statistics, census data (such as from one of the tools above), or internal surveys conducted by your organization.

Award Timeline

[When is final project selection announced?](#) Applicants with selected proposals will be contacted mid-summer to confirm final recommended award amount. Proposals will then be presented to the Conservancy Board for funding approval at a subsequent Board Meeting, typically in the fall.

[How are applications reviewed and scored?](#) Conservancy staff reviews grant applications based on the grant Selection Criteria (please refer to the current year RFP instructions to see the criteria). After an initial round of review, a subset of the applications is also reviewed by the [ETC Advisory Board](#), which consists of public members who represent the interests of ETC Priority Communities.

[How do I receive my grant award?](#) Conservancy grants are usually reimbursement-based, meaning grantees have to pay for any project related costs upfront and submit an invoice package to us for grant disbursement. Please be aware that we withhold 5% of the total requested invoice amount from each billing and will pay you that money once your project is completed.

If the reimbursement-based grant structure presents difficulties for the Grantee's fiscal operations (e.g., cash flow), your organization may qualify to receive grant funds through a series of advance payments. If a reimbursement-based grant is a problem, talk to your project manager about the possibility of receiving advance payments.

When can I start my project? Projects should aim to start late in the year they are awarded or the following spring and conclude by the date given in the current year RFP instructions. We understand that project timelines can change from when you submitted your proposal to when you are selected as a Grantee. Projects can officially start once a grant agreement has been executed between the Conservancy and the Grantee, and when all condition precedent materials (i.e., work program, resolution, insurance coverage) are satisfied. You can look at the "Resources for Grantees" section of our website for more information on the grant management process.

Grant Reporting Requirements & Billing

What are the grant reporting requirements associated with an ETC grant? Grantees are expected to submit invoice packages and progress reports at least quarterly, and no more than monthly. Your assigned Conservancy Project Manager will confirm with you the frequency of invoice and reporting. Each invoice package must include a progress report using the ETC Progress Report template, which will be provided to you by your Project Manager if your project is selected.

What supporting documents do grantees need to provide in the invoice package when requesting grant funds? Supporting documents include backup documentation related to all project expenses, a progress report describing the work completed and/or issues that arose during the billing period and agreed upon deliverables for each project task. Examples of project cost related backup documentation include receipts of food purchases, equipment purchases/rentals and lodging costs, subcontractor invoices, photocopies of stipends if that is offered as part of your program, receipts, or logs for reimbursable costs like gas and vehicle mileage. Staff paystubs and timesheets are not required but should be maintained for audits.

Your assigned Conservancy Project Manager will provide additional guidance and instruction documents to help you when are ready to request your first grant fund disbursement.

Is there a minimum amount for grant billing? No.

How long will it take us to receive our grant reimbursement after submitting billing materials? It typically takes at least three weeks after we approve your invoice and supporting documents for the State Controller to pay you.

Eligible Costs

What can I use ETC grant funds for? The Conservancy can pay for the following projects costs if they are included approved project Work Program:

- Project management tasks that are associated with administering the grant – i.e., staff costs associated with managing contracts, paying consultants, billing and invoicing preparation, time spent coordinating with your assigned Conservancy Project Manager to execute the grant
- Project preparation, implementation, and evaluation tasks – i.e., staff costs associated with executing the project, project planning and outreach, conducting post project evaluations and surveys
- Other direct costs relevant to implementation of project – i.e., food, equipment or supplies purchases, rental services, printing materials, reimbursable costs such as travel, vehicle rentals, lodging
- Equipment that may last longer than the term of the grant such as surfboards or kayaks if it is directly related to carrying out a grant's purpose
- Overhead and Indirect Costs – ex. rent, computers, telephones, office supplies, internet access, copy machines, electricity; the Conservancy allows indirect costs to be billed up to 20% of the grant total
- Staff training or conferences that clearly supports successful implementation of your project and/or helps your staff to better serve your chosen ETC Priority Communities
- Physical training for participants to ensure they feel safe and welcome at the coast (such as swimming lessons)
- Contractor and subcontractor services
- Fiscal sponsorship fees associated with partnering with another organization to help you manage the grant

For more information on ETC Eligible Costs, please refer to [this guide](#).

If you have further questions or concerns that were not addressed in this FAQ, we encourage you to reach out to us to discuss your proposed project. Email explorethecoast@scc.ca.gov with any questions or to request a consultation call.

Join our mailing list [here](#) to receive updates and announcements on the Explore the Coast Program.