

FUNDING APPLICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

Organization Information

Legal Name: Nature and Eclectic Outdoors	Federal Tax ID#: 47-1941752	501(c)(3) Public Charity	
Address: 8818 Travis Hills Dr. #127	City: Austin	State: TX	Zip Code: 78735
Website: www.neoproject.org	Fax: (512) 731-0936	United Way Funded: No	

Head Of Organization

Name: Jennifer Boley	Title: President / Executive Director
E-Mail Address: jennifer.boleyn@neoproject.org	Phone: (512) 731-0936

Application Contact

Name: Jennifer Boley	Title: President / Executive Director	E-Mail Address: contact@neoproject.org	Phone: (512) 731-0936
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Has the organization applied to the Najim Family Foundation in the past and been declined?

No

Grant Amount Requested \$:	Total Project Budget \$:	Organization's Annual budget \$:
\$50,000	\$187,280	\$391,160

Mission Statement:

To offer innovative nature-based educational experiences to youth that connect classroom curriculum with real-world applications, develop leadership and critical thinking skills, and inspire appreciation for differing cultures, ideas, and opinions.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Program / Project Title:

"Wilderness Kids" Youth Development Program

Harvey E. Najim Family Foundation Priorities:

Education

Program / Project Description:

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Children with risk factors attributed to high rates of juvenile delinquency and substance abuse have limited prevention program opportunities within their school systems. "Risk factors" are any variables that cause an individual to be more prone to delinquent and self-destructive behaviors than an individual who does not have these variables. While teachers and school officials recognize the need for such interventive programs, they do not have the budgets, personnel, or expertise necessary to effectively implement programs to serve these students.

SUPPORTING DATA

The U.S. Department of Justice lists the following variables as "risk factors."

- family criminal history or history of childhood abuse, neglect, or trauma
- emotional or learning challenges, poor anger management, or limited social/emotional skills
- poor family relationships and communication skills or high-risk social behaviors
- negative peer-pressure, bullying, or negative community environment
- low academic achievement, poor school attendance, and truancy
- low socio-economic status

1. The Texas Education Agency reports 1 in 3 Hispanic and 1 in 4 African-American students in Texas will fail to graduate, approximately twice the attrition rate of their Caucasian counterparts.
2. A University of Texas study found that Hispanic and African-American reports of domestic abuse are 2-3 times higher than those of Caucasian victims.
3. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy lists San Antonio as a High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) and distribution point of drugs smuggled to the U.S. by Mexican drug cartels. Drugs on the increase in San Antonio include Methamphetamines, Heroin, and illicit pharmaceuticals.
4. 1 in 28 Hispanic and 1 in 9 African-American children have an incarcerated parent compared with 1 in 57 Caucasian children.
5. In Texas, a child is arrested every 6.5 minutes. Texas ranks second only to California in this statistic according to the Children's Defense Fund's "2017 State of America's Children" report. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reports that minority youth are significantly over-represented in the juvenile justice system.
6. The Children in Nature Network reports inner-city youth with limited access to parks and green spaces have higher instances of learning challenges, social and emotional disorders, mental and physical health issues, stress, and behavioral problems. In short, children who spend more time in green spaces are "happier, healthier, and smarter" than their inner-city counterparts.

PROJECT APPROACH

This program targets San Antonio inner-city youth of Hispanic and African-American heritage from low-income households (determined by enrollment in the school lunch assistance program.)

NEO's "Wilderness Kids" Youth Development program combines the benefits of exposure to nature and the outdoors with curriculum designed to strengthen "protective factors," those factors that help at-risk youth better overcome the challenges that may lead them into delinquent and self-destructive behaviors.

Protective factors include:

- academic success, leadership skills, and high self-esteem
- strong family relationships and communication skills
- good social/emotional skills and emotional resilience

- good mental and physical health
- positive peer influence and community ties
- beneficial hobbies and interests
- ties to nature, other living creatures, and the world around them

NEO partners with schools to provide a multi-faceted approach to strengthening these protective factors in at-risk youth.

1. **Outdoor Activities:** In addition to learning classroom curriculum in an outdoor environment, students learn outdoor skills like camping, kayaking, fishing, nature photography, and more. This experiential learning provides "nature immersion therapy" and helps students develop confidence and self-esteem while allowing them to practice leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Parents are encouraged to participate and learn alongside their children in order to develop healthier lifestyle habits and stronger family bonds.

2. **Nature-Related Curriculum:** We incorporate "Project Wild" curriculum that correlates to the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge Standards) that public school teachers are required to teach by. It includes practical applications of materials learned in classrooms and shows career paths that utilize learned skills. Subjects include math, science, language arts, history, social studies, and more.

3. **Teacher and Parental Involvement:** Teachers and parents are encouraged to participate in nearly every aspect of this program to build trust and stronger relationships with students.

4. **Life-Skills Curriculum:** Evidence-based curriculum ensures students complete the program better equipped to overcome their risk factors and succeed in life. Subjects include Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Diversity Appreciation, Anti-Bullying, Leadership, Overcoming Adversity, Family Relationships, Communications, and more.

