



# **CHARACTER AT CAMP GRANT PROGRAM**

Implementation Grant Application Packet

Spring 2026

Dear Camp Leader,

Welcome to ACA's Character at Camp Grant Program! Whether you are a seasoned camp leader or new to the field, we are glad you are considering applying for a grant to support character development at camp. This packet includes background information about character and the grant program, details about eligibility and how to apply, and a copy of the Implementation Grant Application.

The purpose of this program is to provide financial support, training, and technical assistance for organizations starting new character development programs, those enhancing or expanding existing programs, and those celebrating character at camp through communications, development, and/or community partnerships. By the end of the Character at Camp initiative, we anticipate camps in the United States will represent one of the largest and most potent contexts for character development in the learning and development ecosystem.

Eligible organizations can apply for a Planning Grant, an Implementation Grant, or a Network Implementation Grant. To help you decide which is right for your organization, here is a quick overview of each grant pathway:

| Pathway           | Planning Grant                                                                                                                                         | Implementation Grant                                                                                                                                                | Network Grant                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Who Should Apply? | Organizations that need a year of planning, training, and capacity building before they can develop and implement a full character program or project. | Organizations that have a specific character program or project in mind and sufficient capacity to successfully implement that program or project starting in 2027. | Organizations that serve as the coordinating entity for 6+ camps that are eager to plan and implement a character program or project with their on-site program teams |
| Duration          | One year                                                                                                                                               | Two or three years                                                                                                                                                  | One year for planning (if applicable); three years for implementation                                                                                                 |
| Funding Amount    | Up to \$50,000                                                                                                                                         | For three-year grants, the maximum funding request is \$300,000.<br>For two-year grants, ACA's guidance is to request funding up to \$200,000.                      | Up to \$300,000 for a three-year Network Implementation Grant                                                                                                         |

The information that follows outlines the **Implementation Grant** application process. You can find the packets specific to the Planning Grant program and the Network Grant program on the [Character Grant Program](#) web page. After determining your camp's eligibility to apply for a Character at Camp grant, you should carefully consider which grant pathway is the best fit and apply for that grant. You'll find additional details on each grant pathway as well as resources — such as recordings of informational webinars, FAQs, grant program timeline, and access info for office hours with ACA's grantee success team — on the [Character Grant Program](#) web page.

On behalf of ACA's Character at Camp Grant Team, thank you for the work you do to support character development among the campers and staff you serve. Whether you apply for and receive a grant or expand your understanding of character at camp through ACA's [Character Academy](#), we are glad you are joining us in this work. Only together can we reach our ambitious goal of elevating camp as an expansive and effective context for character development.

Onward,



Brian Massey  
Director of Innovation  
American Camp Association

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## Background

The American Camp Association (ACA) represents a community of camp professionals who share in the mission to create quality camp experiences that build a world of belonging and growth. Our work includes a national accreditation program, in-person and virtual opportunities for professional development and connectedness, research, and support for local, state, and federal advocacy — all fueled by a vast community of volunteers, thought leaders, affiliate partners, and collaborators. The [Character at Camp Grant Program](#) is part of a six-year initiative funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc. that is designed to increase and expand character development programs at camps in the United States.

For over a century, day and overnight camps in the US have fostered character among young people through a diverse array of programs, facilities, and camper populations. While each camp is unique, most share common features such as an immersive setting, supportive relationships with peers and adults, opportunities for fun and challenging activities, and support for reflection and personal growth. ACA's [National Camp Impact Study](#) demonstrated that, together, these features promote campers' growth in ways that last over time and transfer to other settings, such as school and early work experiences. What's more, findings from ACA's recently released [Economic Impact Study](#) suggest the size of the camp industry — which exceeds 20,000 day and overnight camps — is more expansive than previously thought.

We also know that young people today are experiencing loneliness, isolation, and divisiveness within their schools and communities, which is why opportunities for young people to contribute to and thrive within these places are more important than ever before. Fostering character development in young people is increasingly important, and camps in the US are well positioned to do this. Thus, the Character at Camp Grant Program provides grant support for starting, improving, expanding, and celebrating character development initiatives at camp.

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## What Is Character?

Character itself can be defined in different ways, but one commonly used definition in the field of youth development is best stated by [Character Lab](#): “The intentions and actions that benefit both the individual and others.” With this example of a broad definition of character in mind, we encourage organizations interested in applying to the grant program to think about the specific character strengths they are focused on, such as strengths of heart (e.g., empathy, kindness), strengths of mind (e.g., curiosity, creativity), and strengths of will (e.g., grit, self-control), and to submit proposals that focus on one or more specific strengths. While applicants will not be prioritized based on the character strengths they choose to focus on, we see a particular need for opportunities for young people to practice and cultivate honesty and integrity and thus encourage camps to consider if/how their camp might be positioned to focus in this area.

