

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS “SCHOOLYARD BOOK SERIES FUND”

LTER Schoolyard Children’s Book Series A program of the Schoolyard LTER Program

Summary

The LTER Schoolyard Book Fund Committee is currently seeking proposals from LTER sites to develop and publish children’s books based on ecosystem research and concepts associated with their LTER site. Funding for up to \$15,000 is available for a children’s book project. This Request for Proposals outlines the goals and objectives of the Fund, procedures for applying, and deadlines and timelines for the project. A two-tiered approach will allow for potential project leaders to vet their project prior to submitting a full proposal. This fund has been set up through the non-profit Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (HBRF) and all funds will be dispersed directly to the participants in the book project (i.e. authors, illustrators, etc) rather than to a specific LTER site. This arrangement will keep overhead costs relatively low, as well as provide a location for any potential donors to make tax-deductible donations directly to the LTER Schoolyard Book Series Fund.

Overall project costs will vary (a range of \$15,000 – \$30,000) and in most cases, projects will require more than the \$15,000 available from the Fund; therefore, proposers can expect to seek funding to supplement this program funding. Note that LTER sites will be eligible for funding for only one book project at any one time.

Background

The LTER network recognizes the importance of outreach to elementary through high school students (K-12) as part of the LTER community at the individual research sites.

The underlying “schoolyard” approach emphasizes the connection to local communities, for which the LTER site can serve as a “schoolyard” for understanding ecology and environmental science. This approach is particularly consistent with the development of empathy for their local environment as a basis for teaching elementary age students. This approach helps students develop an understanding of earth science and ecological concepts in other regions of the world as they mature and gain more abstract reasoning skills.

The design of the Schoolyard Series reflects the overall approach of the Schoolyard Program. In this context, the four themes which are important for development of a children’s book series are:

1. The schoolyard approach that emphasizes the connection to the local community;
2. Reflects ecological concepts, and if possible be interdisciplinary;
3. Long-term perspective consistent with LTER methodology; and
4. A connection to a scientist and/or to scientific questions that are being studied at the LTER site.

Thus, a major objective for the Schoolyard Series is for the children’s book associated with a LTER site to advance the specific Schoolyard program of that LTER site. The second major objective of the Schoolyard Series is to promote greater understanding of ecology and environmental science for children and their families nationwide by production of a high quality children’s book series.

We recognize that while LTER scientists may not be familiar with the process of writing and publishing children's books, they are the best resources for identifying important local, regional, and global scientific issues being studied at LTER sites that could serve as the basis for this important educational opportunity. The LTER Schoolyard Book Fund and Editorial Committees will work with scientists and educators from LTER sites to facilitate the mechanics of the publishing process.

Characteristics of books in the Schoolyard Series

Based on the success and format of *My Water Comes from the Mountains* (Niwot Ridge LTER Site) and *The Lost Seal* (McMurdo Dry Valleys LTER Site), the Schoolyard Series will consist of 9 ¼ x 10 ¼ inch illustrated hardcover books intended for children ages 5-10. Publication of a book in the series represents an opportunity for the LTER site investigators to interpret their sites for their constituents, keeping in mind that arcane or very regional subjects stand less chance of having an educational impact through widespread distribution to libraries and bookstores. Ideally, a book might also have international appeal, increasing the possibility for translated editions that would further spread the LTER site's message.

The books in the Schoolyard Series will be strictly interpretive and not advocate any particular point of view. The books will be suitable for use in a classroom setting, where a teacher may read the story to a class or discuss the story with children after they have read the story themselves. Therefore, a Schoolyard Series book is not the place for anthropomorphism, though authors and illustrators should strive to make the books as pleasurable and accessible as possible. A storyline that connects a character, animal, or situation will be employed to engage the readers and provide a framework for presentation of concepts and findings. The storyline or narrative will have a beginning and an end, and will be based on real environmental relationships, or a real incident or situation. The books will have realistic illustrations and may also incorporate children's artwork and comments.

