

Friends of Acadia Request for Facilitation and Strategic Planning for Engaging Youth in Acadia National Park

Release Date: August 2, 2024

I. Purpose of the RFP

Friends of Acadia is seeking a consultant to work with Acadia National Park and its partners, chiefly Friends of Acadia, in developing/updating a strategic vision and action plan for connecting youth to Acadia National Park. Most of Acadia's youth engagement programming is conducted by the National Park Service with federal funding, plus additional financial and administrative support from Friends of Acadia and the Schoodic Institute. The consultant will work with the park and partners in assessing the value and effectiveness of current programs, considering new ideas for engaging youth, and setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives for programs. The resulting plan is intended to guide Acadia National Park and partners through 2028.

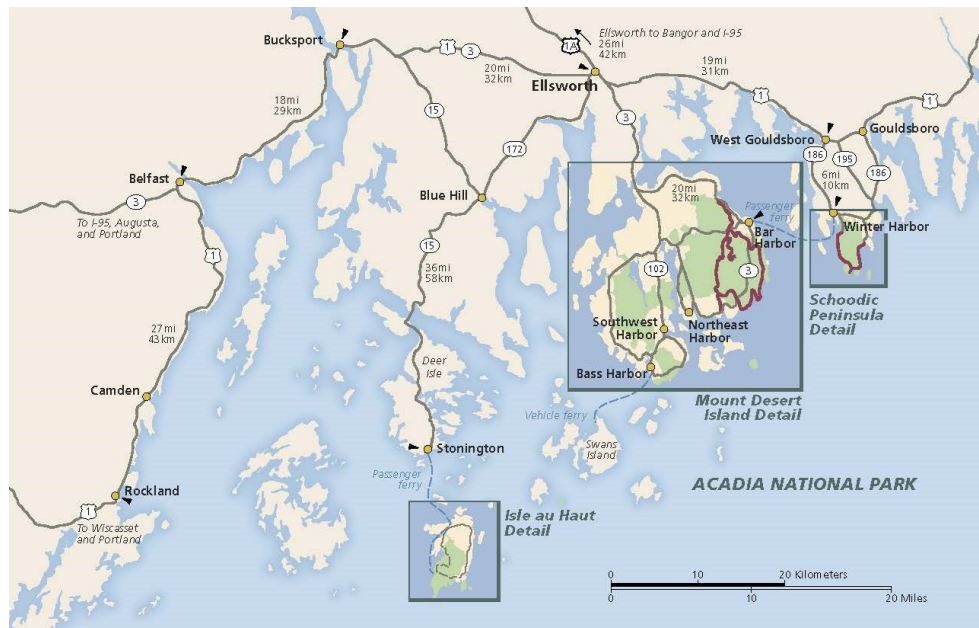
II. Information about Acadia National Park and its Youth Programs.

Acadia National Park's Foundation Document

https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/management/upload/ACAD_FD_2016_508-2017.pdf

provides the following description of the park:

Acadia National Park preserves approximately 50,000 acres in Hancock and Knox Counties in the northeastern United States along the mid-section of the Maine coast. The park consists of portions of Mount Desert Island plus a portion of Isle au Haut to the southwest of Mount Desert Island, the tip of the Schoodic Peninsula on the mainland to the east, and most of or portions of 16 smaller outlying islands.



Map courtesy of the National Park Service. [Nps.gov/acad](https://www.nps.gov/acad)

The park was created to protect the natural beauty of the highest mountains and rocky headlands along the Atlantic shore of the United States. Significant resources include a glaciated coastal and island landscape, an abundance of habitats, a high level of biodiversity, clean air and water, and a rich cultural heritage.

The National Park Service at Acadia offers several ways for young people to engage in the park. These include:

- a. Distance Learning—Rangers connect with classrooms or groups on a variety of topics, such as birds or marine science, designed toward different grade levels.
- b. Field Trips to the Park—Rangers welcome classrooms at the park. The park has developed a variety of programs designed for different grade levels at various sites in the park.
- c. In-depth, Multi-day, Field-based education—The park offers the multi-day Schoodic Education Adventure for middle school students at the Schoodic Education and Research Center. Teachers select programming tied to the Next Generation Science Standards and integrated across the Common Core. Most of the educational experiences are field-based on the Schoodic Peninsula.
- d. Programs in Schools—Park rangers travel to schools within a reasonable distance to conduct education programs.
- e. Festivals—The park capitalizes on dates, such as National Junior Ranger Day or Halloween, to invite young people to come to the park for fun and educational activities.
- f. Public Programming for Families—Acadia offers a junior ranger program that attracts hundreds of families each year.

The park's website <https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/education/index.htm> has more information about these programs. Lesson plans for educators and activities and crafts that support educational activities can also be found there.

III. Information about Friends of Acadia (FOA) and its Support of Youth Programs

Friends of Acadia's mission is to preserve, protect, and promote stewardship of the outstanding natural beauty, ecological vitality, and distinctive cultural resources of Acadia National Park (ANP) and the surrounding communities for the inspiration and enjoyment of current and future generations. Founded in 1986, the organization has approximately 4,200 members who share a common love for Acadia and the desire to give back through philanthropic support, volunteer time, or advocacy.

