

# National Geographic Society Grants Program

## Overview

The National Geographic Society's Grants Program provides seed funding and support to early career individuals, as well as those more advanced in their careers, who are working to address critical challenges, advance new solutions, and inspire positive transformation across all seven continents. Funded projects will incorporate science, storytelling, and/or education, and must align with one or more of the Society's [five focus areas](#): Ocean, Land, Wildlife, Human History & Cultures, and Human Ingenuity.

Please visit our [website](#) for more details about the next deadline and when you will hear back about award decisions.

If you have any questions, contact [funding@ngs.org](mailto:funding@ngs.org). In your subject line, please indicate focus area and project type (e.g., "Ocean Conservation," "Land Technology," "Wildlife Storytelling," "General") to help expedite our response. The project types include conservation, education, research, storytelling, and technology.

## Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We believe we can only achieve our mission when we actualize our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in every aspect of our work. For this reason, we warmly welcome individuals from underserved and underrepresented groups around the world to apply. To read more about our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, please visit our [website](#).

## Grant Categories

Grants will be available in two distinct categories:

### *Level I Grants*

If you are working to establish yourself in your field, hope to gain experience leading projects, are interested in joining the National Geographic Explorer community, and have not yet received a grant from the National Geographic Society\*, you may apply for a Level I Grant for one-year long projects. These grants are highly competitive and priority will be given to applicants who thoughtfully demonstrate how joining the [Explorer Community](#) will help to establish their career.

This opportunity is designed for individuals who may be earlier in their career, those looking to establish themselves better in their field, those seeking mentorship from others in their field and beyond, or those who want to grow their network and enhance their impact by joining a global community of National Geographic Explorers. This opportunity is best suited for individuals who have the potential and desire to make significant positive contributions to their field by

leveraging the funding, capacity, and additional support provided by the National Geographic Society and connections to other Explorers.

\*Individuals who are already National Geographic Explorers (i.e., those who have already received a grant from the National Geographic Society) are NOT eligible to apply for Level I Grants. Level I Grants are only available to individuals who are new to the National Geographic Society network, as well as individuals already in the network who are not yet Explorers, including: team members on previous grants, National Geographic Young Explorers awarded in 2019 or later who have completed and closed out their previous grants, recipients of discretionary funding opportunities such as the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for Journalists and the COVID-19 Remote Learning Emergency Fund, and grant recipients from the China Air & Water Fund.

Although applicants must be 18 or older at the time they submit their application, there are no other restrictions related to age or years of experience in their discipline. However, applicants will be expected to explain why they believe a new or stronger connection to the National Geographic Society could enhance their career.

Funding requests at this level can be up to USD \$20,000. Projects can be up to one year in length, although projects with “Technology” as the primary focus can be up to two years. Recipients of Level I Grants will join a global community of National Geographic Explorers from around the globe and gain access to training courses, software tools, and other resources.

Click [this link](#) to apply. Find a sample application template below:

- [Level I - Application Template](#)

### *Level II Grants*

If you are more established in your field, have previously received a grant from the National Geographic Society, or are seeking a higher level of funding, you may apply for a Level II Grant. **You are not required to have previously received a grant from the National Geographic Society to apply for this opportunity.** These grants are highly competitive and reserved for select projects that push boundaries to achieve significant and tangible impact in your field. Projects can be up to two years long.

Anyone can apply for this grant, including National Geographic Explorers as well as those new to our community. Although applicants must be 18 or older at the time they submit their application, there are no restrictions related to minimum years of experience in their discipline. However, as this level is highly competitive, applicants should make a strong case for why their project is relevant and impactful, and why they are best suited to carry out the work.

Funding requests at this level can be up to USD \$100,000, but smaller requests will be accommodated and will not be more or less competitive. We encourage applicants to build their

budgets to suit the project, rather than to reach the maximum available funding per grant. Projects can be up to two years in length. Recipients of Level II Grants will join—if they are not already a part of—a global community of National Geographic Explorers, but will not have a structured experience like Level I Grants will offer.

