

WWGE Research Fund



ncge
National Council for
Geographic Education

Program Title

What Works in Geography Education

Program Focus

With a focus on K-12 education in the United States, the “What Works in Geography Education” (WWGE) program supports empirical research on student cognition and learning behaviors in geography education. The goal of the program is not to “address big questions,” “develop a new curriculum,” or “restructure a course.” The aim is to take a rigorous look at a multitude of “little” research questions focused on specific geography education materials being developed or already in use in classrooms across the country. For example, research questions may include: What kind of digital math activities increase map reading skills (and vice versa)? How can a classroom-mapping activity be leveraged to help reduce letter-reversal and letter-position errors by struggling readers? What kind of student digital atlas activities can most improve young learner’s understanding of their state’s geography?

Defining Geography Education

For the purposes of the WWGE Research Fund, NCGE defines *geography education* as activities and/or materials designed to improve K-12 understanding of geographic concepts and mastery of geographic inquiry skills as defined in consensus documents such as the C3 Framework, the National Geography Standards, and various state standards. The term *geographic* refers to a mode of inquiry that has its primary focus on location as a causal influence. This spatial perspective involves investigating the importance of conditions at a specific location and its connections with other places. Beyond simple determinism, the focus should be on appreciating and then analyzing the complex web of two-way interactions between humans and environment, where “environment” can include economic, social, political, and cultural features as well as physical and biological conditions and connections (and changes over time).

Measuring the Effectiveness of Innovations in Geography Education

Research proposals should present a contribution to modern understandings of how children learn. Specifically, methods and materials must be informed by recent research on how human brains perceive, process, and use geographic information (especially from maps and other representations). The WWGE Research Fund supports measuring the effectiveness of materials that already exist or are being developed by others, not on creating new materials. The Fund also supports the development and testing of better ways to evaluate spatial-reasoning skills.

All proposals should utilize a sufficiently detailed methodology that could be faithfully replicated. NCGE encourages proposals that develop and test hypotheses based on current research in geographic education and related fields that may include psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics, among others. Given the current educational climate in the United States, NCGE also encourages proposals that focus on links between geographic education and math or

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language-arts learning objectives. Successful proposals will include partnerships between investigators and school educators.

TO APPLY

Application Deadline*

Complete applications must be submitted through your NCGE member dashboard no later than **15 December 2025**: Detailed submission instruction are provided below:

1. Navigate to <https://ncge.org>
2. Click the "members" tab located in the upper right-hand corner of the page
3. Input your user name and password when prompted
4. Click "File" located on the left-hand side of your dashboard's home page
5. Select "upload" and follow the prompts

Proposals will be reviewed by NCGE WWGE Committee and decisions communicated to applicants no later than **2 February 2026**. Grant-supported activities must take place between April 1, 2026 and December 31, 2027. All final reports and required documentation must be submitted within 90 days following the completion of the funded activities.

Please direct inquiries to Dr. Thomas Herman, NCGE Executive Director (tom@ncge.org).

Funding Limit

Applications should have a budget no larger than \$25,000 across the research period which is not to exceed two calendar years. Matching funds are not required.

Who May Submit Proposals

The Fund provides grants to 501(c)(3) organizations and educational institutions, and may consider grants to individuals. The Principle Investigator (PI) shall be a NCGE member at the time of application. NCGE Board Members and others with NCGE appointments (journal editors, ad hoc committee members) and their family members are ineligible to apply while serving.

Proposal Limits

No more than one proposal may be submitted per PI or institution in any awards cycle.

Eligible Expenses

The WWGE program supports research fellowships for graduate students, especially to support MA or PhD thesis research; stipends for faculty sabbatical support; funds to compensate assistants, student interns, research subjects, or cooperating teachers.

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible costs include administrative indirect, food and beverages, and conference travel. Travel necessary for the research work (e.g., travel to and from school or other field sites) is allowed.

Proposal Submission Requirements

To be eligible for review, proposals must meet the following requirements:

1. File Format & Naming:

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- a. Submit three PDF files using the corresponding naming format for each file:
LastName_FirstName_proposal_WWGE25 and
LastName_FirstName_budget_WWGE25 and
Lastname_FirstName_CV_WWGE25
2. Formatting Guidelines:
 - a. Use 1-inch margins and 12-point font throughout.
3. File 1 – Proposal Document: Include the following elements in a single PDF:
 - a. Cover Page (1 page max):
 - b. Principal Investigator(s) name(s), affiliation(s), email, and phone number
 - c. Project Title and Summary (1–2 paragraphs)
 - d. Project Narrative (5 pages max):
 - e. Research Questions and Supporting Literature
 - f. Educational Context (grade level, school/community characteristics, teacher experience, etc.)
 - g. Research Methods (data collection and analysis)
 - h. Project Timeline (1 page max)
 - i. Key References (1 page max)
4. File 2 – Budget:
 - a. Use the provided budget template. Include descriptions for each expense directly in the template
5. File 3 - CV:
 - a. Submit a Curriculum Vitae for each Principal Investigator listed (3 pages per PI max)

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