

SLEWS Academy 2026 Complete Information Packet

With support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Center for Land-Based Learning reinstituted the SLEWS Academy in 2023. The S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation and the James Irvine Foundation supported the initial launch of this program. This returning program trains educators and natural resource professionals to create meaningful, hands-on, habitat restoration-focused programs for high school youth in schools and communities throughout California. This comprehensive training in the best practices of the award-winning Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship (SLEWS) Program will enable more organizations to engage youth in meaningful science and service-learning, providing students with environmental restoration career skills and leadership skills.

SLEWS Academy – Why Participate?

Connect high school aged youth to agriculture and the environment

Develop new partnerships

Engage your community

Use an established model for youth engagement with all the tools such as field day activities, evaluation, and outreach materials, already created for you!

CLBL Background

The Center for Land-Based Learning (CLBL) was founded in 2001 by Winters, CA, walnut farmer Craig McNamara to teach the next generation about the cause and effect relationship between agricultural practices and the environment, and to create connections with the land that so many youth need. CLBL serves urban, suburban, and rural youth throughout California in 15 counties from Yuba to Sonoma to Los Angeles.

The Center for Land-Based Learning is dedicated to creating the next generation of farmers and to teaching California's youth about the importance of agriculture and watershed conservation. Combining innovative hands-on experience with classroom learning, participants in CLBL's many programs develop leadership skills, learn how sustainable agriculture practices contribute to a healthier ecosystem, and create connections to agricultural, environmental, and food system careers.

SLEWS Program Background

The Student and Landowner Education and Watershed Stewardship (SLEWS) Program began in 2001, and has engaged more than 8,500 students and teachers in 13 counties in California. This award winning program has been recognized by national, state, and local partners for excellence in conservation education. With 23 years of history and collaboration with high school teachers, restoration professionals, private landowners, state and national agencies, universities and non-profit organizations, the SLEWS Program is an established and comprehensive approach to youth engagement.



Meeting Educational Needs

With the implementation of Common Core Standards, the SLEWS Program supports a key element of these standards, College and Career Readiness. These standards focus on speaking and listening, preparing students for being able to engage in conversations, consider points of view, and develop a line of reasoning. The SLEWS Program facilitates structured and informal conversations with professionals and peers. Skills applicable in all career fields, and commonly cited as lacking, such as communicating across generations, wearing appropriate attire for the given task and setting, seeing a task through from beginning to end, and problem-solving with a team, are practiced through the SLEWS Program.

In addition, California implemented the Next Generation Science Standards in 2015. These were the first broad national recommendations for science instruction since 1996, and brought sweeping changes for how science should be taught in the United States. The focus is shifted toward helping students experience *how* science is done so that they can understand how ideas are developed and tested, discern between strong and weak evidence, and how science is utilized to address issues. The SLEWS Program and the corresponding SLEWS classroom science curriculum were already perfectly suited for and supported Next Generation Science Standards upon its roll out. SLEWS programs continue to adapt, improve, and support current NGSS.

SLEWS Academy Details

The SLEWS Academy class will be limited to six teams to allow us to provide highly customized, hands-on instruction.

The SLEWS Academy consists of the:

- 3-day Intensive Training Kickoff- in person
- Six Monthly Online Group Sessions
- Individual Program Support
- 2-day Culminating Retreat of Sharing Your Implementation Plans
- SLEWS Network Access through SLACK
- Quarterly online Cohort Meetings post-Academy
- Quarterly Affiliate Newsletter Mailings by Email post-Academy



3-day Intensive Training Kickoff – January 27, Tuesday - January 29, Thursday, 2026

The 3-day intensive training typically* at our Woodland, CA headquarters (40140 Best Ranch Rd.) will focus on SLEWS program objectives and philosophy, field day structure and elements, funding and budgeting, habitat restoration for high school youth, developing essential partnerships, program evaluation, engaging culturally diverse audiences, SLEWS in the classroom and yearlong program elements.

*The location of the in-person portions of the Academy may vary, depending on the organizations that apply, so we may keep the location central to the participating organizations.)

Participants will receive comprehensive SLEWS Program development materials:

- SLEWS Administrator and Coordinator Manual
- SLEWS Classroom Curriculum
- SLEWS Field Guides
- SLEWS Program Activities Toolkit

Online Group Sessions – February through July 2026

Six monthly online sessions following the 3-day training will further prepare teams to launch their own program. These sessions will go into greater depth on cultural competency; recruiting, training and rewarding mentors; taking SLEWS home with community action and public participation in science; resources for program funding; and site visits to established and new SLEWS Programs.

2-day Culminating Retreat - August 19-20, 2026

Teams will be sharing their organization's SLEWS program implementation plans. We will discuss, and provide feedback for moving forward. Again, located at our Woodland headquarters at 40140 Best Ranch Rd.

Individual Program Support

CLBL is committed to helping each organization successfully launch or enhance their program. Individual support may come in the form of meeting facilitation with new partners, assistance with project and school selection, fundraising support, assisting with grant writing, and evaluation. This will include a CLBL visit to each organization, scheduled to meet their program needs.

