



## GRANT APPLICATION & COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

Discover Nature Schools  
***Nature Unbound***  
**2025–2026**



**GRANT GUIDELINES—These guidelines are specific to the *Nature Unbound* program. You must contact your local [Conservation Educator](#) to receive certification training or access the grant application [here](#) once certified.**

### PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

The purpose of the Discover Nature Schools program is to promote conservation education through instructional units that meet grade-level or course-level expectations and encourage hands-on outdoor learning experiences. Each unit is designed to increase student understanding and appreciation of our natural resources and our role in conserving them.

In an effort to assist as many teachers/schools as possible with funding towards implementing this unit (hereinafter referred to as *Nature Unbound*):

1. **A one-time only \$1000 grant for approved instructional and outdoor classroom materials will be awarded per school.**
2. ***Nature Unbound* must be taught (as set forth below) to fifteen (15) or more students.**
3. **Homeschool groups may receive training and materials but are not eligible for funding for equipment/supplies or field experiences.**
4. **Schools in summer school sessions may receive funding for field experiences but are not eligible for funding for equipment/supplies.**

### AGREEMENT DURATION

1. **Applications may be submitted from July 1, 2025, through May 31, 2026. The grant period begins on date of approval letter.**
2. **The following must be submitted and postmarked by Sept. 1, 2026:**
  - **Dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment for approved grant expenditures.**
3. **NEW: The following must be submitted by June 15, 2026:**
  - **The Discover Nature School agrees to submit the Annual Report and Evaluation. The Department will email the form to the lead teacher by April 15. Failure to submit may result in termination of the Agreement. Note: this Annual Report and Evaluation replaces the Grant Narrative Report.**

### MEASURABLE DELIVERABLES

#### MDC agrees to:

1. Furnish *Nature Unbound*, an instructional high school ecology unit. The *Nature Unbound* unit consists of a student book, student science notebook, and a teacher guide. The teacher guide features activities suitable for classroom and outdoor learning and meets specified science course-level expectations for high school biology classes.
2. Provide required training (minimum of 3 hours) for all teachers using the *Nature Unbound* unit.
3. Provide grant funding for approved instructional and outdoor classroom materials as listed in "Materials Funded by Grant."
4. Provide grant funding for reimbursement of bus transportation costs for field experiences directly related to Lesson 9 in *Nature Unbound*. (See "*Nature Unbound* Field Experience Guidelines for Lesson 9.")
5. Provide a primary local MDC Conservation Educator contact.



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**Discover Nature School agrees to:**

1. Designate a lead contact/teacher to make decisions and direct implementation of the program. **This person is responsible for submitting dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment postmarked no later than Sept. 1, 2026, and complete the Annual Report and Evaluation by June 15, 2026.**
2. Require **all participating teachers** to complete training (minimum of 3 hours) **prior to initial delivery of *Nature Unbound* in the classroom.**
3. Teach lessons from *Nature Unbound*, choosing learning experiences that best meet the needs of their students. (**Note:** Standards listed in the teacher guide would be met only if all activities are taught.)
4. If the field experience reimbursement option is chosen, require all students to participate in field experiences directly related to *Nature Unbound* as set forth in the *Nature Unbound* Guidelines.
5. After completion of *Nature Unbound*, submit dated detailed receipts (clearly showing proof of payment and dated after date of approval letter) postmarked no later than Sept. 1, 2026, and complete the Annual Report and Evaluation by June 15, 2026. All pertinent items, including the Annual Report and Evaluation, must be received before any reimbursement is processed.

**MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

All students will complete *Nature Unbound* learning experiences as specified and experience related instructional activities in the outdoors in interaction with the natural environment.