Because the books are intended as a series, the overall goal is to create continuity in appearance of books. Earlier illustrators, or ones whose art is similar to the earlier books, should be considered to improve the sense of the books as a series and not stand-alone pieces. The Editorial Committee and Publisher can help advise on this aspect of the project.

The mission statement for the Schoolyard Series will be printed on the copyright page of each book, indicating the LTER site's commitment to accuracy in both the text and illustrations. The books will also include a back page describing the LTER Network and a glossary as appropriate for particular stories. See attachments A & B for information about the editorial process and suggestions for linking with local educators.

The LTER sites participating in the Schoolyard Series may also develop curriculum materials to use in the classroom or other educational settings. These curriculum materials can be distributed broadly by publication of teacher's editions of the book containing a compact disc with materials for use by teachers. Depending on the approach, these materials can be tied to state or national educational standards. It may also be appropriate for a particular site to publish a version in another language, e.g., Spanish.

How to Apply

Stages for development of a Schoolyard Series book (see also Table 1)

The stages for development of a book project are outlined below and in Table 1. The committees managing the Schoolyard Book Series Fund will award funding to proposed projects at different stages based on available resources and number of proposals. The maximum amount of funding (Stages 1-3) for any LTER site for a book project is \$15,000. The total cost for each book project will vary, but generally will range from \$15,000-\$30,000, based on the experience of printing the first two books in the series and discussions with the book publisher.. Proposals will be favorably reviewed that present detailed, verifiable budgets. In most cases, supplemental sources of funding will be needed in addition to this schoolyard book fund grant. The type and general amount of support that may be requested from the Schoolyard Book Series Fund at each stage are indicated *Advances to the authors and illustrators will be paid back into the Schoolyard Book Series Fund to support future book projects.* All proposals should include a letter of support from the LTER PI, if not submitted by the PI directly.

There is a close link between requesting funds from the Schoolyard Book Series Fund and approval of the book concept by the Schoolyard Book Series Editorial Committee. Funding requests for Stages 2 & 3 are contingent on approval of the book concept by the Editorial Committee.

STAGE 1

As for any book, a Schoolyard Series book will start with a concept for a book that can be developed into a formal book proposal. Funding at the Stage 1 level is intended for those LTER sites that have a preliminary concept for a book project and need some additional funding for meetings with potential authors/illustrators to develop the idea into a formal concept. Stage 1 proposals may be submitted at any established RFP date. LTER sites that already have a preliminary concept and potential authors and do *not* need to apply for money at this stage may submit their concept directly to the Editorial Committee (see next paragraphs) at any time. All submissions for funding for Stage 1 are made through the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (HBRF) as explained below.

The preliminary concept will be submitted by the book project leader to the Schoolyard Book Series Editorial Committee and the publisher, Moonlight Publications via HBRF, for consideration and comments. A few paragraphs, a maximum of two pages, detailing the idea for the book will be needed at the preliminary review stage (please see above, “Characteristics of a book in the Schoolyard Series”).

If a concept is accepted by the Editorial Committee, the applicant will be informed and may submit a Stage 2 proposal at the next established RFP date. If the concept is not approved, the Editorial Committee will provide comments to assist the LTER site in designing a book that fulfills the mission of the LTER Book Fund. It may be helpful to review proposal scoring rubric – see Attachment D.

Stage 1 potential support requests are normally limited to the costs associated with travel and communications that are necessary as part of the project development process **Examples include:** travel expenses, such as travel by author to meet with site investigators to develop preliminary idea (\$500-\$1000), conference calls, etc. This support is intended to lead to preparation of a preliminary book proposal for review. *A maximum of \$1,000 is permitted for this stage of the project.*

Preliminary proposals should include:

- Brief description of one or several possible themes for the book, including a timeline with expected date for completion of submission of full book concept (2 pages maximum).
- Project budget and any matching funds (use budget form – Attachment C).
- List of project personnel with brief bios.
- Letter of support from LTER PI (if not submitted directly by PI).

