

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

**The following questions were derived from 9 technical assistance workshops held throughout the state from March 29, 2010 to April 29, 2010. More than 400 participants attended these meetings. The FAQs are ordered by page number as given in the Nature Education Facilities Program Application Guide dated March 1, 2010.**

**Guide cover: How do I send my application to the Office of Grants and Local Services?**

Applications must be mailed or shipped (US Postal Service, FedEx, UPS, etc.) and postmarked no later than July 1, 2010. They can also be hand delivered no later than July 1, 2010. Close of business for OGALS is 5PM. See the cover of the Nature Education Facilities Program Application Guide for the mailing or physical address.

**Page 6: Eligible Applicants: Can state agencies apply and compete for grants under this program?**

Yes, state agencies are public institutions, and as such, are eligible applicants under this program. State agencies must submit an application for an eligible project along with all required documents.

**Page 6: Eligible Applicants: Are federal agencies eligible?**

No. Federal agencies are not eligible under this program.

**Page 6: Eligible Applicants: Are school districts? They provide nature education.**

No. School districts are not eligible under this program, based on the definition of districts on page 57.

**Page 6: Eligible Applicants: Must an agency or project meet all three of the objectives noted on page 6?**

No. But at least one of the objectives needs to be met.

**Page 6: Eligible Projects: Would a tribal museum, owned and operated by a tribal group be eligible?**

It depends. Although the project would likely be eligible, the applicant may not be. Non-profit organizations (NPO) and public institutions are eligible applicants. Native tribes are not eligible. However, if the tribal group is a 501(c) 3 NPO they would be an eligible applicant.

**Page 6: Eligible Projects: Is the planting or restoration of native habitat an eligible project?**

Not by itself. Native habitat restoration without public access and nature education elements would not be an eligible project. Therefore, if the planting or

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

restoration is incorporated within a nature education facility project, the costs would be eligible.

**Page 6: Eligible Projects: Are trail projects eligible for funding?**

It depends. A trail with interpretive signage or other interpretive elements would be eligible. Projects must provide nature education that includes focused learning about the natural environment to be eligible.

**Page 8: Funds Available: Will the funds be available if there is another bond freeze?**

OGALS does not anticipate any other freeze. At this time, payments on bond funded projects are being processed by the State Treasurer's Office because bond sales are successful.

**Page 8: Funds Available: Is there another round for the NEF program?**

No. The entire \$93 million available will be distributed in the July 1, 2010 application process.

**Page 8: Funds Available: Any formulas to split funds geographically?**

No. There are no geographic splits, north-south, urban-rural, or otherwise. The NEF is a statewide competitive bond program.

**Page 8: Match: Is there a required match?**

Match is not required for this program. However, if the grant requested is less than the amount needed to complete the project, the applicant will need to show the source of additional funds on the Funding Sources Form on page 27. This form provides information on additional funding sources, amounts, and the date(s) funds were committed to the project.

**Page 8: Funding Tiers: How many projects can I apply for?**

It depends on the number of site locations each applicant owns and or operates. The site location is the specific property, park or place where the project will be located. For any one site location, applicants may submit only one project application in any one of the tiers.

**Page 8: Funding Tiers: Why is the department reserving funds and what will it do with them?**

This will allow flexibility to ensure that sufficient funds are available to award quality projects statewide. The funds listed for each tier are estimates only and may change based on the quality and quantity of applications received in each tier. All reserve funds will be used to fund selected projects.

**Page 8: Site Location: City owns a large park and a non-profit leases part of the property for a specific use. Can both agencies apply for funds?**

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

Yes. The NPO can apply for a project in the park if it can meet the land tenure requirements (See page 31 in the application guide). The city can apply for another project in the same park.

**Page 8: Site Location: We own several sites. We are going to apply for several projects. Can we apply in the same tier for each project?**

Yes.

**Page 10: Application Process: How long until the application incomplete letter is mailed?**

Estimated six to eight weeks, after the application due date, depending on how many applications are received. However, OGALS will send a letter to notify that the application has been received within two weeks.

**Page 10: Application Process: (#8), says that contracts must be encumbered (signed) within three years of the appropriation date. Does this mean that all of our construction contracts must be signed in that time period?**

No. Only the contract between OGALS and the awarded applicant needs to be signed by 06/30/12.

**Page 10: Application Process: Who reviews the grants? Is it OGALS staff, peer review, or others?**

OGALS internal staff review and process the applications for competitive awarding. The process includes several layers of analytical comparisons, and site visits. OGALS has over 40 years of experience developing, reviewing and scoring a wide variety of park and recreation programs. No external peer or review teams are used.

