

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
“SCHOOLYARD BOOK SERIES FUND”

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

Mission

The mission of the LTER Schoolyard Children’s Book 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.

Summary

The LTER Schoolyard Children’s Book Fund is currently seeking proposals from LTER sites to develop and publish children’s books based on ecosystem research and concepts associated with that site, geared for students ages 5–10. This Request for Proposals (RFP) outlines the goals and objectives of the LTER Schoolyard Children’s Book Fund (Fund) and procedures for applying. A maximum of \$15,000 is available for a book project. A two-tiered approach will allow for potential project leaders to vet their project prior to submitting a full proposal. Project leaders should be aware that projects range in cost (\$15,000–30,000) so that in most cases, additional funding should be sought. LTER sites will be eligible for funding for only one book project at any one time, and each project must be supported by the site PI or Co-PI. Please read the guidelines below carefully to ensure that your project meets the Fund’s criteria.

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 studied at LTER sites that serve as the basis for this important educational opportunity. The Fund and Publisher (Moonlight Publishing) will work with scientists and educators from LTER sites to facilitate the mechanics of the publishing process.

The Fund has been set up through the nonprofit 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.

The next deadline for proposals at all stages is **Friday, April 24, 2009**. Note that there will only be one grant cycle in 2009.

Background

The LTER Network’s Schoolyard Program (<http://schoolyard.lternet.edu>) recognizes the importance of outreach to elementary through high school students (K-12) as part of the LTER community at 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 the local environment as a basis for teaching elementary age students,

and 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 children's book series reflects this approach. In this context, the four themes which are important for development of a children's book are:

1. Connection to the local community;
2. Reflection of interdisciplinary ecological concepts;
3. Long-term perspective consistent with LTER methodology; and
4. A connection to a scientist(s) 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.

Characteristics of books in the Schoolyard Series

The Schoolyard Series will consist of 9¼ x 10¼ 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. A book project should have broad appeal to national and international audiences. For this reason, arcane or very regional subjects stand less chance of having an education impact through widespread distribution to libraries and bookstores.

Books should be strictly interpretive and not advocate any particular point of view. They should 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. A Schoolyard Series book is not the place for anthropomorphism (e.g., talking animals) though authors and illustrators should strive to make the books as pleasurable and accessible as possible, including elements of excitement and discovery. A storyline that connects a character, animal, or situation should be employed to engage the readers and provide a framework for presentation of concepts and findings. The 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 Fund and Publisher can help advise on this aspect of the project.

Successful completed books:

[*My Water Comes from the Mountains*](#) (Niwot Ridge LTER Site). [Order here](#)

[*The Lost Seal*](#) (McMurdo Dry Valleys LTER Site). [Order here](#)

[*Sea Secrets*](#) (California Currents Ecosystem and Palmer State LTER site). [Order here](#)

Connection to Community

Because of the LTER Schoolyard Program's commitment to local communities, book projects should include a plan for introduction of the books to local schools and other educational organizations near the LTER site or in the region (see suggestions in Attachment B). Book project staff will want to establish working relationships with educators in the early stages of their project. Book projects may include the development of curriculum materials to use in the classroom or other educational settings, such as teacher's editions distributed on CD or on-line. Web-based projects may include ongoing input by local students and their teachers. Depending on the approach, these materials may 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.

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.

HOW TO APPLY

The stages for development of a book project are outlined below and in Table 1. Funding will be awarded based on available resources and number of proposals. The maximum amount of funding from the Fund for any one 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 books in the series. In most cases, supplemental sources of funding will be needed. Proposals must include detailed, verifiable budgets. It is expected that budgets for projects at the concept level may need adjustment as the project develops, with the assistance of the Fund and the Publisher. The type and amount of support that may be requested at each stage is 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. All requests, at any level, are made through the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (HBRF) which will coordinate communications on behalf of the grantee and grantor (see contact information below).

The Three Proposal Stages

Overview:

Stage 1: Concept submission. All projects must begin with an approved concept (see below for instructions). Submission deadline applies if planning funding is requested. If you are not seeking funding at this stage, your concept may be submitted anytime.*

Stage 2: Full proposal. Must have approved concept. Deadline applies.

Stage 3: Publication Plan. To be established with help from the Publisher.

STAGE 1 (Maximum request at this level: \$1,000)

A Schoolyard Series Book project will start with a concept 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

* Note that the Committee will make every effort to review concept proposals outside of the funding cycle as soon as possible, but in some cases, a concept may not be reviewed for 90-120 days.

concept for a book project and need some additional funding for meetings with team members (scientists, authors) to develop the idea into a formal proposal for Stage 2 level funding. Stage 1 proposals may be submitted at any established RFP date. LTER sites that already have a preliminary concept and do *not* need to apply for money at this stage may submit their concept at any time.