**FUNDING AND PAYMENT PROCESS**

1. The Discover Nature School will submit a signed Agreement and will initially receive 50 percent of the grant award for approved instructional and outdoor classroom supplies upon approval of the Agreement.
2. **The school will be notified with an approval letter accompanied with the initial payment. The grant period begins on date of approval letter. Costs incurred prior to grant period are ineligible for reimbursement.**
3. Reimbursement to the Discover Nature School will be the actual costs as documented, with dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment, up to the maximum amounts stated herein.
4. All funds from MDC **must** be deposited in a timely manner.
5. The Discover Nature School shall provide dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment for all costs (including bus transportation) associated with the approved Agreement along with a grant narrative report postmarked no later than Sept. 1, 2026 before final reimbursement will be made.
6. The Discover Nature School will be reimbursed for bus transportation costs for field experiences after submission of dated transportation receipts. Transportation documentation must be an official bus company receipt or detailed receipt on school letterhead signed by a school administrator.
7. Final reimbursement will be made upon completion of the program and submission and review of required grant narrative report and dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment.

**APPROPRIATION**

Funds for this program must be appropriated for each fiscal year, and the Discover Nature School and MDC's obligations hereunder shall not be binding upon MDC for any period in which funds have not been appropriated.



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### **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

1. The Discover Nature School shall contact the local MDC Conservation Educator or Curriculum Coordinator if any changes in the program arise. All changes must be approved prior to implementation. Failure to do so may result in denial of reimbursement.
2. If, for any reason, the Discover Nature School cannot complete *Nature Unbound* and related field experiences during the duration of the Agreement, further funds will not be provided, and any unused funds must be returned.

### **OWNERSHIP**

1. Any equipment purchased with funds under this Agreement becomes the property of the Discover Nature School.
2. MDC reserves the rights to the copyright of all materials it produces and provides.

### **MONITORING REQUIREMENTS**

1. **MDC’s local Conservation Educator shall monitor *Nature Unbound* through ongoing informal monitoring by phone calls, on-site visits, and email.** The Curriculum Coordinator or representative will monitor financial information and reports.
2. After completion of *Nature Unbound* is verified and final reports are approved, MDC shall process final reimbursement.
3. The Discover Nature School shall allow MDC access to all financial records and/or audited financial statements related to this agreement.

### **TERMINATION**

MDC retains the right to terminate this Agreement at any time, without penalty or recourse, by giving written notice at least thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of termination. All unused grant funds must be returned to MDC.

The Discover Nature School may terminate this Agreement with thirty (30) days of notice if agreed by MDC but must return all unused funds.

### **LEGAL COMPLIANCE, SAFETY & HOLD HARMLESS**

The Discover Nature School hereby agrees to comply with all laws and regulations applicable to it, and to take all reasonable and lawfully required steps to ensure the safety of the public during the performance of this cooperative agreement and the provision of all public programs and activities furthered by it, and the Discover Nature School agrees to indemnify and hold harmless MDC, and its agents and employees, from any claim or suit arising out of, or in connection with, this cooperative agreement and the provision of all public programs and activities furthered by it.

### **OTHER PROVISIONS**

MDC shall be given appropriate credit in all publications, educational materials, and in any media contacts related to *Nature Unbound* and grant. Appropriate wording may include “The Missouri Department of Conservation provides the Discover Nature Schools program and grants so Missouri students learn to connect with nature and conserve it, too.”



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## GRANT ELIGIBILITY CHART

### FIRST YEAR OF PARTICIPATION

☞ A field experience reimbursement grant to cover actual bus transportation costs for field experiences up to \$7 per student (maximum of \$3,500) for *Nature Unbound*.

**AND**

A one-time only *Nature Unbound* grant per school up to \$1000 to purchase approved instructional and outdoor classroom supplies. **(See “Materials Funded by Grant.”)**

\* Grant funds disbursed as follows: 50 percent of approved amount for purchase of approved instructional and outdoor classroom materials **upon notification of approval of Agreement**; balance reimbursed upon completion of *Nature Unbound* and submission of required documentation. (See ☞ NOTE below.)

