



## World Wildlife-Heritage Museum

### School Bus Fund — Eligibility & Program Guidelines

#### Program Purpose

The World Wildlife-Heritage Museum is committed to providing meaningful educational experiences to students and making those experiences accessible to schools that may face financial or transportation barriers.

The **School Bus Fund** has been established to assist qualifying schools with the cost of transportation for educational field trips to the Museum. Depending on eligibility, and available funding, the Museum may provide **partial or full financial assistance toward approved school bus transportation costs**.

Admission to the Museum is provided **free of charge**.

Because funding is limited, the Museum has established eligibility requirements, annual limits, and a priority system to ensure that available funds are distributed fairly and support schools with the greatest needs.

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#### 1. Eligibility

To be considered for School Bus Fund assistance, a school must meet the Museum's established eligibility requirements.

Eligible schools include:

- Public schools
- Charter schools
- Qualifying nonprofit or private schools
- Schools serving students in grades K–12
- Other educational institutions approved by the Museum on a case-by-case basis

The Museum may establish geographic, educational, financial, or other requirements from time to time based on available funding and program objectives.



**Meeting the basic eligibility requirements does not guarantee transportation funding.** All requests are subject to review, approval, and available program funds.

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## **2. Educational Purpose**

The requested field trip must have a legitimate educational purpose and be aligned with the Museum's educational programs, exhibits, collections, and mission.

The Museum may give priority to field trips that:

- Support classroom curriculum or educational standards
  - Provide meaningful hands-on or experiential learning
  - Serve students who have limited access to educational enrichment opportunities
  - Align with the Museum's educational mission and programming
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## **3. Financial Need**

Because the purpose of the School Bus Fund is to reduce transportation barriers, schools may be asked to provide information regarding their transportation needs.

Factors that may be considered include:

- The school's available field trip transportation budget
- Whether district or school transportation funding is available
- The cost of transportation relative to the school's available resources
- Whether the cost of transportation would prevent or substantially limit the school from participating
- Whether the school is able to contribute a portion of the transportation cost

Schools experiencing the greatest transportation-related financial need will generally receive the highest priority.

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#### **4. Priority Considerations**

When requests exceed available funding, the Museum may prioritize applications using the following considerations:

##### **Highest Priority**

- Schools demonstrating significant financial or transportation need
- Title I schools or schools serving a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students
- Schools with limited or no district funding available for field trip transportation
- Schools for which transportation costs would otherwise prevent the field trip from taking place

##### **Moderate Priority**

- Schools with limited transportation budgets
- Schools that can contribute toward transportation but require additional financial assistance

##### **General Priority**

- Other qualifying schools that meet the Museum's eligibility requirements and are requesting assistance, subject to available funding

The Museum reserves the right to consider additional circumstances when determining priority.

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#### **5. Annual Field Trip Limit**

To ensure that the School Bus Fund serves a broad range of schools and remains financially sustainable:

**Each eligible school may receive School Bus Fund assistance for a maximum of two (2) field trips per school year.**

The Museum may, at its discretion, approve additional transportation assistance in exceptional circumstances when funding is available.



A school may continue to schedule additional field trips to the Museum beyond its annual transportation-funding limit; however, those additional trips will not ordinarily be eligible for School Bus Fund assistance. Such decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The annual limit applies to the **school**, rather than to individual teachers, classrooms, grades, or departments within the school.

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## 6. Amount of Assistance

The Museum may provide either **partial or full assistance** toward the approved cost of school bus transportation.

The amount of assistance will be determined based on the following factors:

- Demonstrated financial need, as reflected in the priority considerations established in Section 4
- Available School Bus Fund resources
- Number of requests received
- Number of field trips previously funded for the school during the school year
- Transportation cost

The Museum does not guarantee that it will pay the full transportation cost.

When appropriate, the Museum may ask the school to contribute a portion of the transportation expense.

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## 7. Application

Schools interested in receiving School Bus Fund assistance should contact the Museum's Registration Coordinator when scheduling their field trip.

The school will be asked to provide:

- School name and contact information



- Grade level and number of students
- Requested field trip date
- Number of students and chaperones
- Information regarding transportation needs
- Transportation estimate from the school's bus provider
- Information necessary to determine eligibility and financial need

The Museum will review the request and notify the school whether it has been approved for School Bus Fund assistance.

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## 8. Approval

School Bus Fund assistance, whether partial or full, **is not confirmed until the school receives written approval from the Museum.** Upon approval, you will receive written confirmation outlining the terms of the approval including:

- Field trip date
  - Teacher's name
  - Bus company name
  - Dollar amount the Museum will cover
  - Signature of an authorized Museum representative
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## 9. Transportation Arrangements

The school remains responsible for following its school or district procedures for arranging transportation.

The school should:

1. Contact its approved school bus provider.
2. Obtain a written transportation estimate.
3. Submit the estimate to the Museum's Registration Coordinator.



4. Wait for written confirmation of School Bus Fund approval before assuming that the Museum will pay the expense.

When approved, the Museum will pay the transportation provider directly upon receipt of a final invoice.

The Museum will not be responsible for transportation expenses that were incurred without prior written approval.

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## **10. Funding Availability**

The School Bus Fund is a limited annual program and is subject to annual budget allowances.

The Museum reserves the right to:

- Establish an annual funding limit
- Limit the number of schools or field trips receiving assistance
- Establish maximum transportation awards
- Reduce or partially fund individual requests
- Prioritize applications based on need
- Temporarily suspend the program when available funds have been exhausted

**Approval in one school year does not guarantee funding in subsequent school years.**

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## **11. Geographic Considerations**

The Museum may establish geographic eligibility requirements based on the availability of funding and the Museum's educational outreach objectives.

Schools located within the Museum's designated service area may receive priority. Requests from schools outside the designated service area may be considered when funding and program capacity allow.

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## 12. Changes and Exceptions

The World Wildlife-Heritage Museum reserves the right to modify these guidelines as necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the School Bus Fund.

The Museum may make exceptions to individual eligibility requirements when circumstances warrant and when doing so is consistent with the Museum's mission and available resources.

All exceptions must receive appropriate Museum approval.

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## 13. Program Philosophy

The School Bus Fund is intended to **expand access to the Museum and remove transportation as a barrier to educational opportunity.**

The Museum's goal is to partner with schools and educators in a manner that is fair, transparent, and sustainable while prioritizing students and schools with the greatest need.

Through responsible management of the School Bus Fund, the Museum seeks to provide meaningful educational experiences to as many students and schools as possible each school year.

**The School Bus Fund is a program of the World Wildlife-Heritage Museum and is subject to available funding and the Museum's current policies and guidelines.**

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