



NEW MEXICO

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 24, 2026

State's Outdoor Equity Fund will get more than 17,000 youth outside

SANTA FE — A \$2.2 million investment through the state's Outdoor Equity Fund will connect more than 17,000 youth to 54 outdoor programs that support health and wellness, environmental education and workforce readiness.

This round of awards reflects the diverse opportunities the Outdoor Equity Fund creates for young people, including fly-fishing experiences, guide training for Indigenous and rural youth, adaptive outdoor recreation program for children with disabilities, paid conservation internships, bicycle mechanic programs in underserved communities, and much more.

"Investing in outdoor opportunities for young people is an investment in both healthy communities and New Mexico's economy," said **Economic Development New Mexico Cabinet Secretary Rob Black**. "This fund helps young people build skills and experience while preparing a local workforce to meet the needs of our state's \$3.6 billion outdoor recreation industry."

The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division awarded programs spanning 20 New Mexico counties, with more than half serving rural and Tribal communities.

New this year, the Outdoor Equity Fund includes a higher funding tier offering awards of up to \$100,000 to organizations with the capacity to deliver large-scale, high-impact outdoor programs. \$800,000 was granted to eight Tier 2 recipients, seven of which offer paid opportunities for participants.

Other highlights from this round include \$3.9 million in funding requests, nearly \$1.4 million in matching funds, expansion into three new counties, 19 first-time recipients and thirty-four programs with workforce development components, 23 of which offer paid opportunities for participants.

"Young people in every corner of the state deserve access to the benefits and opportunities that come from spending time outdoors," said **ORD Director Karina Armijo**. "With this round, OEF is reaching youth in Chaves, Eddy and Lincoln counties for the first time, expanding program's reach to 25 counties statewide."

"For Indigenous youth, learning from and with our homelands connects language, culture, science and stewardship," said **Kiksuyapi Collective Founder and CEO Leanna McClure**. "By spending time with the Rio Grande and the water systems that sustain Isleta Pueblo, young relatives deepen relationships with place, learn from community, and understand their responsibility to care for the land and water."

"The long-term future of New Mexico's public lands and outdoor economy should be in the hands of New Mexicans," said **Ben Mortensen**, director of outreach for Friends of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. "By connecting local youth with these lands, careers, training and paid work, we are building a workforce that can stay rooted here, care for these places and create the same opportunities for generations to come."

Since Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham established the Outdoor Recreation Division and the Outdoor Equity Fund program in 2019, the division has awarded nearly \$12.8 million in grants, connecting more than 145,000 youth to outdoor education experiences. New Mexico's Outdoor Equity Fund was the first state grant program in the nation designed to expand equitable access to outdoor opportunities for youth, particularly from low-income and underserved communities.

The next round of Outdoor Equity Fund applications will open February 1, 2027. View the full list of awardees and project descriptions at www.nmoutside.com/news.



Trout Unlimited connects Northern New Mexico youth with fly fishing, stewardship and traditional ecological knowledge.



The Bike Works offers Grant County youth bicycle education and earn-a-bike repair workshops.



Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project summer youth interns build archaeology skills alongside traditional skills and knowledge.

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EDNM's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive. EDNM'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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