



GRANT APPLICATION & COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT



Discover Nature Schools
Nature Unhooked
2025–2026

GRANT GUIDELINES—These guidelines are specific to the *Nature Unhooked* 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, *Nature Unhooked*:

1. **A one-time only \$1,000 grant for approved instructional and outdoor classroom materials will be awarded per school.**
2. ***Nature Unhooked* 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 Unhooked*, an instructional unit on aquatic ecosystems. *Nature Unhooked* 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 grade-level expectations for grades six through eight but which may be suitable to teach in fifth through ninth grade.**
2. **Provide required training (minimum of 3 hours) for all teachers using the *Nature Unhooked* unit.**
3. **Provide grant funding for approved *Nature Unhooked* aquatic instructional and outdoor classroom materials as listed in "Materials Funded by Grant."**
4. **Provide grant funding for reimbursement of bus transportation costs specifically for outdoor aquatic field experiences directly related to *Nature Unhooked*. (See "*Nature Unhooked* Field Experience Guidelines.")**
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 Unhooked* in the classroom.**
3. Teach lessons from *Nature Unhooked*, 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 Unhooked* as set forth in the *Nature Unhooked* Guidelines.
5. After completion of *Nature Unhooked*, submit dated detailed receipts (clearly showing proof of payment and dated after date of approval letter) no later than Sept. 1, 2026, and complete the Annual Report and Evaluation by June 15, 2026. All pertinent items, including Annual Report and Evaluation, must be received before any reimbursement is processed..

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

All students will complete *Nature Unhooked* 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 Annual Report and Evaluation following June 15 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 the instructional unit and related field experience(s) 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 Unhooked* 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 Unhooked* 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 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 Unhooked* 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 Unhooked*.

AND

* A one-time only *Nature Unhooked* grant per school up to \$1,000 to purchase approved *Nature Unhooked* aquatic instructional and outdoor classroom supplies. (See “Materials Funded by Grant.”)

* Grant funds will be 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 Unhooked* and submission of required documentation. (See 🚌 NOTE below.)

SUBSEQUENT YEARS OF PARTICIPATION (or schools adopting *Nature Unhooked* 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 Unhooked*.

(See 🚌 NOTE below.)

After 3 years of participation in the *Nature Unhooked* 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 the Annual Report and Evaluation submitted by the lead teacher and ***dated detailed receipts clearly showing proof of payment (no packing slips or purchase orders)*** for all one-time only *Nature Unhooked* materials and for actual bus transportation costs (mileage to and from field experience location and bus driver costs).



MATERIALS FUNDED BY GRANT

- This grant allows for a **one-time only** amount of \$1,000 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.**

Materials funded by Grant

- Activated charcoal or ammo-carb
- Adding machine paper
- Aquarium filter media
- Aquatic dip nets with fine mesh
- Aquatic plants
- Bleach
- Bottles, small plastic
- Buckets (5-gallon)
- Butcher paper
- Clear plastic cups or small drinking glasses
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Cotton balls
- Desk lamp
- Dish soap
- Eyedroppers or pipettes
- Field guides relevant to the *Nature Unhooked* unit
- Flagging tape
- Flat glass craft beads
- Flip chart paper
- Forceps
- Food coloring
- Glass beaker (250 mL or larger)
- Graduated cylinders, plastic
- Hula hoops
- Ice cube trays, white
- Jars, vials, or other containers for field observation
- Kick seines with fine mesh (or materials for construction of kick seines, dip nets, and turbidity tubes — *materials purchase must be approved by your local Conservation Educator*)

- Light-colored string or cord
- 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 ruler
- Metric tape measure
- Nylon stockings
- Orientation compasses
- Paper cups
- Plastic bags (zip-loc styles in quart or gallon size)
- Plastic containers, 1–2 (18 gal. or smaller)
- Plastic containers, clear (shoebox size)
- Safety goggles (one per student)
- Sand
- Scales (calibrated in grams)
- Secchi disk (1 per classroom)
- Spoons, white plastic
- Stopwatches (1 per group)
- Stream table
- Stream table plastic medium
- Thermometers (in Celsius)
- Toilet tissue paper
- Transparent packaging tape
- Turbidity tube (1 per classroom)

- Latex or rubber gloves
- Water quality test kits or testing equipment (This may include litmus paper, pH kits or meters, conductivity meters, dissolved oxygen kits, nitrate kits, or other basic equipment.)

Fishing Equipment and Supplies

- Backyard Bass (www.ironwoodpacific.com)
- Bobbers
- Casting practice plugs
- Extra fishing line
- Fishing hooks
- Fishing poles (closed-face reels recommended)
- Fishing pole caddies
- Live bait — worms, crickets, minnows (no artificial lures)
- Needle-nosed pliers
- Sinkers
- Tackle box

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



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NATURE UNHOOKED FIELD EXPERIENCE GUIDELINES

REQUIREMENTS

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

- Must have a connection to the *Nature Unhooked* unit
- Must occur at a natural, outdoor area or ecosystem or at a water resource area such as a water treatment facility.
- Must occur 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 Unhooked* unit; collecting, investigating, and documenting data using science notebooks and science tools as referenced in the introductory section of the Teacher Guide

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

- Pre-trip discussion for students to learn more about the field experience destination and develop questions that relate to curriculum themes covered in the *Nature Unhooked* unit
- Ample time for students to conduct simple, hands-on field investigations that allow students to:
 - Observe the living and non-living components of the aquatic ecosystem and the interactions among those components
 - Collect data related to and in support of their questions
- Ample post-trip time for students to:
 - Organize their data
 - 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 aquatic ecosystems included in the *Nature Unhooked* student book