When considering if your organization should apply and what specific initiative you should request funding for from the Character at Camp Grant Program, we encourage teams to ensure they understand how character is defined and developed in youth development contexts like camp. To learn more about character development, we suggest that applicants check out any of the following widely used character resources:

- The [Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues](#) is a leading research center focused on character, virtues, and values in the interest of human flourishing. They've created [frameworks](#) for character education that can be used by all educators, and they produce influential [research](#) that shapes how institutions think about character development.

- [Character.org](#) is an organization comprised of educators, researchers, and business and civic leaders who advocate for character. Their [11 Principles Framework](#) is a guide to cultivating character in your organization. They [support educators](#) of all kinds to help them develop comprehensive character initiatives.
- [Character Lab](#) connected researchers with educators to create greater knowledge about the conditions that lead to social, emotional, academic, and physical well-being for young people throughout the country. Their [playbooks](#) are research-based guides to cultivating character, including recommended curricula, videos, and books. Their [tips](#) give actionable advice that all educators can use to enhance their work. While Character Lab has concluded their research, their existing resources continue to be available through their website.
- The [VIA Institute on Character](#) has developed the groundbreaking [Character Strengths Survey](#), a scientifically validated assessment designed specifically to measure the 24 core character strengths in individuals. Nearly 35 million surveys have been taken around the world, and VIA supports the advancement of character science through research, personalized reports, books, and more.

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## Who Is Eligible to Apply for a Character at Camp Grant

Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations that are physically located in the United States and are exempt from tax under Internal Revenue Code (Code) section 501(c)(3) or are a government/municipal organization. Organizations that are exempt from tax under Code section 501(c)(3) must also be public charities under Code section 509(a)(1) (which incorporates Code sections 170(b)(1)(A)(i)-(vi)), 509(a)(2), or (509)(a)(3) Type I or Type II). Tax-exempt religious organizations (e.g., churches and church-related entities) are eligible to apply so long as they are Code section 501(c)(3) public charities.

Additionally, applicants must represent an organization that currently offers day and/or overnight camp programming, which means that **all** of the following criteria must apply:

- The organization delivers camp programs and/or provides camp facilities/services for other camp programs consistent with [ACA's mission and values](#). Organizations operating at multiple sites and organizations offering camp programming on rented or leased sites are eligible to apply.
- The organization currently offers programs and/or services that serve campers for at least one full session of three or more consecutive days during summer and/or non-summer months. Camps can apply for funds to start new programs if they serve campers according to these criteria in some other capacity. Camps offering sessions in a format other than three or more consecutive days can apply if they can justify in their application why it makes sense for their population for the camp session to be shorter and that they can still accomplish their proposed outcomes in that time.
- The organization is based in the US, and the camp programs for which the applicant is applying are primarily run in the US.
- The camp program(s) for which the applicant is applying for a grant has a primary audience of campers five years and older. Applicants proposing projects that focus on adult participants must demonstrate the developmental focus (e.g., character programming for adult participants with special needs, or character programming for families attending a family camp) of the adult-serving program.

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## Implementation Grant Program Overview

The Character at Camp Implementation Grant Program is designed for organizations with experience implementing new programs or projects and/or experience requesting and receiving grant funding to support a new program or project. Experience implementing character development programs or projects specifically is not required. For Implementation Grants, it is crucial that you understand your organization's needs related to character development and have the capacity to apply for and, if awarded, successfully implement the program or project you propose.

Organizations that are not sure they have the required level of experience described above should consider applying for a Planning Grant.

Implementation Grants can be used to start, improve, expand, or celebrate character-focused programs or projects. Examples of these programs or projects include, but are not limited to: character-focused curricula, programming, or activities; staff recruitment and training to support character programs; evaluation efforts to understand and improve character programs; initiatives to build camp culture; and marketing and communication strategies related to the benefits of character programs.

The following are three examples of the many potential character-focused programs or projects:

- Staff Training to Build Camp Culture: A mid-sized overnight camp proposes a staff training focused on embedding character values into every aspect of camp life — from cabin routines to conflict resolution. The grant would support training design, hiring a trainer to facilitate sessions during staff training, and follow-up coaching throughout the summer.
- Character Curriculum and Evaluation: A day camp working primarily with youth from underserved communities plans to pilot a weekly character-building curriculum (e.g., empathy, grit, leadership) and evaluate its impact through camper self-reflections and parent surveys. Findings will guide future programming and be shared with their broader community network.
- Marketing to Showcase Character Impact: A regional camp network of four camps wants to develop a communications campaign to highlight how their programs foster long-term character growth. They'll use video storytelling, alumni testimonials, and social media to raise awareness and build buy-in from families and donors.