Click [this link](#) to apply. Find discipline-specific sample application templates below:

- [Conservation](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Storytelling](#)
- [Technology](#)

### **Conservation**

These grants aim to achieve quantifiable outcomes as a result of evidence-based and scientifically-informed actions. There must be a demonstrated need and urgency for conservation, as well as a clear method to evaluate the success or failure of the project. Applicants must propose projects that result in or inform tangible solutions that contribute to the conservation of natural resources or the long-term survival of cultural resources.

### **Education**

These grants support projects that use educational resources, methodologies, and/or strategies to inspire learners of all ages, in any educational setting, to learn about, care for, and protect our world. Projects may build capacity in a community to support solutions to protect our world. Projects may also advance knowledge through educational research or innovative tools. Applicants should propose projects that either introduce innovative ideas or take proven ideas and scale or replicate them for larger audiences and/or different geographical areas.

### **Research**

These grants support high-quality scientific projects that aim to answer clear questions with measurable outcomes that advance a particular field of knowledge. Established projects should be driven by testable hypotheses. Exploratory projects to pilot new methods or gather important data baselines are also encouraged. Research grants primarily support fieldwork expenses; however, we will also consider laboratory and technology costs as part of the overall project budget (in addition to a stipend, where applicable).

### **Storytelling**

These grants support projects that use techniques like photography, filmmaking, and journalism to demonstrate the power of science and exploration to change the world. Applicants should show a record of successful media projects, and must submit a portfolio. Projects may stand

alone or be distinct components of larger efforts. Awarded funds may support field expenses, equipment, and stipends for freelancers. Approval of a storytelling grant does not guarantee publication by National Geographic media.

## **Technology**

These grants support the development of new technologies and methods or the innovative application of existing technologies that can improve our ability to explore, protect, and tell the story of our world and its inhabitants. Awarded funds support materials, fabrication, and other development costs. Applicants must secure the proper permits for any tests described in the project proposals, and are highly encouraged to conduct proof-of-concept field trials.

## **Additional Eligibility Requirements**

Please note the additional eligibility requirements that are relevant for *both* grant levels:

- The application must be submitted in English, although English does not have to be your primary language.
- Project start dates should be a minimum of six months after the submission deadline to ensure any awarded funds are received in time.
- If you are working on a project outside your home country or community, or with datasets coming from outside your home country or community, you must include at least one collaborator local to the project's country and/or community on your team who is significantly involved in the project
- Methods and/or means of work must be ethical, sensitive, and align with the National Geographic Society [Code of Ethics](#).
- You may submit a proposal as the project leader for only one National Geographic Society grant at a time.
- You must submit a final report and media from any previous National Geographic Society grants for which you were the leader before applying to lead a new project.
  - Note for National Geographic Explorers: The above rule does not apply to Explorer-exclusive funding opportunities such as Meridian Projects (formerly known as Explorer Community Collaboration Grants). You can be actively leading a Meridian Project at the same time as a National Geographic Society grant project.
- The individual responsible for carrying out the project should write the application and be listed as the project leader.

## **Tips for Applying**

Below is some additional guidance in preparing your application.

- We strongly recommend reviewing the following materials before submitting your application:
  - Sample Application Templates (also available in the section above)
    - [Level I - Application Template](#)

- [Level II - Conservation Application Template](#)
  - [Level II - Education Application Template](#)
  - [Level II - Research Application Template](#)
  - [Level II - Storytelling Application Template](#)
  - [Level II - Technology Application Template](#)
- [Budget Guidelines](#)
- [Explorer Mindset & Code](#)
- [Code of Ethics](#)
- We only accept applications that are submitted through our [online portal](#). Please do not submit mailed or emailed applications.
- We strongly recommend writing out your answers to each application question in a separate document in order to avoid any potential issues accessing your saved work in our system.
- Before starting your application, we recommend preparing an updated curriculum vitae (or resume) and any supporting documentation (such as maps, photos, graphics), which you will be asked to attach in the application form.
- We recommend looking up the latest conversion rates for currency in your country, as the budget for National Geographic Society grant applications must be submitted in U.S. Dollars.

