

Environmental  
**STUDENT  
ACTION  
CHALLENGE**



**APPLICATION  
HANDBOOK**

*Alberta* 

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## **FOIP Collection Notice**

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# INTRODUCTION

## *THE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDENT ACTION CHALLENGE*

Calling all problem-solvers! We're looking for innovative and motivated students from across Alberta who are invested in leading projects that are focused on improving the environment. The Environmental Student Action Challenge (ESAC) invites students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 to delve deep into real issues in their communities. Through inquiry-based learning, students will get hands-on experience investigating, researching, and developing solutions to tangible environmental problems in Alberta. ESAC focuses on the care, hope, and positivity that underlies the urge to make a difference. By documenting and sharing their ESAC journeys, participants will have the chance to inspire others to take action, too!

Teachers are invited to submit an application in collaboration with their students for a grant of up to \$1,000 to support student-led projects. Please see our linked web page for details on the support we offer for the application process.

### **The Goal**

The primary goal of ESAC is to encourage and support innovation in addressing environmental problems. We want to provide opportunities and resources for students to cultivate both scientific process skills and find hope and positivity in their own actions. By utilizing a pedagogical model of inquiry-based projects, students will develop a deeper understanding of their environmental topic, including the complex intertwining of scientific and social factors, and how local actions can have big global impacts. It's no exaggeration that Alberta's students have the power to change the world! Our province has a long history of innovation and conservation action. We're excited to see what today's students will contribute to that legacy.

## WHO CAN APPLY?

ESAC was established to support student-led, inquiry-based projects, that identify a student-generated solution to a local environmental problem.

The program is open to all students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, registered in a school funded by the Government of Alberta.

- Projects must be conducted by a school community or student group. The ESAC grant is not designed for individuals.
- Projects must include an adult supervisor (teacher) and administrative (ideally, principal or vice-principal) support.

# WHAT TYPE OF PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

## Project considerations

Successful applications must demonstrate four important goals:

1. Identify a clear local environmental issue the project will focus on.
2. How the inquiry project will provide a meaningful educational experience for students.
3. How the inquiry project will benefit the wider school and community.
4. How the outcomes will benefit the land, air, water, and biodiversity in Alberta\*.

\*For older students, we are particularly interested in projects that connect the health of ecosystems with our carbon footprints and how we might address this through innovative science solutions. E.g.: your students calculate the carbon sink capacity of an acre of naturalized grassland or wetland ecosystems and come up with a proposal to restore ecosystems to offset school or community carbon emissions.

A few examples of potential Alberta environmental issues include:

**Fighting aliens:** By identifying invasive species in water or on land, students could work on projects to remove weeds, plant native species, and educate their community about the risks of introduced and invasive species.

**Making a splash:** By monitoring indicators of water quality or quantity, students could contribute to Alberta databases, compare water quality year to year and create awareness of the importance of watersheds.

**Clearing the air:** By monitoring or researching air quality, students could design educational tools to teach about the impacts of poor air quality to our health, biodiversity and the environment.

**Auditing for awesome:** By raising awareness of the cumulative effects of everyday habits, students could challenge their school or community to make a measurable difference in emissions. Pick a consumption or waste pattern and come up with a plan to move the needle! Could you discourage idling cars? Reduce your electricity use by 30%?

**Discovering our wild world:** By tracking and documenting wildlife, students could use wildlife camera data to record biodiversity data, compare species richness within ecosystems, or create a data-informed solution to a human/wildlife conflict.

**Connecting the dots:** By assessing and analyzing waste output as more than just garbage in the landfill, students could propose and create waste reduction solutions that help reduce carbon emissions, too.

## HOW AND WHEN CAN WE APPLY?

Complete the online application at <https://bowhabitat.alberta.ca/programs/environmental-student-action-challenge.aspx>

Applications open September 1, 2023.

Application deadline prior to **4:30 p.m. on October 31, 2023.**

## HOW MUCH FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

The Government of Alberta will award up to \$1,000\* in total funding to successful applicants.

A single school or school association may receive up to two awards within a single school year.

Funding may cover up to 100% of approved project-specific costs. Additional support through community sponsorships may be sought by the project, but no additional funding from other Government of Alberta sources is permitted.

Project budgets must be included in the application.

Cheques for funded projects will be issued to the school or school association listed on the application. Cheques will not be issued to individuals.

## WHAT EXPENSES ARE ELIGIBLE?

All projected expenses must be submitted through the application budget and approved by the ESAC program coordinator prior to purchase/processing.