Implementation Grants will be funded up to a total amount of \$300,000, based on considerations outlined in the budget guidance chart on pages 7–8. (Applicants are welcome to request funding beyond the recommended range in that chart but are encouraged to contact the Character Grant Team before doing so to discuss their plan.)

To apply for an Implementation Grant, a representative of the organization will complete the application, which includes a description of the proposed activities and a budget to support those activities. Organizations selected to receive an Implementation Grant will be invited to join a community of practice composed of other grantee organizations, participate in program evaluation activities outlined by ACA, will communicate with ACA's Character at Camp Grant Team throughout the grant period, and will submit annual reports describing what they've done and what they've accomplished each year.

We welcome both individual and joint applications to the Implementation Grant Program.

**Individual applications** are for programs and projects that will be implemented by and for a single organization. Single organizations can propose programs and projects to be implemented across multiple sites — this would be considered an individual application as there is a single coordinating entity, and the small number of sites (less than six) operate more or less the same within this organization.

**Joint applications** are for programs and projects that will be implemented by up to five organizations that will receive one grant award to implement programs and projects across each of the organizations. In this case, the organizations are either distinct and functionally independent from each other or are sites that operate more or less independently or with different programmatic foci from one another. One organization will submit the application and serve as the primary point of contact. Applicants submitting a joint application will be asked to identify the additional organizations in the application and to reflect budgetary allocations to these organizations.

**You should apply for a Character at Camp Implementation Grant if:**

- ☐ You are a single organization or part of a small group of organizations (less than six) working on a joint program or project.
- ☐ Your organization has a clear idea of how to address a need related to character development.
- ☐ Your organization has experience successfully implementing new programs or projects to address a specific need related to camper and/or staff development.
- ☐ Your organization has sufficient capacity, both in terms of number of people and expertise, to apply for and manage this grant *and* fulfill all associated programmatic, financial, and reporting requirements.

If your organization does not meet one or more of the criteria above, you should consider applying for a **Character at Camp Planning Grant**. Those representing a network organization that includes six or more camps should apply for a **Character at Camp Network Implementation Grant**.

Funding is limited, and this is a competitive grant program; not all applicants will receive awards.

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## Implementation Grant Application Overview

The Character at Camp Grant Program supports a wide variety of programs or projects related to character development at camp, ranging from programs or projects that focus specifically on campers to those that focus on staff or other operational functions that support character development. Applicants will be asked to select a primary category and a detailed focus within that primary category (programs or projects can include activities from multiple categories) from the following categories:

1. **Starting a new program or project related to character development.**

Examples include:

- Adopting evidence-based character programming
- Testing a new character-focused staff recruitment/training strategy
- Developing a plan to evaluate an existing character-focused program or integrating character development into a new program area, such as a counselor-in-training program
- Increasing staff capacity to implement new character-focused programming through hiring additional staff and/or professional development

2. **Enhancing/improving your organization's character-focused program(s)/strategies.**

Examples include:

- Reshaping character programming to be more culturally responsive
- Strengthening character-related staff recruitment/training practices
- Evaluating campers' character-related outcomes

- Implementing a continuous quality-improvement initiative to improve your organization's character development programming
- Increasing staff capacity to sustain enhanced character-focused programming through hiring additional staff and/or providing more professional development

3. **Expanding your organization's character-focused program(s)/strategies.**

Examples include:

- Building partnerships with schools or community organizations to reach new audiences
- Mitigating enrollment fees to increase access to character-focused programs
- Increasing capacity within an existing program to serve more youth
- Implementing a character-focused program/strategy known to be effective in one camp to additional camps and/or program areas

4. **Celebrating your organization's character work.**

Examples include:

- Implementing a communication strategy to better engage families in supporting character development at home
- Increasing staff fundraising skills and capacity to secure external funding to support character-focused program(s)
- Developing communication tools/strategies to demonstrate campers' character-related outcomes to new audiences

Organizations are welcome to apply for implementation grants to support two- or three-year programs or projects with a primary focus in one of the preceding categories. Applicants can request any amount of implementation grant funds up to \$300,000. However, when preparing your application, please refer to the guidance in the chart below. In rare circumstances, applicants requesting two-year funding may request an amount exceeding \$200,000 or may otherwise request an amount that does not follow the guidance below, but such requests must include a compelling justification and clear rationale for the increased funding level.