STAGE 2

Upon approval by the Editorial Committee of the preliminary book proposal, the LTER scientists and/or educators involved in the book development will prepare a more complete and formal proposal for submission to the Editorial Committee, Moonlight Publishing and the Book Fund Committee at the next established RFP date. A proposal will consist of a draft text manuscript and a plan for introduction of the books to local schools and other educational organizations near the LTER site or in the region (see attachments A and B for guidelines). If children's artwork is to be incorporated in the book and/or an associated website is to be developed, these plans should also be included.

The Editorial Committee and the publisher will review the proposal for content and appropriate material, overall fit within the series, and ensure that the subject matter and presentation is in line with the mission statement for the series. The Committee will then either accept the proposal for inclusion in the publishing plan for the series, or will refer it back to the proposers for further development. The publisher will also review the text for style and content and may recommend further editing by a professional editor prior to proceeding to the layout stage. The publisher will also evaluate example artwork provided by an illustrator already involved in the book proposal, or contact an illustrator whose style is well suited to the narrative of the book.

The Editorial Committee will inform the Book Fund Committee of their decision regarding the full book proposal. If the decision is positive, then the Book Fund Committee will review the proposal and budget request, and will set a schedule, based on current funding flow, for payment of funds. This entire process should take no more than 45 days.

Stage 2 potential support requests for approved book concepts: Advances to author for writing and revising the book (\$1000-\$3000), fees to editor for editing the text with the author (\$1000-\$1500), support for website and/or curriculum design associated with the book (\$2000), advances to the illustrator (\$2000-\$5000), travel, activities associated with testing book concept and drafts in schools. (\$500-\$2000) *A maximum of \$11,500 is permitted for this stage of the project.*

Proposals should include:

- A more fully developed book concept including timeline for the project (3-5 pages).
- Project budget and matching funds. Budget form - Attachment C (Please include schedule of advances payments to author, illustrator, etc.)
- Sample manuscript
- Sample artwork (if artist is known at this time)
- Project personnel (with bios)
- Brief statement regarding potential funding requests for Stage 3.

Stage 3

Once the proposal is recommended by the Editorial Committee, the publisher will work with the book project leader to develop a publication plan. The publisher will establish a publication schedule – see schedule on Attachment A, and all parties are expected to meet the timetable for publication. This stage will include an evaluation of the proposed book for suitability and marketability in the general book trade, and may suggest further revisions. The multi-tiered market for the books will include schools, libraries, and the general book trade, as well as specialty distribution through such outlets as Scholastic Book Clubs, school fairs, and specialty re-binders. Because of funding limitations in most school districts, the publication plan will include a plan for introduction of the series into the educational communities with which the site interacts, such as by distributing books to school libraries and for classroom use and developing curriculum guides for teachers, for example. The proposing site may submit a proposal for funding support for these activities to the Schoolyard Book Series Fund. Generally, a 30-60 day window for completion of the Stage 3 plan (including a detailed publishing and marketing plan) is expected and should be submitted to the Book Fund Committee upon completion.

Stage 3 potential support requests are for activities associated with marketing and distribution of the book, including funds for purchase of books (\$5,000-15,000); developing a plan for distribution (\$500). A maximum of \$15,000 is permitted at this stage.

Stage 3 proposals should include:

- A summary of the book concept, plan for publication and marketing of book as worked out with publisher, and timeline for the project. Please summarize the involvement of local or regional educators with the book development through testing in classrooms, for example, and the plan for distribution of books (via local schools, libraries and other institutions) to complete the site-related outreach component of the book project. (5-8 pages)
- Project budget and matching support (Attachment C)

Please note, a maximum of \$15,000 can be requested for the entire book project (Stages 1-3). If an LTER site only needs funds for Stage 3, this should be noted in the Stage 2 proposal.

Guidelines for requests for support

Requests for Proposals, guidelines and deadlines for submissions will be announced through the LTER Network.

