Environmental STUDENT ACTION CHALLENGE

APPLICATION HANDBOOK

Alberta

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Introduction
The Environmental Student Action Challenge

The Environmental Student Action (ESAC) is back for the 2022-2023 school year, and it's up to you to take action!

ESAC invites students from Grade 3 to Grade 12 to delve deep into real scientific issues in their communities.

Through inquiry-based learning, our leaders of the future will get hands-on experience investigating, researching and developing solutions to tangible environmental problems in Alberta!

Teachers are invited to submit an application to Alberta Environment and Parks about how an inquiry project would provide meaningful educational experience to their students, and how it connects to applicable curriculum.

Your team can receive up to $1,000 to support inquiry-based learning in your community. The Government of Alberta will award up to $15,000 in funding annually to successful applicants to support their environmental action projects.

The Goal
The primary goal of this program is to provide environmental problems for students to research, address and develop solutions. By utilizing a pedagogical model of inquiry-based projects, students will develop a deeper understanding of their environmental topic. Research shows that when people actively engage with environmental problems they are more likely to continue those behaviours later in life.

Who can apply?

ESAC is all about student-led, inquiry-based projects.

The program is open to all students, Grade 3 and up, registered in a school funded by the Government of Alberta.

- Projects must be conducted by a school community or student group. Students must work in teams of two or more to be eligible for the ESAC.
- Projects must include an adult supervisor and principal support.

WHAT TYPE OF PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

Project considerations

Successful applications must demonstrate three important goals:

1. how an inquiry project would provide a meaningful educational experience for their students

2. how it connects to applicable curriculum.

3. how it benefits the land, air, water and biodiversity in Alberta.

A few examples of potential Alberta Environment and Parks issues include:

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

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

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 foster appreciation for local animals.

Speaking up for the voiceless: By a public communication or awareness campaign about nature concerns, students could use theatrical productions, art or music to better inform and engage local communities in conservation.

If you know of a local environmental issue that would be appropriate for inquiry investigation, we invite you to submit your application to receive funding.

Project location

Projects must take place within the province of Alberta, and must occur within a school or school grounds or on public land with appropriate permission[1].

Project duration

Projects must start and finish within the school year. They may start before the ESAC grants are awarded but funding is not guaranteed.

1 To request Temporary Field Authority (TFA) for an activity on public land, please call 310-3773 to connect with a Land Approval Officer.

How and when can we apply?

Complete the online application at www.alberta.ca/student-action-challenge.aspx. Applications open in October.

Applications for the 2022-2023 ESAC program must be received prior to **4:30 p.m. on October 31, 2022.**

How much funding is available?

The Government of Alberta will award up to $15,000* 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 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?

Eligible expenses
The ESAC will fund:

- Project design, materials and resources to implement the inquiry project.
- Education and communication resources may also be included in your funding request.

The ESAC will not fund:

- Fundraising activities.
- Projects outside the province of Alberta.
- Activities that are required by law or are mandated by any level of government.
- Lobbying or advocacy activities.
- Incentives or rebates.
- Any cost not tied directly to the project design and delivery.
- Other expenses may be deemed ineligible at time of application.

How are applications evaluated?

Project applications for awards of up to $500 and awards up to $1,000 will be evaluated based on the same criteria, although applications for awards up to $1,000 are expected to provide additional details. ESAC applications will be evaluated based on:

- **Level of measurable educational value for students.** How well does this project introduce concepts of inquiry? What hands-on environmental activities are included in the knowledge building process?
- **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?
- **Level of connection to curriculum.** How does this project tie into Program of Studies?
- **Timeliness.** 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: Grade 3
  - Division II: Grades 4 to 6
  - Division III: Grades 7 to 9
  - Division IV: Grades 10 to 12

Refer to Evaluation Criteria – Appendix A for full details.

What are the reporting requirements?

Required for all grants

- 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 Parks 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.

- Each inquiry-based project should Include:
  - Pre-topic survey and post-topic survey to assess efficacy of knowledge building
  - Documentation of group knowledge building
  - Program satisfaction surveys from the teachers

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

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
Benefit to the land, air, water or biodiversity of Alberta.	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	4
Level of measurable educational value for students	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.	4
Level of connection to curriculum	The project has no connection to grade-appropriate curriculum.	The project has minimal connection to grade-appropriate curriculum.	The project has good connection to grade-appropriate curriculum, with clear ties to one or two topics of study.	The project has excellent connection to grade-appropriate curriculum, with clear ties to two or three topics of study.	The project has excellent connection to grade-appropriate and clear ties to curriculum across different subject areas. The project is a holistic learning experience.	4
Scope of reach	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.	4
Level of planning and research	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.		3
Timeliness	Project does not address a current issue.	Project partially addresses a current issue.	Project addresses a current issue.			2
Cost effectiveness	Proposal includes ineligible expenses or does not have a complete budget.	Budget is complete but project is not 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.		3
					TOTAL:	20

Environmental STUDENT ACTION CHALLENGE

INITIATION

Local environmental problem or issue

Can be self-generated or from AEP

GROUP KNOWLEDGE

Recipients are required to provide a shared experience with their students.

Students are required to document their experiences, including but not limited to: sketches, journaling, photographs, video clips.

Question Generation

Using the knowledge from the shared experience, students refine the questions and identify the scope of the inquiry project.

Pursue Knowledge

ACTION CHALLENGE

Teachers continue to work with their students to research the issue. depending on the project, students work on the action items to support the inquiry (i.e. monitoring the wild-life, creating social media content, designing props for the theatrical program etc.).

Individual Knowledge

Students are assigned smaller aspects of the inquiry project to study independently or in small groups (i.e. water quality project–groups could study temperature, DO, turbidity, pH etc.).

Applying Knowledge

PROJECT CAPSTONE

Students share their inquiry project with AEP staff. This can be done in a theatrical performance, report, poster, presentation. Get creative!

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