We will assess the reasonableness of the budget and its alignment with several factors, including: the amount of funding requested, the demonstrated need related to character development, and the potential for impact (including the number of youth served and/or the depth of impact among a specific population, such as youth with chronic illnesses or disabilities or youth from low-resourced communities).

## Implementation Grant Timeline and Budget Guidance

### **\$50,000 to \$100,000**

*Two-year programs or projects, single organization/site programs or projects, and/or organizations with budgets of \$0 to \$750,000 per year and/or <500 campers served (day camps) / <1,200 campers served (overnight camps)*

### **\$100,001 to \$200,000**

*Two- or three-year programs or projects, single organization/site programs or projects or joint programs or projects, and/or organizations with budgets of \$750,000 to \$3M per year and/or 500–750 campers served (day camps) / 1,200 to 1,500 campers served (overnight camps)*

### **\$200,001 to \$300,000**

*Three-year programs or projects; single, joint, and/or partnership programs or projects; and/or organizations with budgets of >\$3M per year and/or >750 campers served (day camps) / >1,500 campers served (overnight camps)*

Character grant funds may be used for personnel, capital expenses, and indirect (general operating) costs, subject to the following limits: personnel costs (including fringe) may not exceed 75 percent of the total grant budget; capital expenses may not exceed 30 percent; and indirect (general operating) costs may not exceed 15 percent of the total grant budget. Applications with proposed budgets exceeding the allowable funding limits will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed. ACA will consider your budget proposal as submitted and will not adjust the requested amounts. If your Character at Camp Implementation Grant proposal is awarded funding, it will be at the funding level in your proposal.

If you have any questions about the funding level for your grant proposal, please contact ACA's Character at Camp Grant team.

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## Implementation Grant Application Timeline

*(Note: all dates subject to change)*

|                 |                                                                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 1, 2026     | Implementation Grant application opens in ACA's grant portal, Foundant   |
| October 1, 2026 | Implementation Grant application closes in ACA's grant portal, Foundant  |
| December 2026   | Applicants notified of grant award decisions                             |
| January 2027    | Grant awards announced, and fund distribution and grant activities begin |

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## Implementation Grantee Requirements

If selected to receive a grant, organizations will be required to:

1. Designate two members of your organization's leadership/program team to serve as grant leads. These individuals should be the people at the organization who are directly responsible for the success of the grant and will be actively involved in the grant requirements and activities.
2. Complete all necessary grant paperwork at the start of the grant period.
3. Complete and submit an annual narrative and budget report throughout the grant period.
4. Use grant funds in accordance with the approved budget and promptly report any anticipated or unanticipated changes to proposed spending.
5. Maintain ACA camp membership and individual membership for both grant leads.
6. Attend virtual semiannual grantee meetings set by the Character at Camp Grant Team.
7. Participate in ACA's Character at Camp Grant Program Evaluation focused on supporting field-wide learning by assessing character development and practices among campers, staff, leaders, and/or other participant groups. All evaluation materials will be provided, and grantees will receive training and technical assistance to support these activities. (For a full overview of the evaluation core, see Appendix.)

We recognize that many camps depend on volunteers primarily or entirely. In this case, at least one of the two individuals assigned to this project should be the camp director/executive director, the chair of the board of directors, or whomever in the organization is responsible for the success of the program.

We also understand that staffing and capacity are different for every camp and that they may evolve over time. If selected to receive a grant, grantees should inform the ACA of any changes or unique needs so we can work together to determine appropriate adjustments to the requirements outlined above.

Grantees will also have opportunities for deeper engagement, collaboration, and support. Participation in these opportunities will be optional and dependent on grantee interest and capacity. Some of those opportunities will include peer learning communities with other grantees, training and technical assistance sessions facilitated by ACA, and in-person gatherings at ACA regional and national events.

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## Implementation Grant Application Instructions

This application is designed to be completed by members of your organization's leadership and/or program team. Before completing the application, we recommend convening your team to discuss your proposed activities and develop a clear overview of what you aim to accomplish during the Implementation Grant period.

While the online grant portal [GLM by Foundant](#) saves your responses as they are entered, we recommend that you prepare your answers in advance in a separate document. You will use unique Foundant login credentials to log in (not your ACA website credentials). Multiple individuals from your organization can log in and access an application. Additional information and tutorials for Foundant can be accessed [here](#).

You must submit the following documents in Foundant to complete your application:

- IRS determination letter and eligibility criteria form.

If your organization does not have an IRS determination letter (some governmental/municipal organizations and church organizations may not be required to obtain an IRS determination letter), you may still be eligible for this grant. Please reach out to [character@acacamps.org](mailto:character@acacamps.org) to discuss what alternative documentation may be accepted.

