

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **What is the Native Youth Community Adaptation and Leadership Congress (NYCALC or Congress)?**

Answer: NYCALC is a federal and non-governmental collaborative that invites native communities to work together to address conservation challenges in a changing environment. NYCALC provides training in leadership principles, STEM, conservation, and outdoor skills for the next generation of native leaders (rising high-school seniors) and their communities. The one-week, on-site Congress utilizes open space technology to allow students to create a personalized action plan each year that is relevant to current issues. A mini-grant program provides students with resources for implementing lessons learned once they return to their communities with the goal of empowering communities to address social change and conservation priorities.

- **When does the Congress occur?**

Answer: The NYCALC Congress is an annual program that occurs during the first or second week of July of each year. Specific dates for each year will be provided once the student application is released in early spring.



Answer: The onsite, one-week Congress is held at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services [National Conservation Training Center](#) at 698 Conservation Way, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, approximately 1.5 hours north-west of Washington D.C. Please click [HERE](#) for a map.

● What are the main topics and/or themes of the Congress?

Answer: Conservation, Leadership, Networking, Empowerment, Individuality, Inclusion, Competence

● What are the goals of the Congress?

Answer: The Congress has four primary goals:

- 1) Training for tribal youth (rising high school juniors/seniors), Jr. Faculty (currently enrolled/ college-age), community mentors (youth leaders, educators, etc.), and conservation professionals;
- 2) Empower communities to implement and/or continue existing programs via mini-grant opportunities;
- 3) Broaden the awareness of the roles and responsibilities of conservation communities;
- 4) Federal employee and tribal leadership training to improve cultural competencies and relationships.



Answer: 3-5 groups of students from any federally recognized tribe of the United States*****, including those from U.S. Territories, that are rising high-school seniors are eligible to apply for the Congress. This means the students should be in their junior year (11th grade) of high school at the time they submit their application.

Sophomores and Juniors will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The strength of each individual's application answers to part 1 and part 2 (must not be the same answers as anyone else in your group) and that will determine each individual's acceptance.

Applying as a group does not automatically determine an individual's acceptance into the program. Meaning each application will be reviewed individually and must show the student demonstrates leadership activities they have participated in relation to benefitting themselves and/or the tribe/community.

****The Native Youth Community Adaptation and Leadership Congress (Congress) generates more and more interest each year. In this year as in the past three, the vast majority of funding for student travel is from our partner, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and (BIA), as bureaus of the Department of the Interior (DOI), have a legally mandated obligation to ensure that the federal Indian trust responsibility is fulfilled. The federal government agencies have a unique and distinctive political relationship with federally recognized Indian Tribes. This has given rise to a unique federal trust responsibility, involving the legal responsibilities and obligations of the United States toward federally recognized Indian Tribes and the application of fiduciary standards of due care with respect to Indian lands, Tribal trust resources, and the exercise of Tribal rights.

funding contributions from partners outside DOI. For example, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), a bureau of the Department of Agriculture, was able to work with their partner, KUPU, to send Native Hawaiian students to the Congress. Another partner, a non-governmental organization (NGO), Conservation Legacy Ancestral Lands, provided funds to assist student travel from non-federally recognized tribes. However, funding available in previous years for students from non-federally recognized tribes is not guaranteed for the 2020 year. All tribal students can apply but funding is expected to be very limited for students from non-federally recognized tribes for the aforementioned reasons.

● Who is the target audience of the Congress?

Answer: Groups of a minimum of three and a maximum of five rising high school seniors and one community mentor. Sophomores and Juniors will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

● How many student must apply as a group to be eligible?

Answer: For our summer 2020 program, we will only be accepting applications from groups of students consisting of a **minimum of three to a maximum of five** individuals from the **same community**.

● Can I apply as an individual applicant?



projects. Groups that attend the Congress together, have a stronger support network and success rate of implementation upon return into their communities. Please ask your mentors or take the opportunity to be a leader and recruit more students to apply to this amazing opportunity. Please see Who Is Eligible to Apply to the Congress above.

● Will I need a Mentor?

Answer: Yes. We do ask applicant groups to identify an individual who will be responsible to travel with and oversee the group throughout the week of the Congress; however, we identify these individuals as community mentors (advisers, teacher, youth leader) as their role is larger and more important than chaperoning an event.