### **What Does it Mean to be a [National Geographic Explorer](#)?**

Receiving a grant from the National Geographic Society means more than just funding! By obtaining a grant, individuals become a part of a diverse, global community of National Geographic Explorers, which gives them access to the following:

- In-person and virtual courses in science communication, project management, and more—including the award-winning NGS Sciencetelling™ Bootcamp,
- In-person and virtual events, such as the annual Storytellers Summit and Explorers Festival,
- Online community spaces to connect and network with other National Geographic Explorers in your field and beyond,
- Opportunities to present your work virtually or on stage with National Geographic, or placement with external media outlets,
- Hardware developed by the National Geographic Society Exploration Technology lab, as well as licenses to software like ArcGIS and MATLAB,
- Opportunities to apply for exclusive funding opportunities such as Meridian Projects, and more!

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### ***Eligibility***

**How do Level I and Level II Grants differ?** Level I Grants are up to USD \$20,000 and are for individuals who are earlier in their career, less established, or at a point in their career where they want to build their skills and network through joining a cohort-based program and learning from mentors. Level II Grants are up to USD \$100,000 and are for more established individuals or those who need higher levels of funding to complete boundary-pushing projects in their chosen field, and ideally who may want to give back to those earlier in their careers through mentorship and/or teaching opportunities.

**How is this opportunity different from previous National Geographic Society grants?** As part of the Society's strategic plan, NG Next, one of our strategic focus areas is: "Fewer, Bigger, Better." This means that we will award fewer total grants per year at higher dollar amounts per grant, with the aim of building deeper relationships with each Explorer. Additionally, in accordance with our continued focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, we have broadened the criteria for who is eligible to apply.

**Why are National Geographic Explorers not able to apply for Level I Grants?** These grants are intended to be a gateway for other changemakers to join our community. (However, please note that team members on previous grants, National Geographic Young Explorers awarded in 2019 or later, recipients of discretionary funding opportunities such as the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for Journalists and the COVID-19 Remote Learning Emergency Fund, and grant recipients from the China Air & Water Fund ARE eligible to apply for Level I Grants.) National Geographic Explorers may apply for Level II Grants.

**Can National Geographic Explorers with active grants apply for Level II Grants?** No. You must close your previous grants before applying for a new one. This entails submitting the final report and media assets on the Society grants portal. Please note that this does not apply to most Explorer-exclusive funding opportunities such as Meridian Projects (formerly known as Explorer Community Collaboration Grants).

**May government employees apply for a grant, and may government employees be listed on projects as team members?**

Yes. The National Geographic Society requires compliance with the [Foreign Corrupt Practices Act](#) (FCPA). A government employee who receives a grant may be required to receive approval from a supervisor from the particular government agency (National Geographic would provide the necessary form).

**May I apply for a scholarship? Will National Geographic help fund my studies?**

The National Geographic Society does not provide funding for scholarships, tuition, study abroad programs, school living expenses, or internships.

The National Geographic Society prioritizes funding for costs directly required to complete the proposed project, such as travel, lodging, and food (including for team members), as well as lab or studio-based work (including equipment and supplies). Applicants may also request money to

cover safety-related costs, such as COVID-19 tests, personal protective equipment (PPE) for their team, cleaning supplies, medical insurance, travel insurance, medication, etc. Applicants may request money for compensation, institutional overhead, and dependent care, as detailed below. The "Justification" (description) section must be completed for all budget line items requested.

### ***Application and Review Process***

**Is it possible to have multiple principal investigators (PI) on a project?** No. The applicant on a grant proposal should typically be the sole PI. If the project is ongoing and already has more than one PI, then only the individual who applies and is awarded a grant will gain the National Geographic Explorer title. We acknowledge that many projects are collaborations among multiple individuals, and ask applicants to describe the contributions of team members on the application.