- Your organization's most recent board-approved financial statement, which would include major income and expense lines, assets, and overall profit and loss.
- Your organization's most recently filed IRS Form 990

If your organization does not file a 990, you may still be eligible for this grant. Please reach out to [character@acacamps.org](mailto:character@acacamps.org) to discuss what alternative documentation may be accepted.

- Board roster
  - Provide a current board roster that lists each board member's name, role or officer position (if applicable), professional affiliation, and term dates.
- Organizational chart
  - Provide an organizational chart that outlines your current staff structure, clearly identifying key roles, reporting relationships, and any positions that will support or be supported by this grant.

# IMPLEMENTATION GRANT APPLICATION

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## Camp Information

**1. What organization is submitting this application?**

If the camp name is different than the organization name, please enter that as well. Otherwise, enter your organization name again. Please enter only the camp(s) for which you intend to use these funds, especially if your organization operates more than one camp at different locations or with different names.

Organization name:

Camp name:

Organization website:

Affiliation, if applicable (e.g., Girl Scouts of the USA, Salvation Army, Camp Fire, SeriousFun Children's Network, YMCA, faith-based organization, college or university):

**2. Does the organization submitting this application have current status as a tax-exempt organization under Code section 501(c)(3) or government/municipal or religious entity?**

Checkbox: Yes / No

If yes, please upload documentation verifying your organization's nonprofit or government/municipal entity status here (i.e. IRS Determination Letter): [Upload]

**3. What is the organization's primary mailing address?**

Street address:

City:

State:

Zip code:

**4. If applicable, what is the camp location (if different from the organization mailing address)?**

Street address:

City:

State:

Zip code:

**5. What is the name and contact information for the organization's leadership (CEO, executive director, etc.)?**

First name:

Last name:

Email:

Phone:

Job title:

**6. Is the organization leader identified above aware and fully supportive of this grant application?**

Checkbox: Yes / No

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## Application Type

The Implementation Grant Program accepts both individual and joint applications. Individual applications are submitted by a single organization (including multisite programs under one coordinating entity), while joint applications involve two to five distinct or functionally independent organizations applying together under one lead applicant; please respond to the questions associated with your selected application type below.

### 7. What type of application will you be submitting?

Checkbox: Individual Application / Joint Application

If you select Individual Application, please skip to the next section. If you select Joint Application, please complete the rest of this section.

### 8. List each participating organization. Please include each organization's name, a brief description, and the name and job title of the primary point of contact for each organization. You may include up to four additional organizations beyond the primary organization.

[Text Entry]

### 9. What defines and distinguishes this collection of organizations? Why does this collection of organizations make sense for this joint application?

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

### 10. Please paste and upload letters of commitment from each of the organizations listed in your joint application. Merge the letters into one PDF file.

[Text Entry] [Upload]

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## Executive Summary

### 11. Please provide a brief executive summary of your application. It should include the following information:

- **Organization overview:** Name of your organization and a brief description of your mission, camp(s), program(s), and details of the campers and communities served.
- **Character project:** A short description of the character-focused project you propose to undertake through this grant.
- **Rationale:** Why this project is needed at this time and why your organization chose to pursue this work.
- **Funding request:** The total amount of Character at Camp Implementation Grant funds you are requesting.

The executive summary should provide a clear, high-level snapshot of your organization, your proposed work, and your funding request, outlining the scope and purpose of your application.

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

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## Implementation Proposal Design & Rationale

In this section, you will describe the character development program or project you propose to implement, the major outcomes you aim to achieve, and the organizational strengths that position you to achieve those outcomes. We are looking for a clearly articulated, actionable, and realistic proposal that aligns with your organization's mission, character context, proposed timeline, and budget. Your response should demonstrate that your organization understands its capacity and is well equipped to successfully implement the proposed work.

### 12. What is your organization's mission statement?

[Text entry – 1000 characters]

### 13. Describe your organization's prior experience with character-related initiatives and how character is currently incorporated into your camp's mission, programs, or organizational practices.

If character has not yet been formally integrated, please share any related efforts or areas of exploration. Please include specific examples of character activities, practices, or initiatives.

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

### 14. Describe your organization's identified needs or areas for growth related to character development.

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

### 15. What are (up to) three character strengths that your organization aims to support in your grant-funded character-focused programs and projects?

