

## ATTACHMENT 1.1

### ENVIRONMENTAL TRAVELING COMPANIONS

**Project:** Youth LEAD and Shared Adventures Programs

**Recommended Funding:** \$150,000

**Location:** Various locations across the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin).

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#### Overview

##### Background

Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC) seeks to make outdoor adventures accessible to people with disabilities and under-resourced youth to inspire self-confidence, connection to nature, and environmental stewardship. ETC has served over 100,000 participants in its nearly 50-year history of working in California, and fulfills its mission through whitewater rafting, cross-country skiing, and kayaking trips throughout northern California, including at Lake Tahoe. Most participants live in the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento areas.

ETC's youth curriculum is specially targeted to support under-resourced students with a wide range of personal experiences and knowledge or comfort level around outdoor activities. Most participants have never camped or spent a significant amount of time outdoors, many are non-swimmers, and most have not previously participated in wilderness adventure sports. ETC's goal is to meet the participants where they are and to create teachable moments. Age-appropriate and culturally relevant social-emotional learning is a core part of the Youth LEAD Program curriculum.

Staff evaluated ETC's grant application based on the criteria described within the California Tahoe Conservancy's (Conservancy) Grant Guidelines, which includes analysis of the project's consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan. In addition, staff used the concepts of the California Outdoors for All Strategy when reviewing the application. Staff considered the number of participants from underserved groups, the extent to which the project reduces barriers for underserved people to access Lake Tahoe, and the extent to which the project provides long-term positive impacts on participants. At Lake Tahoe, underserved groups include people of color, people with physical disabilities, people with cognitive or emotional disabilities, low-income individuals or families, English language learners, and formerly incarcerated individuals.

##### Detailed Description

1. Major Elements and/or Steps

The recommended grant award supports staff planning, implementation costs including rentals and fees, and participant scholarships for two programs over three years.

- Youth LEAD (Leadership, Environment, Adventure, Diversity) Program: This program consists of an intensive 14- to 21-day outdoor adventure and education course for under-resourced 14–18-year-olds. Participants learn leadership skills, healthy living habits, and stewardship ethics while backpacking at Lake Tahoe, sea kayaking in the Bay Area, and whitewater rafting the American River. Over 80 percent of instructors are people of color. ETC anticipates serving 45–60 participants annually. At least 80 percent of participants qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch programs and at least 80 percent will be people of color.
- Shared Adventures Program: This program focuses on teaching safe paddling skills to people with physical and emotional disabilities while participating on a four-day kayaking trip at Emerald Bay. ETC anticipates serving 10-12 participants annually. Participants will be a mix of people with disabilities and able-bodied paddlers. The able-bodied paddlers are caretakers for those with disabilities.

## 2. Overall Context and Benefits

This grant provides a unique opportunity to support programs for people who live outside of the Basin and who may not otherwise have the opportunity to visit the region. ETC's programs take participants to several iconic California landscapes: the Pacific coast, streams and rivers, and Lake Tahoe. All these places are expensive and intimidating to access for many Californians.

The grant expands ETC's participant scholarship program. ETC offers scholarships on a sliding-scale basis with the majority of participants paying nothing or minimal tuition fees. This grant helps ETC move closer to its goal of serving everyone, regardless of financial limitations.

The grant also provides stability for program staffing. Providing three years of secured funding helps ETC strategically plan programs and staffing needs, ultimately leading to more impactful programs.

### 3. Schedule

The grant supports the programs described above beginning in spring 2024 and running through calendar year 2026.

#### **Financing**

This grant is funded by General Fund monies. The majority of the recommended grant supports participant scholarships for the Youth LEAD and Shared Adventure programs. The grant also supports personnel costs for program development, field instruction, and programmatic evaluation.

Conservancy funding leverages an additional \$145,000 from other grants and private foundations.

ETC's funding request reflects only program activities that occur at Lake Tahoe. Conservancy funding will not be used for program elements that occur outside of the Basin.

Staff recommends the grant budget as shown below. The budget may be adjusted among line items, but total expenditures under this grant will not exceed \$150,000.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Youth LEAD Program: planning and implementation	\$52,000
Youth LEAD Program: scholarships	\$93,000
Shared Adventure Program: planning and implementation	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>

#### **Authority**

##### **Consistency with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan**

The recommended action advances Strategic Plan Goal 3 to provide public access and outdoor recreation for all communities because it supports free and low-cost outdoor programs for under-resourced youth and people with disabilities. The recommended action also supports Strategic Plan Goal 6 to promote racial equity and help make the Basin a safe and welcoming place for all because ETC's programs provide a safe and culturally inclusive environment for participants to recreate outdoors at Lake Tahoe.

#### **Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act**

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.), certain classes of activities are statutorily exempt from CEQA or are exempt because they have been determined by the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency to have no significant effect on the environment. Staff has evaluated this grant and has found it to be exempt under CEQA. The authorization of this grant qualifies for a categorical exemption under CEQA Guidelines section 15301 – Existing Facilities. Staff has prepared a notice of exemption (NOE) (see Attachment 1.3). If the Board approves this grant, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, section 15062.

### **List of Attachments**

Attachment 1.2 – Resolution 23-12-02

Attachment 1.3 – Notice of Exemption

- Exhibit A – Location Map