### SUBSEQUENT YEARS OF PARTICIPATION (or schools adopting *Nature Unbound* in formal summer school)

☞ A field experience reimbursement grant to cover actual bus transportation costs for field experiences up to \$7 per student (maximum of \$3,500) for *Nature Unbound*.

(See ☞ NOTE below.)

After 3 years of participation in the *Nature Unbound* program, the school is eligible for an additional \$500 for equipment/supplies listed on page 5 of this agreement.

☞ **NOTE:** Bus transportation costs and the balance for instructional material costs shall be reimbursed after receipt of required documentation postmarked by Sept. 1, 2026. Documentation shall include an Annual Report and Evaluation, and ***dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment (no packing slips or purchase orders)*** for all one-time only *Nature Unbound* approved materials and for actual bus transportation costs.



## MATERIALS FUNDED BY GRANT

- This grant allows for a **one-time only** amount of \$1000 for approved items. These items may be purchased in any combination or number based on a school's need. All purchases must be reflected on clear and legible original OR clear and legible copies of dated detailed receipts showing proof of payment.
- **Only items on this list are eligible for reimbursement.\* No substitutions. Keep all dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment.**

### Equipment/Supplies

- Air thermometers
- Aquatic dip nets with fine mesh
- Biltmore sticks
- Bleach
- Clipboards
- Cloth (muslin, white sheets, or pillowcases)
- Dowel rods
- Duct tape
- Electric tape
- Field guides relevant to the *Nature Unbound* unit
- Flagging tape
- Forceps
- Golf tees (100 white, 100 green, 75 red, 75 blue, and 25 tan)
- Hula hoops
- Insect nets
- Jars, vials, or other containers for field observation
- Magnifiers, hand lenses, or loupes
- Materials for outdoor observation areas — seed packets, potted plants, shrubs, or trees native to Missouri (or annual plants known to attract specific Missouri wildlife and approved by your local Conservation Educator); soil; garden hand tools; plastic liner or plastic pond form; pond plants native to Missouri; pond pump
- Metric rulers or metric measuring tapes
- Nail polish
- Orange cones or tent stakes
- Plastic containers (1–2, 18 gal. or smaller)
- Rolls of adding machine paper
- Rope
- Safety goggles and gloves
- Soil and/or water test kits or water quality testing equipment [This may include thermometers, litmus paper, pH kits or meters, conductivity meters, dissolved oxygen kits, nitrate kits, turbidity tubes, Secchi disks, or other basic equipment.]
- Soil thermometers
- Tokens (60 — 20 each of three colors)
- Weather data collection equipment (anemometers, sling psychrometers, light meters, etc.)
- Wire (heavy)
- Yarn

**\* NOTE:** Not all materials required to complete *Nature Unbound* activities are funded by this grant.



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## **NATURE UNBOUND FIELD EXPERIENCE GUIDELINES FOR LESSON 9**

### **REQUIREMENTS**

In order to qualify for reimbursement of transportation costs for field experiences taken in conjunction with the *Nature Unbound* unit, field experiences:

- Must have a connection to the *Nature Unbound* unit
- Must occur at a natural, outdoor area or ecosystem within 100 miles of the school and within the state of Missouri.
- Must provide students with opportunities to apply inquiry and field investigation skills and knowledge gained through activities in the *Nature Unbound* unit such as designing and implementing investigations, collecting and documenting data on biodiversity and abiotic factors using science notebooks and science tools

Meaningful opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills fully to the field experience include:

- Pre-trip planning time for students to research the ecosystem's history, components, management practices, etc., to create maps and decide what data is needed toward the development of a management plan
- Ample time for students to conduct field investigations, record observations, and collect data
- Ample post-trip time for students to:
  - Organize their data
  - Create a resource management plan
  - Prepare and present short class presentations on their field investigations and findings/conclusions

Examples of destinations include:

- Conservation area
- State park
- National forest
- City or county park
- Private property with areas representative of Missouri's ecosystems included in the *Nature Unbound* student book