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\$1.9M available for youth outdoor programs

Demand for nation's first state-funded youth outdoor access program reaches record high

SANTA FE — New Mexico's pioneering Outdoor Equity Fund program will open its final fiscal year 2026 application window January 1-31, with \$1.9 million available as demand for the grants continues to climb.

Since 2020, New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Division has gotten more than 106,000 young people from 23 different counties outdoors for education and career training through Outdoor Equity Fund grants. The program is the first state-funded initiative in the nation focused on youth outdoor access.

Interest in the program has surged since 2024, with the number of applicants jumping 46% and grant requests totaling \$4.9 million — more than double the available funding. "Outdoor access opens doors for communities and offers invaluable health benefits for young people," said **EDD Secretary Rob Black**. "We're strengthening New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy while cultivating the next generation of stewards, entrepreneurs, and outdoor workforce leaders."

"Because of the Outdoor Equity Fund, we were able to create Camp Tierra Viva, a uniquely designed program for children living in our domestic violence shelter," said **Marcie Davis, chief executive officer of La Casa, Inc.** "Continued statewide investments ensure that underserved youth can experience the restorative power of nature."

"We create pathways for Native youth and adults with disabilities to thrive through para-sports and nature-based programs," said **Noah Blue Elk Hotchkiss** of Tribal Adaptive Organization. "Investing in equitable outdoor access uplifts entire communities and ensures everyone, regardless of ability or background, can experience the healing and joy of the land, and connects our past to the future."

Due to the competitive nature of this grant, applicants are required to register for an informational webinar to ensure the highest-quality proposals. The webinars will take place on **Wednesday, December 17, 3-4 PM**, and **Tuesday, January 6, 5:30-6:30 PM**. Visit nmoutside.com to register, find more information on the grant program, and apply.

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Tribal Adaptive Organization will provide 50 disabled Native American youth in San Juan County with access to adaptive equipment for weekly outdoor activities.



Institute for Applied Ecology's is using an OEF grant to offer no-cost training and professional development in conservation and native plant ecology to Pueblo youth.

EDD's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive. EDD's programs contribute directly to this mission by funding workforce training and infrastructure that supports business growth, helping every community create a thriving economy.

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