**What is the timeline?** Please visit our [website](#) for the most up-to-date information on our deadlines and review timelines.

**How long do Explorers have to complete projects?** Project terms for Level I Grants may last up to one year (for technology projects at this level, up to two years). Level II Grant projects can be up to two years in length. For all projects, we can offer no-cost extensions if strongly justified.

**How will the applications be evaluated?** Applications will go through the National Geographic Society's standard grants evaluation process, which includes detailed reviews from a variety of stakeholders. Reviewers will evaluate the strength of the proposal as well as whether or not the applicant has made a clear case for joining the Explorer Community as a means to enhance their career and impact (Level I) or proposing work that is innovative and boundary-pushing (Level II).

### **Does NGS fund programming or organizational costs?**

NGS prioritizes funding for project-based work. Any requests for programming and organizational support should be directly and clearly tied to project-based outcomes and/or goals, which are often area or site-specific. Budget requests must comply with our budget guidelines.

### **If a Level I or Level II application is declined, may the applicant reapply for the same project?**

Due to the large volume of applications that we receive, applicants whose proposals have been declined may not resubmit the same proposal unless they have been invited to do so by a National Geographic staff member.

### **I'm having trouble uploading attachments and/or publications to my application. How do I fix this?**



The two most common reasons you would receive an error when submitting an attachment are the length of the title and the inclusion of special characters. Please shorten the title of the attachment or publication to less than 80 characters, including spaces, and ensure that any special characters are removed.

Additionally, please follow the steps below in this exact order. To upload attachments with description text:

- Select Choose File, pick the specific file and click Open
- Enter the desired descriptive text for that specific file in the Attachment Description box
- Select Upload
- Repeat (up to 5 attachments in each upload box)

If you are still experiencing issues, please reach out to [funding@ngs.org](mailto:funding@ngs.org).

### ***Taxes and Payments***

#### **Does the National Geographic Society transfer the awarded project funds in a single payment to the Explorer, or can the Society disburse funds to partner organizations separately as appropriate?**

National Geographic Society does not disburse funds to partner organizations separately. There should be only one payee / financial party who is responsible for managing the budget and making any additional payments in accordance with the party's agreement with the other partner organizations.

#### **Are National Geographic Society grants taxable?**

Yes, grants are taxable for citizens of the United States if the grant is received by the individual. If the grant is received by an institution (e.g., university or other NGO), the money generally will not be taxable to the individual. For grants to non-United States citizens, the individual or institution receiving the grant would need to understand the tax consequences. *For any tax questions, applicants should consult a tax expert before applying.*

Please note: National Geographic Society grants support individuals leading projects. Funding can be accepted through an affiliated institution or individual, but the relationship will be between the Society and the Explorer. Our grants do not support organizations, but can support individuals leading work with or via an organization.

### **Legal Disclaimer**

The National Geographic Society has zero tolerance for bribery and corruption, and complies with all applicable laws prohibiting such conduct including the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the U.K. Bribery Act. National Geographic Explorers may not: offer or give anything of value to a government official or any other person as an incentive to, or in exchange or as a reward for, obtaining an improper advantage for National Geographic; or give, offer, solicit or accept anything of value that is intended to induce the recipient to violate his/her duty of loyalty



to his/her employer. All licenses, permits and other government permissions or approvals required to carry out a grant must be obtained through the lawful, legitimate process of the country where the grant activity occurs.

The National Geographic Society complies with all embargoes and sanctions established by the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Asset Controls (OFAC). If any work under the proposed grant will be performed in countries including but not limited to Cuba, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Crimea, you must consult your legal counsel to ensure that an appropriate general license is available, or a specific license has been obtained, allowing the grant activity to take place. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Commerce must be notified when certain items are exported (including encryption software standard on all computers). You must consult with your legal counsel and comply with all export requirements applicable to the grant work.

Special Note: The situation in Russia and Ukraine is ever evolving and any funding decisions will be made in accordance with what is permissible under the U.S. sanctions program for the region.