The options below do not constitute an exhaustive list of all possible character strengths. If necessary, write in additional character strengths under "Other."

|              |                   |                      |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Kindness     | Creativity        | Motivation           |
| Respect      | Integrity         | Humility             |
| Confidence   | Honesty           | Judgment             |
| Teamwork     | Perseverance      | Spirituality         |
| Appreciation | Gratitude         | Responsibility       |
| Diversity    | Autonomy          | Resilience           |
| Leadership   | Critical thinking | Independence         |
| Compassion   | Self-control      | Community-mindedness |
| Curiosity    | Volunteering      | Other [Text entry]   |

### 16. Why did you select these character strengths? Please describe how they align with your organization's mission, current context and programs, and your goals for the grant period.

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

### 17. Implementation Grants may be issued for a two- or three-year term. What is your proposed grant duration?

Checkbox: Two years / Three years

### 18. Program/Project Overview:

Describe the program or project you will implement if awarded this grant. Include the core components, who will be served, when and where implementation will occur, and how the proposed work aligns with your identified needs and selected character-focused strategies.

[Text Entry – 5000 characters]

- 19. Primary Outcomes:** Describe up to three primary outcomes you expect to achieve through this grant. For each outcome, explain how it is specific, measurable, achievable within the grant period, and aligned with your organization's mission and areas for growth. Describe what success will look like by the end of the grant period.

[Text Entry – 5000 characters]

- 20. Implementation Plan and Key Activities:** Describe the key activities and steps you will take to achieve the stated outcomes. Explain how these activities connect to your outcomes and align with your proposed timeline for when activities will take place.

[Text Entry – 5000 characters]

- 21. Please provide a timeline outlining all major program or project activities included in your program or project description that will be implemented during the grant period.** Indicate when each activity will occur within the two- or three-year timeline. Refer to quarters as three-month periods beginning with the grant award start date of January 2027. For example, Quarter 1 refers to January, February, and March; Quarter 2 refers to April, May, and June, etc. You may use the provided template or create your own.

[Text Entry – 5000 characters]

[Upload PDF]

- 22. What existing organizational strengths demonstrate your readiness to successfully implement this program or project?** Identify two or three specific strengths (e.g., partnerships, staffing, infrastructure, culture, curricula) and briefly explain how each will contribute to successful implementation.

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

- 23. If funded, how will your proposed program or project be sustained beyond the grant period?** How will the character activities be integrated into your organization's ongoing work, and how will you ensure the financial and operational sustainability of these activities after the grant period ends?

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

- 24.** One goal of the Character at Camp Initiative is to increase the accessibility of character-development opportunities for all campers, staff, families, organizations, and communities, including those who are currently underrepresented within the camp industry. **If the project you are proposing helps to achieve this goal, please detail how and why you believe it will do so.**

*(Please note that answering this question is not required to complete this application or to be considered for a grant. If you do not wish to answer, please skip this question and proceed to the next.)*

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

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## Budget

The budget is a critical component of your proposal and should clearly reflect the resources required to implement your proposed program or project. Through developing and justifying your budget, you demonstrate the feasibility of your plan and the alignment between proposed activities and requested funds. Your budget should be realistic and consistent with the scope of work described in your application and align with character focused activities. Please ensure that your request adheres to the stated funding range and category limits outlined in these guidelines. Applications exceeding the maximum award amount or category caps will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.

For general guidance on developing your budget, refer to the “Implementation Grant Application Overview” section of this application packet and the FAQs on the ACA website.

**25. Please provide a budget that outlines the amount of grant funds requested to implement your proposed program or project.**

Implementation Grant awards will range from \$50,000 to \$300,000. Please include all funding requested to implement the proposed project. Applicants must submit a multi-year Budget Summary outlining the amount requested for each year of the grant, along with a detailed Budget Narrative explaining expenses within each category. The Budget Narrative should explain why each expense is necessary and how it directly supports the proposed Character at Camp program or project.

### Budget Summary

| Budget Category                       | Year 1<br>Total | Year 2<br>Total | Year 3<br>Total | Total | % of<br>Total |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|---------------|
| Personnel*                            | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |
| Consultants                           | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |
| Materials & Supplies                  | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |
| Travel                                | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |
| Capital Expenses**                    | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |
| Other Direct Costs                    | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |
| Indirect (General Operating) Costs*** | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |
| Total                                 | \$              | \$              | \$              | \$    | %             |

\*Personnel costs may not exceed 75 percent of the total grant budget.

\*\*Capital expenses may not exceed 30 percent of the total grant budget.

\*\*\*Indirect (General Operating) costs may not exceed 15 percent of the total grant budget.

### Budget Narrative

Provide a detailed Budget Narrative explaining each expense included in your request for all Budget Categories. Clearly describe how each cost is necessary for implementing the proposed program or project and how it aligns with the grant activities.