As mentioned above, the themes that should be incorporated into a concept for an LTER children's book include:

1. The schoolyard approach that emphasizes the connection to the local community;
2. Reflects ecological concepts, and if possible be interdisciplinary;
3. Long-term perspective consistent with LTER methodology; and
4. A connection to a scientist and/or to scientific questions that are being studied at the LTER site.

Successful projects should promote a greater understanding of ecology and environmental science for children and their families, and advance the specific Schoolyard Program associated with an LTER site. Please refer to "Characteristics of a book in the Schoolyard Series", above. In addition, a matrix (Attachment D) is included, showing how the project will be evaluated to help LTER teams in their proposal development.

Projects that can be completed within an 18-month cycle will be most favorably reviewed. Project leaders are encouraged (but not required) to seek revenues from external sources, especially to ensure that the books are distributed to a wide audience. In most cases, it is anticipated that additional funding will be needed to complete the project.

Deadlines for funding proposals

Stage 1 Preliminary proposals. Deadlines are **February 29, 2008**, and **October 15, 2008**. Submissions are made electronically to the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (see instructions below). Decisions will be made within 45 days of the announced deadlines.

Stage 2 Full proposals. Deadlines are **February 29, 2008**, and **October 15, 2008**. All Stage 2 proposals must have had their preliminary proposal approved by the Editorial Committee. Submissions are made electronically to the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (see instructions below); sample artwork or other materials may be sent via regular mail. All material will be sent initially to the Editorial Committee via HBRF. Once a project is approved by the Editorial Committee, the Schoolyard Children's Book Fund Committee will review the proposal and budget requests. This process will take no longer than 45 days from the deadline.

Stage 3 Proposal due after marketing plan is designed with the publisher, anticipated within **60 days of approval of Stage 2**.

Where to submit a funding proposal

All submissions may be sent electronically to David Sleeper, Executive Director, Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (dsleeper@hbresearchfoundation.org). Materials that cannot be sent electronically should be mailed to:

Mr. David Sleeper
Hubbard Brook Research Foundation
16 Buck Road
Hanover, NH 03755
Telephone: 603-653-0390 ext 104
(Please alert Mr. Sleeper that materials are coming via regular mail).

Information about the Schoolyard Children's Book Fund and forms will be posted on the LTER web site.

About The Schoolyard Series Book Fund

The Schoolyard Series Book Fund is overseen by a committee with members Monica Elser, Chair (Arizona State University, CAP LTER), Peter Groffman (Institute for Ecosystem Studies, HBR LTER) and Whendee Silver (University of California-Berkeley, LUQ LTER) from the LTER community; and managed by David Sleeper (Hubbard Brook Research Foundation). A member of the LTER Network Office and David Sleeper are ex-officio members of the Committee.

The Hubbard Brook Research Foundation will also manage funds for the series contributed by private donors, which may be individuals or organizations. Donors may provide support for books at any stage, including post-publication for the purpose of distribution of additional books. Donations from individuals must be made through HBRF and will be tax-deductible to the donor.

The Schoolyard Series Editorial Committee is overseen by a committee with members Diane McKnight, Chair (University of Colorado, MCM LTER), Carol Landis (Ohio State University, MCM LTER), Claudia Mills (University of Colorado, children's book author), Amy Rinehart (President, Moonlight Publishing).

Questions may be referred to: Diane McKnight, Diane.McKnight@colorado.edu (book concepts, publishing), and Monica Elser, mmelser@asu.edu (book fund)

See below:

Attachment A: Publishing and Editorial Review Process

Attachment B: Education and Outreach Suggestions

Table 1: A Brief Guide to the Process

ATTACHMENT A
PUBLISHING & EDITORIAL REVIEW PROCESS

I. MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Schoolyard Series is to engage children and their families in learning about the earth's ecosystems, both locally and internationally, through narratives that reflect the dynamic research being conducted at the National Science Foundation's Long-Term Ecological Research Sites

II. THE EDITORIAL REVIEW PROCESS:

The LTER network will establish a Schoolyard Book Series Editorial Committee who will work with Moonlight Publishing in preparing and updating the publishing plan for the series, which will be based on 1-3 books per year.