5. **S.T.E.M. Challenges:** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics challenges are presented throughout activities to build leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. These challenges improve understanding of these subjects and their basic principles.

6. **Community Service:** This program incorporates environmental community service projects that develop closer ties between students, the environment, and their communities. Rather than standard "trash clean-up" events, NEO hosts activities such as "Invasive Species Removal" and "Trail Maintenance" that partner students with parks personnel and teach useful skills and knowledge.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

- 1: Provide direct services to at least 750 students
- 2: Involve at least 200 students in community service
- 3: Improve academic performance
- 4: Improve leadership and critical thinking skills
- 5: Improve social/emotional skills
- 6: Educate students on career paths and opportunities

Evaluation Plan:

NEO utilizes several tools to monitor the effectiveness of the "Wilderness Kids" Youth Development program.

- "Before" and "After" surveys are given to teachers and are made available to parents and students.
- NEO tracks families and students who participate in single and multiple events, including their demographic information.
- NEO utilizes a customized Rubric to measure changes in student behavior, knowledge, and skills throughout the program. This Rubric is made available to teachers and families as well.
- NEO gathers feedback from partner schools after each event regarding what they believe the greatest benefits and challenges of the activity were. We use this feedback to hone the format of activities to best benefit the participants and their respective schools.
- NEO discusses the progress of the program and addresses any concerns at board meetings and as needed.

Plans to sustain project beyond the term of this request:

NEO's "Wilderness Kids" Youth Development Program has been operating year-round since 2014, and it has expanded each year. Through generous grants, state support, in-kind contributions, volunteer and member support, and the support of multiple parks departments including the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, we will continue to operate year-round and assist the schools that desperately need our programming. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department awarded NEO \$48,538 and the Baxter Trust awarded NEO \$40,000 during our last program cycle. Since NEO surpassed all goals and outcomes during that period, we expect to receive continued support from both organizations. NEO also receives income from "fee for service" public and private events and activities.

Children Impacted:

How many unduplicated children will the TOTAL PROJECT INITIATIVE impact?

750

How many unduplicated children will NFF REQUESTED FUNDS impact?

750

Please provide the percentage of each group below that will be served by the project in which funds are being requested. Do not leave any area blank. If that specific group will not be served, include zero. The percentage should total 100%.

A. Population Served Age		B. Population Served Ethnicity	
Infants (0-5)	0%	African American	8%
Children (6-13)	60%	Asian American	0%
Young Adults (14-18)	40%	Caucasian	1%
TOTAL:	100%	Hispanic/Latino	90%
		Native American	0%
		Other and Define	0%
		TOTAL:	100%

City Council District for Which Children are Being Served:

District1, District2, District3, District5, District7

Line item Budget:

Line Item Description	Total Project Funds Allocation	Najim Funds Allocation
Program Director Salary	\$65,000	\$30,000
Program Assistant Salary	\$31,000	\$0
Equipment Costs	\$20,000	\$1,000
Educational Materials and Equipment	\$15,000	\$4,000

Fuel / Mileage	\$3,840	\$2,000
Vehicle Rentals	\$9,600	\$3,000
Camp Meals	\$7,200	\$1,000
Camping and Park Fees	\$6,000	\$3,000
Banners and Marketing	\$5,400	\$0
Service Project Supplies	\$6,010	\$0
Educational Training and Certifications	\$3,605	\$1,000
Safety Related Training and Certifications	\$2,875	\$1,000
Liability Insurance	\$4,800	\$2,000
Equipment / Vehicle Insurance	\$4,800	\$2,000
Utilities	\$2,150	\$0
TOTAL:	\$187,280.00	\$50,000.00

OTHER FUNDING RESOURCES

For Project being Requested: Funding sources and amounts, pending and committed.

PROJECT - PENDING

Funder Name	Amount Requested
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	\$50,000
Baxter Trust	\$20,000
TOTAL:	\$70,000.00

Other funding sources and amounts, pending and committed not specific to this request.

ALL OTHER ORGANIZATION REQUESTS - PENDING

Funder Name	Amount Requested
Shield-Ayers Foundation	\$50,000
Lola Wright Foundation	\$25,000
Vivian L. Smith Foundation	\$50,000
TOTAL:	\$125,000.00

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

What percentage of your board contributes financially to the organization?

100%

How are board members expected to participate in your organization?

Our board members are all working class and are not in financial positions to contribute large sums of money. However, they all contribute small sums throughout the year. All board members are required to be active participants in NEO's planning, development, and actual events and activities. The board members' in-kind contributions are much more substantial since they all volunteer during NEO events and activities. The "in-kind" value of board member volunteer hours based on the national standard of \$24.14/hr was approximately \$56,574 in 2017.

LIST OF BOARD DIRECTORS

Name	Corporate Affiliation
Jennifer Boley	Executive Director, Nature & Eclectic Outdoors

Joshua Lewis	Manager, Game Republik
Bethany Niazian	Training Coordinator, Shell Oil
Nena Mbawuike	X-Ray Technician, Corridor Mobile Medical Services
Valerie James	Veterans Liaison, Mental Health America