Budget Categories:

- Personnel
- Consultants
- Materials & Supplies
- Travel
- Capital Expenses
- Other Direct Costs
- Indirect (General Operating) Costs

[Text Entry – 2000 characters per category]

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## Grant Team

While the successful implementation of any proposed grant activities relies on many hands to get the work done, leadership is critical to the program's or project's success. The following section requests background information on the two grant leads most responsible for carrying out the program or project as well as the key personnel required to implement the proposed activities.

**26. Who is the first grant lead at the organization who will oversee the grant award and programs or projects?**

First name:  
Last name:  
Role/Job title:  
Email:  
Phone:

**27. What best describes this person's employment at the organization?**

Checkbox:  
☐ Full-time year-round  
☐ Part-time year-round  
☐ Full-time seasonal  
☐ Part-time seasonal  
☐ Volunteer  
☐ Other, please describe:

**28. Who is the second grant lead at the organization who will oversee the grant award and programs or projects?**

First name:  
Last name:  
Role/Job title:  
Email:  
Phone:

**29. What best describes this person's employment at the organization?**

Checkbox:  
☐ Full-time year-round  
☐ Part-time year-round  
☐ Full-time seasonal  
☐ Part-time seasonal  
☐ Volunteer  
☐ Other, please describe:

**30. Describe the qualifications and relevant experience of the grant leads. Explain how their background and expertise positions them to successfully oversee the grant and implement the proposed program or project.**

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

**31. What institutional resources, systems, and processes are in place to support the Implementation Grant and all program or project activities, and how will you ensure that it will be managed and completed successfully in the event of a change in your organization leadership or grant team leadership?**

[Text Entry – 3000 characters]

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## Organizational Capacity

This section will help us understand factors that help you to achieve your desired outcomes in the future programs or projects you design. This will include information about your finances and your organizational structure.

- 32. What is your organization's total operating budget?** If camp programs represent only a portion of your organization (e.g., a university or community center), you may provide the annual operating budget for the camp program(s) only.

[Text Entry]

- 33. Please upload your organization's most recent board-approved financial statement.** The statement should include major revenue and expense categories, reflect assets and liabilities, and net income or loss.

[Upload]

- 34. Please upload a copy of your organization's board roster.**

[Upload]

- 35. Please upload a copy of your organizational chart.** You can use free templates in Creately, Google Slides, or Microsoft PowerPoint if you do not have an existing organizational chart.

[Upload]

- 36. All Implementation grantees will be required to participate in the Character at Camp evaluation program led by the ACA. This includes participation in annual required training sessions and completion of evaluation activities before, during, and after your organization's camp program period. Do you understand and agree to fulfill all required evaluation components?**

Checkbox: Yes / No

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## Application Review Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the overall quality, clarity, and feasibility of the proposed program or project, as well as the organization's readiness to successfully implement and sustain the work.

Reviewers will consider the following factors:

### **Program/Project Design**

The clarity and strength of the proposed character-focused program or project and how well it aligns with the goals of the Character at Camp Grant Program.

### **Intended Outcomes and Implementation Approach**

The extent to which the proposed outcomes, activities, and timeline present a clear and realistic plan for advancing character development.

### **Organizational Capacity**

The organization's leadership, staffing, systems, and overall readiness to successfully carry out the proposed work.

### **Sustainability**

The potential for the proposed character-focused work to be integrated into the organization's ongoing programs and sustained beyond the grant period.

### **Budget Alignment**

The clarity and reasonableness of the proposed budget and its alignment with the proposed program or project.

### **Overall Application Quality**

The overall clarity, coherence, and strength of the application.

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# Appendix - Evaluation Guidelines and Expectations

## Character at Camp Evaluation Core Overview

The ACA has partnered with the [University of Utah Outdoor Education and Youth Development Lab](#) to support the evaluation of the [Character at Camp Grant Program](#). This work is designed to help the ACA and participating camps better understand what works in character education, how these efforts impact youth, and how camps can strengthen and sustain high-quality character development programs.

A key goal of this initiative is to build a shared understanding of character outcomes across the camp field. Through this Evaluation Core, the ACA will develop practical tools and resources that will help redefine how character is measured and understood in summer camps. These tools and insights will be shared broadly with the field, benefiting not only participating grantees but the entire camp community.

Participation in the Evaluation Core is required for Implementation Grantees and Network Implementation Grantees, and optional for Planning Grantees. Camps that participate will receive individualized data reports — including access to an interactive camper data dashboard — that can be used to strengthen programs, communicate impact, and support future funding and grant opportunities.