The formal review process shall begin with a concept paper submitted to the Editorial Committee via HBRF (Stage 1). An LTER site may submit only one concept paper/proposal at any time. The concept paper will consist of 1-2 page description including timeline, a preliminary budget, bios of project personnel, and a letter of support from the LTER PI. If accepted, the project will advance to Stage 2, where a formal proposal will consist of a more fully developed book concept (3-5 pages), timeline, budget form, sample/draft text manuscript, sample artwork (if illustrator is known), bios of project personnel, and a brief statement regarding other sources of funding for the project.

The Editorial Committee will review proposals for content and appropriate material, and ensure that the subject matter and presentation is in line with the mission statement for the series. The Committee will then accept or reject a proposal for inclusion on the publishing plan for the series. If a proposal is rejected but the board feels that with some re-working it could be accepted for publication at a later date, the Editorial Committee will recommend appropriate changes.

Once the Stage 2 proposal is recommended by the Editorial Committee, the project will advance to Stage 3, where the publisher (Moonlight Publishing) will evaluate the proposed book for suitability and marketability in the general book trade, and may suggest further revisions. Once the publisher accepts the book proposal based on suitability, an estimate of the support required for publishing the proposed book will be prepared. This estimate will consider the plans from the proposing site for purchasing books for distribution to participating local or regional educational organizations. Moonlight Publishing will make all vendor decisions for each project.

Stage 3 requires a summary of the book concept, a plan for introduction of the books to local schools and other educational organizations near the LTER site or in the region, budget and a plan for supplementing funding if needed. If children's artwork is to be incorporated in the book, a plan for that activity and integration with the LTER site's website should be included.

A more detailed description of the potential funding for the above process is outlined in the LTER Schoolyard Book Series RFP.

The LTER Children's Book Series Fund Committee will be informed of the decisions by the publishers and Editorial Committee. The Book Fund Committee will award funding to the proposed project based on available resources and other proposals. The budget estimate from the

publishers will also be taken into account and large disparities between the publisher's estimate and the LTER site's initial budget estimates may require the LTER site to submit a new budget.

III. PUBLISHING PROCESS AND EXECUTION

After the Editorial Committee and Moonlight Publishing accept a project for placement on the publishing plan, Moonlight Publishing will evaluate what publishing season and year to publish the book in, add the title to the publishing plan, and draft a schedule accordingly. Schedule dates can only be upheld if all materials are turned in on time and all parties agree to hold to all schedule dates that involve their participation. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator or co-principal investigators for the participating LTER site to ensure that the schedule is met.

Fall Publishing Schedule:

January 1: receipt of manuscript and art

February 15: Author review of edited manuscript and queries from copyeditor

March 1: Final copyedited manuscript returned to Moonlight

April 1: Author/Illustrator review of page proofs from designer

May 15: Final pages and files from designer

June 1: Ship files to printer

July 1: Color corrections

August 1: Books Print

September 15: Books in warehouse

Spring Publishing Schedule:

June 1: receipt of manuscript and art

July 15: Author review of edited manuscript and queries from copyeditor

August 1: Final copyedited manuscript returned to Moonlight

September 1: Author/Illustrator review of page proofs from designer

October 15: Final pages and files from designer

November 1: Ship files to printer

December 1: Color corrections

January 1: Books Print

February 15: Books in warehouse

The schedules outlined above may vary due to sales and marketing opportunities for individual titles, but the timelines will be consistent.

