

# Teachers on the Public Lands Program Guidance

## SECTION I. PROGRAM PURPOSE, GOALS and ELEMENTS

### A. Purpose

Developed by the BLM's Education 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 offices/sites. TPL teachers spend a portion of the summer learning and working at a BLM site and perform various tasks depending on their interests and the education needs of the site. TPL teachers engage with site education and youth engagement projects, learn about BLM resources, and develop projects and materials to be used by BLM employees, other teachers, community volunteers, and youth. When TPL teachers return to school in the fall, they spend part of their classroom time presenting their TPL experiences 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 education projects and materials, and can receive graduate and/or continuing education credits.

### B. Program Goals

The TPL program will:

- Provide TPL 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 TPL teachers with knowledge and teaching skills related to the resources and themes interpreted by BLM staff.
- Provide BLM employees with expertise and mentorship opportunities from TPL teachers on the development of site based public lands education programs and services.
- Engage TPL teachers in the development of education and youth engagement materials for use in their school and at the BLM site, as well as for possible national dissemination.

The program is designed to permit TPL teachers to develop site based educational activities and materials also appropriate for students in the teachers' home schools. The activities should make BLM public lands relevant to students in the field and in classrooms.

### C. Program Elements

The TPL program has several core elements supporting 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. In addition, each teacher will also receive a \$372 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, 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 BLM site managers will attend a webinar outlining the elements of the program, including the lesson plan requirement.

- Final Project – Each TPL teacher will develop at least one educational project for use with students in the outdoor classroom. The project will be reviewed by the BLM 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 project development.
- Certificate of Completion – Each TPL teacher will receive a certificate of completion for the school district records and support converting 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 BLM 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, BLM site manager, school administrator (optional), 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.
- COVID-19 – Each TPL teacher will follow BLM volunteer guidance and policy for COVID-19.
- Program Evaluation – All TPL sites will participate in a program evaluation. A program evaluation form and instructions will be provided to all participating TPL sites.

During this experience, TPL teachers will:

- Develop **content knowledge** on their assigned BLM sites and relate this 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 BLM's national education themes.
- Develop and use important **teaching skills**, such as critical thinking/ problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity.
- Create a **final project** meeting their needs as well as the needs of the assigned BLM 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.

- 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.

## **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.
- Complete a final project to include development of learning activities, programs, events, or projects relevant to both public land resources and the teaching needs of their school district or organization.
- Work at BLM sites in roles mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the local 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 at BLM field sites.
- Mentor BLM staff on program 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 teachers a professional development stipend for appropriate level of effort in support of the TPL agreement.
- Assist BLM 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 intern.
- 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 education and interpretation programs relates 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.
- Education and youth engagement programs and materials will be developed for use in the intern's school and at the BLM site, as well as for possible national dissemination