We recognize that camps vary widely in size, structure, population, and capacity. The Evaluation Core is intentionally designed to be flexible. The tools and approaches outlined below are a starting point, and ACA staff and evaluation partners will work closely with each participating camp to ensure the evaluation plan fits their unique context. This may include adapting tools for different age groups, translating materials into necessary languages, or adjusting timelines for camps that operate outside of the summer season.

**ACA also understands that some camps may not be able to implement every component of the Evaluation Core due to capacity or other constraints. A camp's ability to fully implement all evaluation elements will not impact its application status or standing if selected as a grantee.**

Ultimately, this effort is intended to support, and not burden, camp's work. By participating, camps will gain meaningful data to improve their programs, demonstrate impact, and contribute to a larger movement to advance character development across the camp field.

## Evaluation Implementation Team

All Implementation grantees are asked to designate a small team to support Evaluation Core activities. This team will coordinate and carry out the evaluation efforts at your camp. Roles may be combined, and many camps find that a team of 2 staff members can successfully manage these responsibilities, often as part of their grant leadership roles. Larger teams may choose to distribute responsibilities more broadly.

We ask that the following key functions are covered:

- Overall grant leadership (e.g., 1–2 grant leads)
- A primary evaluation point of contact
- Support for self-assessment activities
- Coordination of staff surveys
- Coordination of camper/CIT surveys
- Any additional support needed for data collection

ACA staff will work with each grantee to ensure roles and responsibilities are structured in a way that fits your camp's size, staffing model, and capacity.

## Training and Technical Assistance

ACA and its partners provide a series of required and optional learning opportunities to support implementation of the Evaluation Core. These sessions are designed to build confidence, clarify expectations, and help camps make the most of their evaluation efforts. Specific dates and details will be shared each January, and we anticipate offering two sessions in the spring and one in the fall each year.

### Required Trainings

- **Preparing for the Evaluation Core (Spring):**  
An overview session to help grant leads plan for and manage evaluation activities. The University of Utah team will review key components, timelines, and answer questions.
- **Self-Assessment Orientation/Training (Spring):**  
Required for designated assessors only. This session prepares staff to complete the self-assessment of character practices during the summer.
- **Making Meaning of Data (Fall):**  
A session focused on understanding and using collected data. Camps will receive customized reports and guidance to support continuous improvement efforts.

### Optional Support

Optional office hours will be available to provide additional guidance, answer questions, and help camps align Evaluation Core activities with any existing or planned evaluation efforts. ACA and University of Utah staff are available to support camps in streamlining their approach.

## Required Evaluation Core Data Collection Components

The Evaluation Core includes several data collection activities designed to capture camper, staff, and organizational experiences. Camps will be supported in their implementation of these components in ways that best fit their setting and population.

### Camper/CIT Survey

A 10–15 minute survey for youth ages approximately 8–15, focused on opportunities to practice character strengths (Curiosity, Teamwork/Leadership, Kindness, Community-Mindedness) and experiences (Belonging, Engagement, Camper–Counselor Relationships, Voice, Safety). The survey should be administered to at least **one session of campers** at the end of their session, either online or on paper.

### Staff Survey

A 10–15 minute online survey for staff who work directly with campers (e.g., counselors, activity leaders). This survey should be administered during the summer.

### Camp Leadership Survey and Follow-Up Interview

A 30-minute online survey for the staff member most familiar with how character is integrated into camp programming and operations. The survey should be completed prior to the summer season and will be followed by a virtual 30–60 minute interview with a member of ACA's evaluation team.

### Self-Assessment of Character Practices

An assessment tool designed to capture the use of character practices at the point of service. This is completed by 1 or 2 designated staff members at two points during the summer. Ideal assessors are staff who understand day-to-day programming and work closely with camp leadership. This represents an approximately 8-hour commitment, including pre-summer training, two assessment periods, and a post-summer debrief.

**Table 2. Data Collection Elements for Evaluation Core**

| Core Element                                   | Participants                                    | Format          | Time Commitment                                    | Timing                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Camper survey                                  | At least one session of campers                 | Online or paper | 10-15 minutes                                      | Summer                                                |
| Staff Survey                                   | Staff who work directly with campers            | Online          | 10-15 minutes                                      | Summer                                                |
| Camp leadership survey and follow-up interview | Director or other member of the leadership team | Online          | 30 minutes for survey; 30-60 minutes for interview | Survey pre summer, interview flexible                 |
| Self-assessments and debrief                   | 2 camp staff trained as assessors               | Online          | 1-2 hours per assessment; 2-hour debrief           | Assessments mid- and late summer; debrief post summer |