

Teachers on the Public Lands Program Guidance

SECTION I. PROGRAM PURPOSE, GOALS and ELEMENTS

A. Purpose

Developed by the BLM's Hands on the Land staff and the University of Colorado Denver, Teachers on the Public Lands (TPL) provides professional development experiences for teachers by placing them as teacher "interns" at BLM HOL sites. TPL teachers spend a portion of the summer learning and working at the HOL site and perform various tasks depending on their interests and the education needs of the site. TPL teachers engage with site education projects, learn about BLM resources, and develop lesson plans that can be used by BLM employees, other teachers, and community volunteers. When TPL teachers return to school in the fall, they spend part of their classroom time presenting their TPL projects to their own students and to other appropriate audiences. The program allows teachers to fully explore BLM public lands, enrich their students with a clearer understanding and appreciation of public lands resources, develop activities that will be used in the classroom during the school year, and have the opportunity to receive graduate and/or continuing education credits.

B. Program Goals

The TPL program will:

- Provide teachers with place-based learning experiences.
- Provide access to information on the rich resources of the public lands for inclusion into materials and programs for classrooms and schools.
- Provide teachers with knowledge and teaching skills related to the resources and themes interpreted in the BLM.
- Provide BLM employees with the expertise of teachers to inform and mentor them in the development of public lands education programs and services.

The program is designed to permit teachers to develop HOL site educational activities that are also appropriate for students in the teachers' home schools. The activities should be designed with an eye to making BLM public lands relevant to students at HOL sites and in classrooms.

C. Program Elements

The TPL program has several core elements that support the overall goals of the program. These elements are described below.

- Stipend – Each TPL teacher will receive a \$2,200 professional development stipend. This stipend will be issued at the end of the TPL season. Each teacher will also receive a \$353 credit to cover the costs of University of Colorado Denver course and tech fees.
- Level of Effort – The time committed will be approximately 160 hours. The level of effort includes the site-based TPL project, teacher research, lesson plan development, and immersion experiences. TPL teacher may spend up to 30 percent of their time experiencing BLM operations, working with the public, and learning about the work of the different

divisions within BLM.

- Training – All TPL teachers and their HOL site managers will attend a webinar that outlines the elements of the program, including the lesson plan requirement.
- Lesson Plan – Each TPL will develop at least one lesson plan for use with students in the outdoor classroom. The lesson plan will be reviewed by the HOL site manager for inclusion of BLM resources and accuracy of information, and by UC Denver staff for educational quality and effectiveness. UC Denver will provide all teachers with a rubric for the lesson plan.
- Certificate of Completion – Each TPL will receive a certificate of completion that can be taken back to the school district and converted into recertification points or units.
- Graduate Credit – All TPL teachers will participate in the on-line UC Denver graduate course *Experiential Learning in the Parks*. Tuition payments are covered under the program at no additional cost to TPL teachers.
- Background Check – If required to access BLM facilities and networks the hosting BLM office will pay for a basic background check for each TPL teacher.
- Project Agreement – Each HOL site manager and TPL teacher will outline his/her TPL program requirements on the provided Project Agreement form. Project agreements will be signed by the TPL teacher, HOL site manager, school administrator, and BLM field office manager. Additionally, per national guidance, each teacher will be signed up on a BLM Volunteer Agreement for the duration of the TPL experience.
- Program Evaluation – All TPL sites will participate in a program evaluation. A program evaluation form and instructions will be provided to all participating HOL sites.

During this experience, TPL teachers will:

- Develop **content knowledge** on their assigned HOL sites and relate that knowledge in their classrooms. Content knowledge includes understanding BLM systems and human interaction within these systems. Content knowledge also includes first-hand knowledge of the historical/scientific context associated with the human/cultural interactions and the environmental systems within the TPL teachers assigned site. Special consideration will be given to content pertaining to climate, watersheds, invasive species, wild land fire, and energy.
- Develop and use important **teaching skills**, such as critical thinking/ problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity.
- Create a **final project** that will meet their needs as well as the needs of the assigned HOL site. The project will incorporate the content knowledge gained by the teacher and can be integrated into their classroom curriculum.
- Understand the **value of experiential learning** and develop the skills necessary to bring experiential learning to the classroom.
- Create **video journals** capturing their TPL experiences.
- Develop **grant writing** skills to support experiential learning in their classrooms.

- Engage in an online **learning community** with other TPL teachers to reflect on, analyze, and communicate their TPL experiences.

General themes to be addressed:

- The nature of the Bureau of Land Management
- The role of experiential learning
- Content and pedagogical knowledge relating to historical, cultural, and environmental systems of the Bureau of Land Management

SECTION II. TECHNICAL APPROACH and OUTCOMES

A. Technical Approach

Teachers on the Public Lands is a collaboration among the University of Colorado Denver, the Bureau of Land Management, and participating teachers.

The teachers will:

- Conduct independent research on varied topics for the purpose of developing resource education programs. Learn about public lands resources.
- Complete a final project that includes development of curriculum-based learning activities relevant to both public land resources and the teaching needs of their school district or organization.
- Work at HOL sites in roles mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the local HOL site manager.
- Participate in the on-line UC Denver graduate course *Experiential Learning in the Parks*.
- Develop activities based on their experience to use in both their school districts and the HOL outdoor classroom.
- Mentor BLM staff on lesson development, partnering with schools, and other educational components.
- Work to understand and support resource management efforts and articulate them in their schools/districts.

The University will:

- Provide 26 teachers a living expense stipend for appropriate level of effort in support of the TPL agreement.
- Assist BLM HOL sites in recruiting and retaining teacher interns.
- Develop and offer the on-line graduate course *Experiential Learning in the Parks*.
- Provide expertise and support for mutually agreed upon public lands activities
- Oversee, review, and provide feedback to interns regarding lesson plans and projects.
- Coach and counsel teacher interns regarding completion of program requirements as outlined in the project agreement.

The Bureau of Land Management hosting office will:

- Recruit and retain teacher interns.
- Complete a project agreement in collaboration with each teacher intern.
- If needed, pay for a basic background check for each teacher, granting him/her access to BLM facilities and network infrastructure. Provide space and equipment for teacher interns to conduct educational curriculum development activities including research, lesson planning, and materials development.
- Provide consultation, advice, and assistance from BLM resource programs.
- Provide necessary training in appropriate aspects of the BLM.
- Provide an overview of the BLM and its mission and programs, and explain how interpretation and education relate to and support this mission.
- Provide adequate training to interns to enable them to successfully complete the program.

B. Expected Outcomes

Expected Outcomes:

- Teachers will leave the internship with a better understanding of the role of the Bureau of Land Management and the management of public lands.
- Students within these teacher's classrooms will have a better understanding of the role of the Bureau of Land Management and the management of public lands.
- Curriculum materials will be developed for use in the intern's school and at the HOL site, as well as for national dissemination.