Science Societies

ASF funds equipment and travel for soil judging teams

September 10, 2025



Team USA poses for a picture during the International Soil Judging Contest in Scotland in 2022.

The Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF) is funding up to $20,000 annually for three years to support student teams with travel and equipment expenses for regional and national soil judging contests. The first awards are for contests this fall. This initiative not only supports student participation, but also strengthens workforce development by preparing the next generation of soil scientists.

In March of this year, the Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF) signed an agreement for the *Collegiate Soil Judging Travel and Equipment Award* that will grant up to $20,000 per year to soil judging teams. The intent of the award is to provide travel assistance and equipment rental/purchase assistance for students participating in university-based regional and national contests.

The funding is to be provided for three years from the Buoyoucos Fund to cover expenses. At the end of 2027, the ASF Board will determine whether to make this award permanent.

The structure of the award during a full year of availability will offer two application periods; one in January for funding toward the national contest held in the spring and one in June to focus on the regional contests held in the fall. Due to the timing of the agreement being executed, this first year's award is focused fully on fall contests. The 2026 awards will be split into two application periods.



A group judging event at the 2024 National Collegiate Soil Judging Contest. Photo by John Galbraith.

The announcement and call for applications went out in June and closed on July 15. There was an overwhelming response nationwide, and we received 10 applications for equipment and 16 for travel assistance. Applicants were required to answer a series of questions, including justification for their requests.

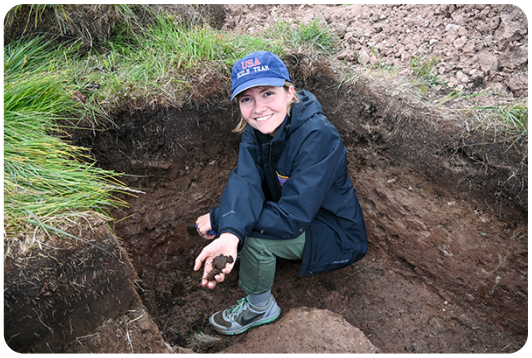
The requests for funding in the inaugural year totaled $24,893. The committee very much wanted to fund everyone that submitted a request, but we are $4,893 short of being able to do that.

SSSA, ASA Boards help with this year's funding

Enter the SSSA and ASA Boards! The committee reached out to both the SSSA and ASA Boards to ask for funding to make up the difference to be able to fund everyone's requests.

One of the strongest arguments for providing funding is workforce development. Soil judging coaches are actively training the next generation of soil scientists, and their ability to mentor students is highly influenced by finances. These are the students who are very interested in soil and the applications of soil science. Their time spent studying soil profiles and discovering the “stories” that those profiles tell captures their imagination along with their curiosity to discover more and use their knowledge in their careers.

A number of the coaches who applied for funding spoke about a lack of funding from their universities and the amount of fundraising that the students do to try to ensure that everyone gets to travel and compete. Many are lacking adequate equipment for an entire team, and many must ask students to pay out of pocket for their own registration fee and meals during the contests.



Students who participate in soil judging contests represent the future of soil and agronomic science.

These students, in many ways, represent the future of soil and agronomic science. Many of them are members of the Societies and attend CANVAS/SASES conferences, and many will become certified and pursue careers related to soil science and agronomy. We would like to encourage them to continue down that pathway and help them not only have the correct equipment, but also the opportunity to travel to compete and experience new landscapes and soils to enhance their education along with the soft skills that are so important in their upcoming careers.

The SSSA and ASA Boards voted to split the requested funds, which allowed all applications to be funded in full! There are some VERY happy soil judging coaches and students out there! A list of the programs that received funding is provided in Table 1.

We wish all of the teams the best in their regional contests this fall!

Table 1. Programs receiving funding for travel and/or equipment to participate in soil judging contests this fall.

Region	Travel, equipment, or both	School
1	Both	West Chester University
1	Travel	Brooklyn College
1	Travel	University of Delaware
1	Equip	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
1	Equipment	Brown University
2	Travel	University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez
3	Both	University of Wisconsin–Madison
3	Travel	Southern Illinois
3	Travel	University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign
4	Both	Stephen F. Austin State University
4	Travel	Texas A&M University– Kingsville
5	Both	Morningside University
5	Travel	Missouri State University

Region	Travel, equipment, or both	School
5	Equipment	University of Nebraska at Omaha
6	Travel	Modesto Junior College
6	Travel	New Mexico State University
7	Both	Oregon State University
7	Both	Washington State University
7	Travel	Colorado State University
7	Equipment	University of Idaho

More ASF content

Back to current issue

Back to home

Text © . The authors. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Except where otherwise noted, images are subject to copyright. Any reuse without express permission from the copyright owner is prohibited.

Agronomic Science Foundation content

View more