● Who is considered a community mentor for the purposes of NYCALC and what is their role?

Answer: Any individual over the age of 21 can act as a community mentor. MENTORS MUST HAVE A LIST OF APPLYING STUDENTS NAMES BEFORE Preference will be given to community mentors who currently work within the educational arena and/or as current youth leaders, etc. Once a community mentor is chosen, it is their responsibility to agree and abide by the following [NYCALC Mentor Roles and Responsibilities](#).



Answer: A mentor needs to have their personal information (name, address, etc) and A FULL LIST OF APPLYING STUDENTS FROM THEIR COMMUNITY, PRIOR TO FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION.

● If I attended NYCALC last year, can I attend again as a student?

Answer: No. The program is designed to recruit new applicants to attend once with the hope of being inspired and motivated by this event to pursue a higher education, get more involved in their community, apply for the Congress mini-grant by providing us with a project proposal they believe will be beneficial to their community, be nominated by a participating agency or partner of the Congress as an enrolled college student to act as Jr. Faculty, network and eventually become interested in becoming a conservation related career to encourage native high school youth to apply for the program as a professional.

● When are the application deadlines?

Answer: **Deadline has been extended to April 17, 2020.**

● How long does it take to fill out the student application?

Answer: The questions should take a few hours to complete prior to opening the online application. A [preview of the questions is](#)



● How do I access the application?

Answer: The 2020 application is an online Google Form. We highly suggest viewing the preview of the application (available here), writing your answers and copy/paste them into the app. Once the application is open it needs to be filled out and cannot be exited/reentered.

● What are the different components of the application?

Answer: The application is set into four parts. 1: Data such as name/birthday/school/etc 2. Short answer questions on your involvement in clubs/organizations/etc 3. Paragraph responses 4. A project outline. (see the Preview of Questions for more detail)

● Do I complete the application individually or as an applicant group?

Answer: The application is filled out individually. All answers should be original. The only possible group answer is for the Project Outline portion (see question preview). This project idea can be written by a group OR individually. If collaborated on, each student should still answer the questions on each of their applications.

not automatically determine an individual's acceptance into the program.

● Who do I submit my application to?

Answer: At the end of the application there is a submit app button, and an option to receive through email a copy of your answers. This will send your responses to the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, and ultimately to the NYCALC application reviewers. All submissions are viewed and read with utmost respect to privacy. Refer to the Privacy statement in the application for more details.

● When do I receive an admission decision?

Answer: Mid-April, 2020, Mentors will be notified of admissions and are responsible for telling students.

● What happens if my application is late?

Answer: There will be no late applications accepted to NYCALC 2020, please be wary of our deadline: **March 31, 2020.**

● How can I tell when all parts of my application have been received?



- **What is the grant application that we are being asked to complete as part of our application?**

Answer: Part 3 of the application is a project outline. This portion should be a preliminary project idea that will be developed throughout the Congress. At NYCALC you have the opportunity to potentially earn a mini grant to help put it into action upon return from the Congress. THIS IS THE ONLY PORTION THAT CAN BE COMPLETED AS A GROUP. IT CAN ALSO BE COMPLETED AS AN INDIVIDUAL. Answers should be complete sentences.

- **Can you provide me some examples of past projects that have been completed?**

Answer: Community mini-grants are supporting projects that have ranged from creating greenhouses, local and sustainable food-sourcing, aquaponics, adaptation strategies workshops and training, regional training on community adaptation, soil science, and STEM training activities

- **If we are awarded a grant for our project, when will we receive the funding?**



How is the funding to be used?

Answer: The grants provide opportunities for students to develop projects that benefit your community, school, or tribe. The proposal guiding document that is submitted with the grant application should provide information on requirements and timelines on how the funding is used.

● When are we expected to begin and finish our project after we leave the Congress?

Answer: As soon as projects are awarded and funding is provided should projects begin. Projects can be a one-time project or on-going (phases) and must be completed within one year after receiving funding. At the end of the year period, final project narrative reports will be submitted.

● How do we arrive at the Congress?