**Page 10: Application Process: What information is publicly accessible during the competitive process?**

The competitive review process is closed to the public. General timelines are shared on the web at [www.parks.ca.gov/grants](http://www.parks.ca.gov/grants).

**Page 10: Application Process: What information is publicly accessible once applicants are awarded grants**

OGALS places a list of agencies awarded grant funding, the project name and amount of the grant on its website at [www.parks.ca.gov/grants](http://www.parks.ca.gov/grants).

**Page 13: Application Checklist: What happens if I make a mistake on one of the application checklist items?**

The criteria portion of the application is considered complete and cannot be changed as of 07/01/10. However, OGALS will allow an opportunity to correct errors in other documents submitted after review of the project application.

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Page 13: Application Checklist: Must my entire application be double-spaced? For example, must my land tenure agreement be double spaced?**  
No. The double-space requirement only applies to criteria 1-7.

**Page 13: Application Checklist: Can I send in any documents for early review?**

Yes, OGALS encourages if you have specific concerns, to send for review documents such as resolutions or land tenure prior to the application deadline. However, OGALS will not review criteria prior to the deadline.

**Page 14: Application Form: What is the role of the Director/President/CEO versus the Day to Day contact?**

The Director represents the financial and operational decisions of the agency and is ultimately responsible for the project; the Director will be the recipient of any high-level communications about the project. The Day to Day contact will act as the agency's primary liaison with OGALS. This contact person will receive routine communications about the project and work routinely with a Project Officer from OGALS to ensure that all grant requirements are met.

**Page 14: Application Form: Why does it say "Director/President/CEO under the name for the Day to Day contact?"**

That's a typo. It should say "Day to Day" contact.

**Page 14: Application Form: Should I list the total acreage of the site, or just the acreage for this specific project?**

Just list the acreage for this project. Example: You are building a one acre nature center within a 20 acre park. Total project acreage would be one acre.

**Page 15: NPO Requirements: In our mission statement, does the environmental stewardship need to be a primary goal or can it be a secondary goal?**

It can be a secondary goal as long as the applicant can demonstrate that the non-profit is an eligible applicant under the program and can meet at least one of the program objectives.

**Page 15: NPO Requirements: Which budget do non-profits need to submit? The most recently completed fiscal year, or current fiscal year?**

Submit the budget for your most recently completed fiscal year.

**Page 15: NPO Requirements: My form 990 plus attachments is over 40 pages. Do you need the whole thing?**

No. Submit the first two pages of the form which includes Part I, Part II and Part III.

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Page 15: NPO Requirements: We're a brand new nonprofit. What evidence should we provide to demonstrate that we don't present unreasonable risks if awarded funds under this program?**

Send us additional information about your Officers and Board, such as resumes, or bios.

**Page 21: Grant Scope/ Cost Estimate: What happens if we include something on our cost estimate that you decide is ineligible?**

Applicants will not be disqualified because of the cost estimate submitted; a revised cost estimate form can be provided to OGALS.

**Page 21: Grant Scope/ Cost Estimate: I plan to include a line item for contingency in my contracts. How do I account for this in the cost estimate?**

Do not add a contingency line item in estimates submitted to OGALS. Include the estimated contingency cost into the related feature(s) and/or major support amenity on the cost estimate form.

**Page 26: Funding Sources: Are pledges considered a committed source of funds?**

No. A pledge or promise of funds is not a commitment. The funds must be obligated to the project by a binding agreement; note the date of the agreement on the funding sources form.

**Page 28: CEQA: What if I have already completed CEQA, but want reimbursement for the costs?**

Include the costs for CEQA in your cost estimate if the costs were incurred during the performance period of this program (see page 11).

**Page 28: CEQA: We are on federal land; can we do NEPA instead of CEQA?**

No, all projects must have completed CEQA. This is a requirement of Proposition 84.

**Page 31: Land Tenure: I am not sure my lease will meet your requirements. Will you review it and let me know?**

Yes. OGALS can review land tenure agreements ahead of the application deadline to provide guidance for applicants.

**Page 31: Land Tenure: Are we required to have had land tenure since then 07/01/09? Our lease began after that date but the guide says OGALS will start counting the 20 or 30 year land tenure requirement from the date of appropriation which is July 1, 2009.**

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

No, your lease does not have to begin before or on 07/01/09. However, all land tenure agreements must extend to at least 06/30/29 or 06/30/39 depending on the grant amount requested to meet the 20 or 30 year requirements.

**Page 33: Land Tenure Form: What does it mean when you say “highlight the sections of the agreement that meet the requirements listed below”?**  
Use an actual highlighter (of any color) to accent the appropriate sections of your land tenure agreement.

**Page 34: Concept Level Site Plan: May I include more than one 11 x 17 drawing?**

Yes, if your project site is so large that one sheet is inadequate.