ATTACHMENT B
LTER CHILDREN'S BOOK SERIES: EDUCATION OUTREACH SUGGESTIONS

- I. LTER sites inherently fall into three categories based on population density. These categories affect the ways sites will interact with school districts in introducing this children's book series.
 - A. Remote sites: Sites located in low population areas with few opportunities for collaboration with local schools.
 - B. Rural sites: Sites located in a rural setting, often associated with National Forest lands.
 - C. Urban sites: Sites located in or near areas with high population density.

- II. Alignment with Curriculum Frameworks and Local Schools: In order to facilitate use of the book series in classrooms, and to increase marketability of the series in the schools, we suggest that LTER education representatives, who intend to create a book, initiate communication with district personnel/teachers prior to submitting a proposal.
 - A. Remote sites are encouraged to link content with National Science Education Standards: <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/nse/html/> These sites will not be required to contact local school personnel, but some effort will be needed to ensure that book content is appropriate for the target audience.
 - B. Rural sites are encouraged to link content with state and/or local curriculum frameworks. Contact with local schools is encouraged but may be limited by the resources and interest on the part of the local school district.
 - C. Urban sites are required to link content with state and local curriculum frameworks. These sites, in particular, must demonstrate contact with, and support from local schools before a proposal will be considered. If there is a large student population for whom English is a second language, the site may consider having a plan to publish the book in both English and a second language, such as Spanish.

- III. Supplementary Activities/Resource Materials: Feedback from school teachers connected with the Niwot Ridge LTER site and its completed children's book has indicated that this book series will be enhanced by development of a teachers' guide. Because different sites will have various levels of logistical support, we have outlined three levels of supplementary materials that sites may choose to develop.
 - A. Reference Sheet: One or two pages listing currently available published activity guides and/or background information to help teachers improve student comprehension of book themes.
 - B. Website posting: Inclusion of reference sheet on individual LTER site web pages. This could also include providing links to relevant resources available on the web, especially within LTER network.
 - C. Teachers' Manual: Sites with available logistic support are highly recommended to produce a teacher's manual to accompany the children's book for their site. Manuals can be developed in collaboration with local teachers to ensure relevance to local curriculum and increase use of these books as school resources.

Table 1: **LTER Children’s Book Series—A Brief Guide to the Process**

(Note: All submissions for funding are made via the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation)

Process	Book Fund	Submit proposal to:	Time-line
Stage 1: Develop a preliminary book concept	May ask for travel and communication expenses (<\$1000) to support development of book concept	For Funding: Submit preliminary proposal to Book Fund Committee (Feb 29, Oct 15) For Approval of Concept: Submit Preliminary Concept to Editorial Committee (any time): One page detailing the idea should be sufficient	Request for Funding: 30 days after submittal Review by Editorial Committee: 30 days after submittal—only preliminary proposals accepted by the editorial committee may proceed to stage 2.
Stage 2A: Preliminary Concept accepted by Editorial Committee; Development of a complete and formal proposal	May ask for funds for author (<\$3000), and editor (<\$1500)	For Funding & Approval: Submit formal proposal covering stages 2A & 2B, includes some ideas for Stage 3 to Book Fund Committee (Feb 29 & Oct 15)	Proposal forwarded to Editorial Committee for review. Book Fund Committee, when notified of approval, will review budget requests. Entire process should take no longer than 45 days after deadline.
Stage 2B: Publisher and Editorial Committee will establish publishing time-line and evaluate artwork	May ask for funds for illustrator (<\$5000); May ask for funds for developing website and/or curricular material (<\$2000)	see above	Publisher will provide editorial & artwork review prior to final layout stage. Funding: approved funds will be dispersed directly to appropriate people (i.e. author, illustrator) as dictated by the publisher’s timeline
Stage 3: Publisher will work with book project leader to develop publication & marketing plan	May ask for funds to purchase books, and develop and initiate a distribution plan (<\$15,000)	For Funding: Submit request for funds to the Book Fund Committee after developing a publication plan with the publisher	Publisher will complete publishing and start marketing. Funding: notification 30 days after plan approved by publisher. Approved funds will be dispersed directly to publisher.