Answer: Once a participant has been accepted to attend the Congress. They will receive a packet of forms to be completed by their parent or guardian, including information pertaining to their flight to and from Washington, D.C.'s Dulles Airport. The flight will be booked and paid for by a non-profit partner contracted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department. Once the flight is booked, an itinerary will be sent to the chaperone and participant. Upon arrival at Washington Dulles Airport, the participant will be met by non-



What is the lodging like at the campus?

Answer: Participants will room with two to three other participants in a dorm room setting. The rooms are similar to hotel rooms with soap, shampoo, linens and towels provided. There is also a shared kitchen for the entire lodge with a refrigerator and microwave. The lodges also have available washers and dryers. Non-profit partner staff will oversee all participants in their lodge. Participants will be required to check-in each evening and check-out each morning so that they are accounted for. Chaperones will monitor the lodges 24 hours per day.

Where can I find a map of the campus?

Answer: <https://training.fws.gov/>

What accommodations are available at NCTC?

Answer: Dining services are available in the Commons Building with breakfast starting at 630am, lunch at 1130am, and dinner at 530pm. There is a Physical Training Center open Monday thru Friday 6am to 10pm. There is a wireless network available, high speed internet in lodges, classrooms, and open areas with public computers. Cable television is also in guest lodges. Each individually controlled heated and air-conditioned guest room has a double bed, reclining chair, combination desk and work space, television with cable TV, personal safe, Internet connection cables or wireless

a microwave, refrigerator, ice machine and coffee maker.

● What if I forget something?

Answer: There is a small gift shop at the NCTC campus that offers some items. Please make sure that you bring money to purchase those items on your own.

● How much does the Congress cost per student?

Answer: The Congress does not cost anything to an individual student. The student may want to bring his/her own money for personal items forgotten or mementos. Food, stay, and travel are provided cost-free.

● How much does the Congress cost per group?

Answer: All meals, room and board, and travel are provided for all participants for the entirety of their stay.

● What is the safety precautions on campus?

Answer: The National Conservation Training Center is a closed facility with a gated entrance. All visitors to the facility must pass through a guard gate and show identification. There are also

Emergency Aid and Medical Care

Answer: The non-profit partner contracted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department will provide 24 hour emergency aid and medical care to all participants. NMWF's additional staff of seven CPR certified individuals and a registered nurse will assist participants with all of their medical needs and transport them to a medical facility if necessary during the Congress.

● What are the expectations of me after the Congress has concluded?

Answer: Students are expected to implement their project proposal outlined in part 3 of the application upon completion of the project. As a future leader, you will help ensure a healthy natural environment for your communities, many of which are heavily dependent on wildlife, fish, and plant populations as an essential part of your traditional life/ways and subsistence.

● Once my group completes our project, are we eligible to apply for additional grant funding?

Answer: Yes, if additional funds are available.



Answer: When you are attending as a student of NYCALC, we encourage you to engage and network with all agency staff present during the week of the Congress. Agency staff representing a federal agency can nominate and sponsor 3 to 5 Jr. Faculty for future Congresses. Nominated Jr. Faculty are enrolled college-aged students that would be an asset to the Congress and has demonstrated qualities (attitude, support provided, initiative, interests, experience) they believe will enable them to be successful mentors and leaders.

● What is the role of Jr. Faculty?

Answer: Junior Faculty act as mentors to students throughout the event and supports the Faculty in facilitating the development of the community adaptation leadership skills of all of our native youth participants throughout the Congress.

● What webinars or other meetings should I be attending prior to Congress?

Answer: There will be several webinars that are mandatory for mentors to attend prior to the Congress. These will provide a place to get additional information, ask questions, and address further questions and concerns on how to better prepare for Congress. We expect our mentors to share this information with students and



When I get accepted, what forms do you need from me?

Answer: Once you are accepted into the program, you will be contacted by our non-profit partner, New Mexico Wildlife Federation, who will be handling the travel arrangements and required forms and authorizations. The partner will provide you with all the forms you need along with a checklist to help you keep track.

Photos by U.S. Fish and Wildlife

This program is created in partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Indian Affairs and New Mexico Wildlife Federation.

NATIVE
YOUTH
COMMUNITY
ADAPTATION
AND
LEADERSHIP
CONGRESS