### Eligible expenses

The ESAC will fund:

- Project materials and resources to implement the project.
- Education and communication resources.
- Subject matter experts intended to gain knowledge relating to your project (up to a third of your grant allocation).

## Ineligible expenses

The ESAC will not fund:

- Activities that are required by law or are mandated by any level of government.
- Costs not tied directly to the project design and delivery.
- Donations to other organizations.
- Fundraising activities.
- Incentives or rebates.
- Lobbying or advocacy activities.
- Memberships, supplies or participation enrollment costs for other established programs.
- Projects or program enrollment outside the province of Alberta.
- Other expenses may be deemed ineligible at time of application. ESAC aims to have a supportive dialogue regarding proposal budgets and will reach out to explain and advise whenever possible.

## HOW ARE APPLICATIONS EVALUATED?

ESAC applications will be evaluated based on:

**Benefit to the land, air, water or biodiversity of Alberta.** Does this project describe the stewardship actions or issue to be resolved?

**Scope of educational collaboration.** How well does the project collaborate with others in the school and community?

**Timelines.** Does this project address a current environmental issue or challenge?

**Cost effectiveness.** Does this project include ineligible expenses? Does this project use the funds wisely, and can the equipment purchased be utilized in the future for other inquiry-based projects?

Each application will be assessed in one of four divisions:

Division I: Kindergarten to Grade 3

Division II: Grades 4 to 6

Division III: Grades 7 to 9

Division IV: Grades 10 to 12

Refer to Appendix A

# WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

## Required for all grants

1. Pre-topic survey and post-topic survey to assess efficacy of knowledge building.
2. Documentation of group knowledge building.
3. Project teams must provide a short (500 word) project reflection. This should include a description of the process (challenges, successes, and surprises) and an outline of how the project is expected to continue into the future.

As a final culmination of the inquiry project, students should share their findings and proposed environmental solutions with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas staff.

We encourage you to be creative in your delivery and tailor it to the skills and abilities of your students. For example, they could perform a short theatrical piece, share their research via video, create a large poster, draft a report, design an art project, deliver a presentation to leaders in the community, write an article for a local newspaper, etc.

By using cross-curricular presentation styles, you will help create a meaningful and memorable learning experience for your students.

## Media

All successful projects will be recognized on the ESAC website. Other recognition, such as school visits, blog posts, and social media posts, may occur throughout the school year.

# QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the ESAC, please contact the ESAC Coordinator at: [Student.Action@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Student.Action@gov.ab.ca)

# APPENDIX A: EVALUATION CRITERIA

## PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Size of award applied for: up to \$500 | up to \$1,000

Division: 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 (scored on anticipated grade level skills and knowledge)

CRITERIA	0	1	2	3	4	SCORE
<b>Benefit to the land, air, water or biodiversity of Alberta.</b>	Project has no description of stewardship actions or environmental issue.	Project has minimal description of stewardship actions or environmental issue.	Project has a good description of stewardship actions or environmental issue, with clear links to community based solutions.	Project has an excellent description of stewardship actions or environmental issue, with clear links to community based solutions.	Project has an excellent description of stewardship actions or environmental issue, with clear links to community based solutions. There is a clear and measurable ecological benefit	<u>4</u>
<b>Level of measurable educational value for students</b>	Project is expected to have no measurable value.	Project may have value, though it would be challenging to measure.	Project may have a measurable educational value for students.	Project has a clear measurable educational value for students.	Project has a highly developed measure of educational value for students, with included proposed metrics.	<u>4</u>
<b>Scope of reach</b>	Only the participants are involved in the project.	Project involves others within the school but none in the larger community.	Project involves others in the school and has minimal reach in the community.	Project involves others in the school and has significant reach in the community.	Project has significant reach in the school, community, and into the rest of the province.	<u>4</u>
<b>Level of planning and research</b>	No research is shown in the application.	Minimal research is shown in the application.	Significant research is shown in the application.	Research is extremely relevant to the outcome.		<u>3</u>
<b>Timeliness</b>	Project does not address a current issue.	Project partially addresses a current issue.	Project addresses a current issue.			<u>2</u>
<b>Cost effectiveness</b>	Proposal includes ineligible expenses or does not have a complete budget.	Budget is complete but project is not cost effective.	Budget is complete and the project is cost effective, but there is no additional funding or in-kind support for the project.	Budget is complete, the project is cost effective, and the project leverages additional funding or in-kind support.		<u>3</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>						<u>20</u>



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