FOA is an official philanthropic partner of the National Park Service, and one of four pillars in its strategic plan is to “engage youth and future generations as supporters, stewards, and change agents to protect and preserve the park and provide leadership and support to the FOA mission.” There are four sub-sets to this overarching goal that help define what is meant:

1. Support life-long learning as the foundation for building stewardship of Acadia.

2. Provide opportunities for youth to engage with the outdoors and be inspired by places in nature.
3. Educate and engage youth in developing conservation ethics, values, and stewardship behaviors associated with Acadia National Park through a variety of media.
4. Engage more young adults (20-40 years old) as stewards, volunteers, and donors actively involved in FOA.

To meet these objectives, Friends of Acadia invests in a variety of programs in partnership with Acadia National Park and the Schoodic Institute. These programs fall into four programmatic areas:

- a. Family Engagement – FOA runs Acadia Quest, an app-based discovery program designed to encourage families to explore areas of the park.
- b. School Engagement – FOA supports teacher training programs, outdoor classroom grants, school transportation to field trips, the Schoodic Education Adventure, and a portion of the salaries of several NPS education rangers.
- c. Internships – FOA supports internships for teenagers (Acadia Youth Conservation Corps) and college-aged students or early-career professionals (Summit Stewards, Recreation Technicians, Wild Gardens Intern, Stewardship Assistants, Communications and Development Interns, as well as interns employed by other entities, such as the Student Conservation Association and American Conservation Experience).
- d. Volunteerism – FOA welcomes young volunteers with their families or with groups to participate in the trails and carriage roads stewardship activities. FOA also hosts the Earth Day Roadside Clean-up and Take Pride in Acadia Day, which are well-suited to young volunteers.

Descriptions of these programs and FOA's involvement can be found at <https://friendsofacadia.org/our-impact/tomorrows-stewards/>.

IV. Scope of Work

Friends of Acadia is seeking assistance for the following tasks.

- a) Work with a Core Team (FOA's Vice President of Conservation and ANP's Chief of Visitor Experience and Education Division) to develop the objectives and agenda for an in-person workshop to consider current youth engagement programs, weigh potential future programs, prioritize programs, and develop measures of success for implementation.
- b) Convene a multi-day workshop the week of November 18 – 21 or December 2-5, 2024 with Acadia National Park staff and Friends of Acadia staff to develop consensus about youth engagement goals and programs for the next three years.
- c) Develop a process to solicit and integrate input from other stakeholders, such as the Schoodic Institute (for the Schoodic Education Adventure) and schools (for programs that support schools) regarding priorities for youth engagement activities at Acadia.
- d) Work with FOA and partners to develop measures of success for each of the programs or SMART goals according to prioritization.

- e) Provide notes or the basic outline of a strategic plan designed to guide FOA's "Tomorrow's Stewards" pillar through 2028.

FOA welcomes consultants to propose a different approach to this project. The consultants should describe the process they would like to use in their narrative.

V. Budget

Friends of Acadia has budgeted up to \$20,000 for the completion of this project, including all travel expenses.

VI. Timeline

- a) Request for Proposals released August 2, 2024.
- b) Proposals due to Stephanie Clement, Vice President for Conservation, Friends of Acadia by 5:00 p.m. ET on September 13, 2024. E-mail your proposal to stephanie@friendsofacadia.org.
- c) Review of Proposals, including time for interview of finalists: September 2024.
- d) Meeting with Core Team (TBD, October 1 - 15, 2024)
- e) Outreach to partners in preparation for the multi-day workshop (November 1 – 15)
- f) Multi-day Workshop to consider current youth engagement programs, weigh potential future programs, prioritize programs, and develop measures of success for implementation (either the week of November 18 – 21 or December 2-5, 2024)
- g) With the Core Team, assess the next steps after the workshop and develop the workplan and timeline for completion of the project (December 2024 and January 2025)
- h) All notes and the completed plan due by end of January 2025.

VII. What to Include in the Proposal

- a) Description of how you plan to undertake the proposed Scope of Work or an alternative process.
- b) Description of consultant's qualifications, including examples of similar projects.
- c) Detailed budget with travel expenses and daily or hourly rates for the ongoing support as described in the Scope of Work.
- d) Resume/curricula vitae of the consultant(s) involved.
- e) References from other clients.

VIII. Selection Criteria

- Clarity of approach to the project. (30%)
- Demonstrated ability to work successfully with organizations to develop measurable outcomes tied to our goals and/or programs. (30%)
- Knowledge of outdoor education, national parks, and/or youth engagement. (25%)
- Proposed cost. (15%)

IX. Helpful Links

Friends of Acadia website tied to the "Tomorrow's Stewards" pillar:

<https://friendsofacadia.org/our-impact/tomorrows-stewards/>

Acadia National Park website – information regarding education and youth programs:
<https://www.nps.gov/acad/learn/education/index.htm>

X. Questions

All questions may be directed to Stephanie Clement at 207-370-2960 or
stephanie@friendsofacadia.org.