SLEWS Network – Ongoing

The SLEWS Network will help participants stay connected to CLBL and peer organizations. The network will be open to all who participated in the SLEWS Academy, connect participants to a network of CLBL-certified practitioners who are applying SLEWS methods in their own communities, and provide an ongoing opportunity to transmit knowledge and share new practices as participants work to implement SLEWS in their communities.



TIMELINE

- **Complete the [Interest Form](#) to participate by October 3, 2025 to apply to SLEWS Academy.** (The interest form is linked here and will be on our website in the summer)
- If we have more interest than can accommodate, we have a selection process based on ability and capability to implement SLEWS programs shown in the interest form application. The week of October 13-17, 2025, organizations will be contacted regarding their selection into the program. Affiliate Agreements will be sent out for organizations to complete and return to confirm your participation as well as a pre-survey by October 31, 2025.
- January 27 - January 29, 2026: 3-day Intensive Training Kickoff
- February - July: Six Monthly Online Group Sessions
- Ongoing: Individual Program Support throughout your program implementation
- August 19-20, 2026: 2-day Culminating Retreat of Sharing Your Implementation Plans, and SLEWS Network Access
- Implementation of SLEWS programs must be during the 2026-2027 and/or 2027-2028 school year
- Quarterly Cohort Meetings online post-Retreat and Quarterly Affiliate Newsletter by Email

CONTENT

How SLEWS works – what it would look like for YOU to run SLEWS.

The SLEWS Program is designed around partnerships. The core team includes:

SLEWS Program Coordinator

Through the SLEWS Academy, your staff will have the tools and training they need to coordinate the team and to run the SLEWS Program. The SLEWS Coordinator is the lead on designing and implementing SLEWS field days, including student involvement in restoration tasks, teambuilding, leadership and science learning activities. The Coordinator also provides in-class presentations, trains volunteer mentors, and performs evaluation and reporting of field days.



Restoration Project Planner

Often from a partner organization, but sometimes on the same staff as the SLEWS Coordinator. This person is the lead on the restoration project planning and implementation; including restoration project funding, permitting, ordering plants, site preparation and maintenance.

High School Teacher

The teacher coordinates school logistics for SLEWS field trips such as scheduling buses and substitutes, participates in all SLEWS field days, and connects hands-on learning to the classroom with SLEWS curriculum.

Landowner

The landowner works closely with the Restoration Project Planner and the SLEWS Program Coordinator on logistics such as timing of SLEWS field days and access to the property. Often landowners will participate in SLEWS field days and discuss their land stewardship and/or agricultural operation with students.



Mentors/Community Volunteers

Mentors attend all the SLEWS field days for a particular school and project. They receive training in ecosystem restoration and outdoor education and help facilitate SLEWS field day activities. Mentors lead small groups of students to ensure student safety and restoration project success.

WHAT YOU NEED

A Team

Organizations should identify a team of three to four people who will attend all components of the SLEWS Academy together and who will participate in the implementation of your program. This team can include someone from outside of your organization who will be a partner in implementing your program, such as a natural resource professional partner, educational non-profit partners' staff, or a teacher. At least one of your team members must be in an upper management position within your organization (i.e. Executive Director, Program Director, Supervisor).

Tuition

The tuition for an organization to participate in the SLEWS Academy is \$3,500. This covers up to 4 staff members from your organization (your team) to attend the SLEWS Academy, which includes the 3-day kickoff training in person, the online once a month sessions, the in person culminating retreat, food for the in person portions, transportation from your hotel (if needed) to the in person portions (your travel to and from your nearby staying location-if needed- are additional costs to you/not included here), and the CLBL program support of editing documents with you, searching for grants for/with you, working with you on grants as a team, assisting you with project site visits and classroom visits, attending your first field days, and other support. There are payment plans for the tuition fee on the affiliate agreement contract for confirming participation in SLEWS Academy.

Organizational and Financial Support

Our goal in providing the SLEWS Academy is to invest in the capacity and training of youth providers and natural resource professionals, thereby increasing the number of high quality outdoor experiences for youth. Therefore, to be effective, we expect organizations who participate in the SLEWS Academy to implement their new programs within 1-2 years of participating in the training.

Licensing Fee (Post Academy annual fee)

Upon completion of the SLEWS Academy cycle 2026-2028, partners are required to pay a licensing fee for 5% of the worth of the overall program value in order to hold the partner accountable to continued proper use of the program name and program model beyond the SLEWS Academy cycle. The partner may elect to pay the minimum annual licensing fee of \$1,320 or the annual licensing fee that includes additional support from CLBL staff each year of \$1,845. This higher fee includes a portion of CLBL staff time to continue assisting with your programs after SLEWS Academy, such as attending site visits (travel, lodging, and staff time for the site visit) for new SLEWS projects and program assessments, and grant writing assistance for sustaining programs (if this is still needed for keeping your programs running).

**Questions?**

Please contact

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