

Nature's Necessities: Restroom Upgrades

By The Cibolo Center for Conservation



Mission: To promote the conservation of nature through education, stewardship, and community connections.

Critical Need in our Community and Population to Be Served by the Project:

There was a time when children spent their days exploring the outdoors—riding bikes until the streetlights came on, drinking from garden hoses, and discovering the world through unstructured play. Today, many kids are disconnected from nature, spending 7–10 hours a day on screens and less than 10 minutes outside. This shift contributes to the societal condition known as "Nature Deficit Disorder," linked to anxiety, poor mental health, reduced physical fitness, and lower environmental literacy.

In 2016, Bexar Co. child obesity rates reached 28.8%—nearly twice the state average. Additionally, 47% of students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks. Access to green spaces—tied to increased activity, lower obesity, and better mental health—can help address these issues. Yet many children, especially from Title 1 schools, face barriers to safe, educational green spaces.

The Cibolo addresses this by providing nature-based education to thousands of children annually. However, our ability to serve is hampered by inadequate restrooms. Frequent closures from plumbing failures disrupt programming and reduce access to nature experiences for children who need them most.

This project supports the Environment, Recreation & Preservation focus area by ensuring our facilities can meet demand—allowing us to deliver vital environmental education that fosters well-being, stewardship, and lifelong connections to nature.

The Cibolo improves quality of life by connecting people to nature through education, stewardship, and recreation. We serve over 40,000 children and adults (ages Pre-K–Gray) annually, including more than 3,500 children—44% from Title 1 schools and low-income families in Bexar County, and over 70% identifying as Hispanic or another ethnic minority. These children, ages 4–18, attend The Cibolo's TEKS-aligned outdoor nature-education programs that promote academic growth, reduce stress, and build lifelong environmental stewardship.

As The Cibolo welcomes more schools and families for outdoor learning and recreation, accessible restrooms are even more essential to supporting a safe and inclusive experience. Without renovation, our ability to safely serve youth and families—especially those with limited access to green spaces—will be reduced. This project ensures continued, equitable access to nature-based learning.

Description of Project and Proposed Use of Impact SA Funds:

The Cibolo will fully renovate the restrooms at its Nature Center (built in 1992) and Herff Farm (built in 2007)—essential facilities that support outdoor education for thousands of children annually. Outdated plumbing systems frequently experience blockages and overflows, creating hygiene and safety hazards that disrupt programs and necessitate ongoing repairs. Renovations will replace aging plumbing, improve drainage, and install new tile, trim, dividers, and durable, water-efficient fixtures. Child-friendly and ADA-accessible upgrades will include sinks and counters designed to prevent spills and reduce slips, as well as touchless features that minimize germ transmission and improve cleanliness. These long-overdue renovations will eliminate recurring issues, ensure safe, functional restrooms, and allow educators to focus on what matters most: delivering high-quality, nature-based learning experiences to a growing number of youth and families across the region.

Impact San Antonio funds will cover full renovation of the Nature Center and Herff Farm restrooms, including design, demolition, plumbing and drainage improvements, and installation of tile, fixtures, trim, paint, dividers, sinks, and counters. Funding will also support contractor labor and project oversight. These upgrades will address safety concerns—like overflowing sinks and slippery floors—and improve accessibility, hygiene, and functionality for children and community members. From 2023–2025, The Cibolo spent over \$15,000 on emergency plumbing repairs across three vendors, a patchwork approach that is no longer sustainable. This investment will permanently resolve chronic failures, reduce staff burden, and ensure long-term operational efficiency. With reliable restrooms, The Cibolo can expand access to nature education and recreation for the 40,000+ visitors it serves each year.

Impact on People to Be Served - Measurable Outcomes (Described in "S.M.A.R.T." terms):

Specific: This project will eliminate recurring restroom closures that currently disrupt an average of 16 events and affect 540 people annually. Renovations will restore over 211 hours of lost instructional time and allow us to serve an additional 550 people per year—a 13.5% increase in children's programming alone. Improved capacity and accessibility will ensure safer, uninterrupted learning experiences for all students, including those from Title 1 schools.

Measurable: We will track program attendance and satisfaction rates, event disruptions, lost instructional hours, general visitor complaints, and restroom uptime using registration logs, incident reports, and staff maintenance records. Outcomes will include, ideally, zero programming disruptions (down from 16/year), restoration of 211+ instructional hours, a 13.5% increase in program capacity, and full restroom availability for an estimated 40,000+ annual visitors.

Achievable: We have a clear implementation plan, secured contractor estimates, and a track record of completing capital projects on time and within budget. With Impact SA support, we can quickly mobilize to begin construction. Program and facilities staff will track improvements in real time, and our team is well-positioned to absorb the increased participation projected from fully functional, upgraded restrooms.

Relevant: This project supports our mission by ensuring safe access to nature-based education and aligns with the Environment, Recreation & Preservation focus by improving infrastructure that sustains outdoor learning. Functional restrooms are critical for hosting youth programs, Title 1 field trips, and nature camps—expanding access, enhancing recreational use, and preserving the integrity of high-use public facilities.

Time-Bound: We expect to begin serving more children and families through fully renovated bathrooms by October 2026, following final inspections. Measurable improvements will be tracked from Fall 2026 through Summer 2027, aligning with our program calendar and the two-year Impact SA grant period. Final impact data and a summary video will be submitted with our end-of-2027 grant report, demonstrating the full scope of project outcomes.

Project Budget:

Funding Source	Amount	Narrative
Individuals	\$10,000.00	Funds from individual donors will cover the final \$9,823.39 of construction costs and a \$1,176.61 contingency for unforeseen expenses. This targeted goal will be incorporated into select donor communications, emphasizing the tangible, child-focused impact of completing the restroom upgrades.
Total Other Revenue	\$10,000.00	

Expense Category	ISA Exp	ISA Narrative	Other Exp	Other Exp Narrative
Indirect Costs	\$10,000.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
Construction Costs	\$90,000.00	Grant funds will cover restroom construction & renovation expenses such as tile, plumbing, sinks, counters, stalls, dividers, trim, paint & construction labor for the Nature Center and Herff Farm restroom renovations.	\$10,000.00	This will cover the remaining construction balance and a small contingency to ensure project completion without delays or funding gaps.
Total Expenses	\$100,000.00		\$10,000.00	