If a concept is accepted, 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 Fund will provide comments to assist the LTER site in designing a book that more closely fits the guidelines. It may be helpful to review the proposal scoring rubric (see Attachment D).

Stage 1 requests are normally limited to the costs associated with travel and communications that are necessary as part of the project planning and development process. **Examples include:** travel expenses, such as travel by author to meet with site investigators to develop preliminary idea (\$500-\$1,000), 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 (1-2 pages). Please describe any established or preliminary interactions (if any) with local schools, educators or other institutions which will be a likely outlet for the book.
- Preliminary 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 (Maximum request at this level: \$11,500)

Upon approval of the book concept, the project will advance to Stage 2, where a more formal proposal will be prepared for submission at the next established RFP date. A proposal will consist of a more fully developed book concept (3-5 pages), timeline, budget, sample/draft text manuscript, sample artwork (if artist has been determined), bios of project personnel and a plan for introduction of the books to local schools and other educational organizations near the LTER site or in the region (see Attachment B for suggestions). 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 Fund and the Publisher will review the proposal for content, appropriate material, and overall fit within the series, and ensure that the subject matter and presentation is in line with the mission statement for the series. If a proposal is not accepted, but the Fund feels that with some re-working it could be acceptable, the Fund will recommend appropriate changes. If accepted, 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. 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 (\$1,000-\$3,000), fees to editor for editing the text with the author (\$1,000-\$1,500), support for website and/or curriculum design associated with the book (\$2,000), advances to the illustrator (\$2,000-\$5,000), travel, activities associated with testing book concept and drafts in schools (\$500-\$2,000). *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 advance payments to author, illustrator, etc.).
- Plan for introduction of books to local school or education institution.
- Sample manuscript.
- Sample artwork (if artist is known at this time).
- Project personnel (with bios).
- Brief statement regarding potential outside funding sources.

STAGE 3 (Maximum request: \$15,000 minus amount requested at Stage 1 and 2)

Once the Stage 2 proposal is recommended, the Publisher will work with the book project leader to develop a publication and marketing 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. These costs may be included in Stage 3 proposals. 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 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 (minus amounts requested at Stages 1 and 2).*

Stage 3 proposals should include (5-8 pages):

- A summary of the book concept.
- Plan and timeline for publication and marketing of book as worked out with publisher.
- Budget, and a plan for supplementing funding if needed (use Attachment C).
- Summary of 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.
- 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.

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:

5. Connection to the local community;
6. Reflection of interdisciplinary ecological concepts;
7. Long-term perspective consistent with LTER methodology; and
8. A connection to a scientist(s) and/or to scientific questions that are being studied at the LTER site.

Please refer to "Characteristics of a Book in the Schoolyard Series" above. In addition, a rubric (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 (concept) proposals. Deadline is **April 24, 2009**. Submissions are made electronically to the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (see instructions below). Decisions will be made within 45 days of the announced deadlines. The deadline does not apply if no funding is requested.

Stage 2

Full proposals. Deadline is **April 24, 2009**. All Stage 2 proposals must have had their preliminary proposal approved by the Fund. Submissions are made electronically to the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (see instructions below); sample artwork or other materials may be sent via regular mail. 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 Committees

The Schoolyard Series Book Fund is overseen by a Funding Committee with members Monica Elser, Chair (Arizona State University, CAP LTER; mmelser@asu.edu), 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 Schoolyard Series Editorial Committee is comprised of Diane McKnight, Chair (University of Colorado, MCM LTER; Diane.McKnight@colorado.edu), Carol Landis (Ohio State University, MCM LTER), Claudia Mills (University of Colorado, children's book author), and Amy Rinehart (President, Moonlight Publishing).

Judy Brown at the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation coordinates proposals and administers the Fund, and welcomes questions (and suggestions) about the process and payments: jbrown@hbresearchfoundation.org or 603-653-0390 ext 102.

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.

Attachments and related materials:

Attachment A: Publishing process and calendar
Attachment B: Education outreach suggestions
Table 1: Snapshot of proposal process
Attachment C: Budget forms: Spreadsheets (see Sheet Tabs at bottom for appropriate Stage)
Attachment D: Scoring Rubric

ATTACHMENT A PUBLISHING PROCESS

PUBLISHING PROCESS AND EXECUTION

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.

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

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

dsleeper@hbresearchfoundation.org

Maximum amount of funding for any one project is \$15,000.

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 (April 24, 2009) For Approval of Concept: Submit Preliminary Concept to Fund at any time. 1-2 pages detailing the idea should be sufficient	Request for Funding: 30 days after submittal Review by Editorial Committee: 30 days after submittal—only preliminary (concept) 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 (April 24, 2009)	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.