**Page 34: Concept Level Site Plan: My project involves improvements to 10,000 square feet of a 150,000 square foot building. Must I show the approximate square footage of every room in the building?**

No. Just show the square footage and identify the use for every room that is in the project for the grant proposal.

**Page 34: Concept Level Site Plan: Our project is to add a new wing to the building; do we need to show the entire building in our site plan? Our project is for exhibits only. Do we need to show the entire building on our site plan?**

The site plan must show the parts of the building that will be funded by the grant. Although the plan doesn't need to show the entire building, it needs to show where the new construction and/or exhibits intersect with the larger building.

**Page 34: Project Location Maps: How much detail is necessary?**

OGALS needs to be able to see the names on the nearest major cross-streets.

**Page 34: Photos: May we provide drawings or elevations that illustrate the proposed project?**

Yes.

**Page 34: Photos: May we reference the photos or drawings in our response to the criteria?**

Yes.

**Page 35: Project Selection Criteria: Do I need to repeat the text of the criteria in my response?**

No. Just make clear which criteria you are responding to.

**Page 35: Project Selection Criteria: May I send in my criteria response early and get feedback?**

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

No. But OGALS will review other application checklist items, e.g., land tenure documents, etc.

**Page 35: Project Selection Criteria: Is there a competitive edge to providing more information than is requested?**

No. Just respond to the prompts listed in each criteria in a clear and concise manner.

**Page 35: Project Selection Criteria: Some of the scoring rubric show a range of points, others show specific point totals. If a rubric shows, for example, 1 or 3 or 5, is it possible to score 2 or 4?**

No. The only rubric which allows a possible range of scoring is criteria 1A.

**Page 35: Project Selection Criteria: May I add photos and illustrations to the criteria?**

OGALS recommends that you not because it will use valuable space in the maximum 20 page criteria response. However, within the responses, applicants may reference photos and illustrations included in the maximum four page photos sections.

**Page 35: Project Selection Criteria: The guide says that criteria responses should use the same numbered and lettered order for each criterion but does that include the order of the sub-numbered areas? For example, in Criterion #1, I will respond in order to A, B and C. Do I also have to respond to the prompts under A in order?**

No. For some applicants, rearranging the order of the responses within each criteria section may allow for a better narrative flow. However, address all prompts and ensure that there is clarity in the response for ease of review by OGALS staff.

**Page 36: Project Summary: Can I single space the project summary?**

Yes. Only the criteria response section of the application needs to be double spaced.

**Page 37: Criterion #1: Need for Nature Education: In criterion 1A - 2 Are fauna, flora, etc. limited to CA resources?**

No.

**Page 40: Criterion #2: Educational Opportunities: Do I get more points if I have multiple resources at my site? Do I get more points if I have endangered species at my site?**

No. OGALS will score responses to the criteria. There are no extra points in the OGALS review process.

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Page 40: Criterion #2: Educational Opportunities: You are asking about a lot of things that this program won't pay for like programs, media, and video.**

NEF will pay for the capital costs of the building or facility where learning and discovery opportunities will take place.

**Page 42: Criterion #3: Visitor Outreach: We are already operating a nature education facility and have a lot of visitors. Who do you want our targeted visitors to be?**

Tell us. Who is in the community? Who is currently being reached? Who is not being reached? This becomes the target population. How will the project help to reach new people?

**Page 42: Criterion #3: Visitor Outreach: We plan to use someone else to help us with our outreach (3C). Is a formal agreement with them necessary at the time of application?**

No.

**Page 44: Criteria #4: Project Access: My project includes a building which will have limited hours, but the grounds will be open 24/7.**

Include the hours for both. If the building is the focus of the project, then those hours will determine the score.

**Page 44: Criteria #4: Project Access: My project will be open from dawn to dusk. What do I put for the hours?**

Just put "dawn to dusk."

**Page 44: Criteria #4: Project Access: 4A: What if our hours change in the future?**

Respond based on expectation of hours at the time of application. Keep in mind that your application packet and criteria responses will become part of your signed contract. If hours should change dramatically in the future, notify OGALS.

**Page 44: Criteria #4: Project Access: We have to charge a fee for our facility. Is this a disadvantage?**

No. Fees are allowable; fees should be reasonable.

**Page 44: Criteria #4: Project Access: My project will be open for programs only like organized events (school groups, camps). The general public excluded. Is it eligible?**

No. Projects must be open to the general public. Organized events are allowable for a portion of the public accessibility.

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Page 44: Criteria #4: Project Access: Do after hours activities located on site count as alternative means?**

No. "Alternate access" means opportunities not at the site.

**Page 44: Criteria #4: Project Access: I see that a website could be alternate access. Will OGALS pay for it?**

No

**Page 46: Criterion #5: Sustainable Design: Will I be required to complete the sustainable design elements I list?**

Yes. OGALS will verify items have been completed prior to making a final payment.

**Page 46: Criterion #5: Sustainable Design: Where can I find information on sustainable practices related to historic buildings?**

State Parks Office of Historic Preservation [www.ohp.parks.ca.gov](http://www.ohp.parks.ca.gov) has links for sustainable building information, especially as it relates to historic sites.

**Page 46: Criterion #5: Sustainable Design: Where can I get more information on sustainable design?**

For a more detailed discussion of sustainable features and techniques, and for links to a wide variety of resources, see the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) website at [www.calrecycle.ca.gov/GREENBUILDING//](http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/GREENBUILDING//)

**Page 48: Criterion #6: Project Readiness: Is there an advantage to having a grantee history with OGALS?**

No. This does not help you, and it can only hurt if your agency has a history of non-performance with our office.

**Page 48: Criterion #6: Project Readiness: It looks like I could respond to these questions using an outline or chart instead of a narrative. Is that OK?**

Yes.

**Page 48: Criterion #6: Project Readiness: What kinds of projects should we list for our planned project manager?**

Find a project or projects that are comparable in type and dollar amount. Similar in scope means similar in size or complexity.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: As part of our project, we need to install a generator at our remote site. Is that an eligible cost?**

Yes, it is best if bolted to the site.

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Will OGALS pay for improvements or mitigation efforts off-site in order to meet CEQA?**

No, funds must be provided by another source.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Is CEQA required mitigation an eligible cost?**

Yes, if the mitigation is within the project site. The costs are subject to the 25% cap for non-construction.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Criteria #3 asks about visitor outreach to targeted groups. If awarded, can we charge the costs of outreach to the grant?**

No. However, costs related to public meetings and/or focus groups to help plan and/or design the project are eligible for reimbursement as long as the costs are within the grant performance period.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Are costs related to existing staff used in support of the project eligible costs?**

Yes, if the staff costs are directly related to the project and specifically documented as such. For additional information on the required documentation, see the accounting and audit rules for employee services in the Grant Administration Guide for Proposition 84 Programs.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Our facility will include office space for our agency. Is that an eligible cost?**

No. The grant will only pay for office space necessary for the facility. It will not fund unrelated office space.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: We plan to apply for a project that we are already incurring costs on. If we are awarded funds, can these retroactive costs be reimbursed?**

Yes. Eligible costs incurred after July 1, 2009 may be reimbursed. But only if the grant is awarded, and the costs are eligible. Therefore, any costs incurred before award would be at the applicant's own risk.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Is the interest on a bridge loan or other interim financing mechanism an eligible cost?**

Yes.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Is hiring someone to help you evaluate whether your project is inspiring environmental stewardship (as in criterion 1C) an eligible cost?**

No. The evaluation is not a project cost; it would be done after the project is completed and paid for.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: We want to buy a bus to bring people to our site. Will the grant fund the bus?**

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

No. Grant funds must be used for capital outlay projects only.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Are plants for a botanical garden an eligible cost?**

It depends. Native plants and generally available plants would be eligible. Costs for exotic specimens would not be.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Do the pre-construction/design costs include help with design for exhibition room (interpretive design)?**

Yes.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: We are required to pay impact fees to our local permitting agency. Are these fees eligible for reimbursement?**

No.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Will OGALS pay for improvements or mitigation efforts off-site in order to meet CEQA?**

No, funds must be provided by another source.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: We are required to add a traffic light to ease access to our facility. Is this an eligible cost?**

No. The eligible costs can only be incurred within the project site boundaries.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: Our building needs renovation for ADA and fire code compliance. Would these costs be eligible?**

Yes.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: If we incurred construction costs prior to the award, and did not have a Labor Compliance Program in place, are those costs reimbursable?**

No.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: My project includes interpretative elements at a water treatment plant. Which costs are eligible?**

The exhibits and other fixed elements that interpret the water treatment plant are eligible. The water treatment plant itself is not an eligible cost. The water treatment plant is not eligible because its primary purpose is to treat water, not to provide nature education.

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: My project includes interpretative elements at a fish ladder. Which costs are eligible?**

The exhibits and other fixed elements that interpret the fish ladder are eligible. The fish ladder is not eligible because its primary purpose is to help fish move up the river.

CA State Parks  
Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS)  
Nature Education Facilities Program (NEF)  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Page 51: Eligible Costs: My project involves an aquarium. Are filtration tanks an eligible cost?**

Yes. The filtration tanks are eligible because they support the tanks, which provide focused learning about nature education.