



2026 Grant Opportunity and Application

Introduction:

Guided by the vision of founder and 8-time major champion Tom Watson, [Watson Links](#) continues to advocate for golf mentoring opportunities that pair junior golfers with adult golf mentors for free on-course play. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Watson Links reached 21 markets and 1,075 participants in 2025 by partnering with individuals and organizations across the country to provide on-course mentoring initiatives that connect junior golfers with caring, experienced adults.

These on-course golf mentoring opportunities are free for both juniors and mentors. They build confidence, community, and a foundation for long-term growth—and they are made possible through strong collaboration. Junior golfers are typically aged 10-18 and have at least a basic knowledge of golf. Mentors are adults of all ages and skill levels. Learn more about [how every kid deserves a golf mentor](#).

For those who are new to Watson Links, we provide support through funding, products and strategic frameworks to help more golf mentoring happen and feel special. Our three frameworks are: **Day(s) of Play, Swing Series, and Mentor Month**. Learn more about these [here](#). Grant recipients need to choose 1 or more initiatives to implement with our funding and work collaboratively with the Watson Links team.

Our 2026 Grant Program:

In 2026, Watson Links will continue to offer start-up grants for new programs up to \$5,000 and maintenance grants for existing programs up to \$2,500 to fuel more **golf mentoring opportunities** across the country. Grant funding will be considered for the following individuals/organizations to implement golf mentoring initiatives *outside of the Kansas City market*:

- **Girls Golf Chapters**
- **First Tee Chapters**
- **High School Boys or Girls Golf Coaches**
- **PGA or LPGA Teaching Professionals**

Existing and prospective “playing partners” are eligible. Former grant recipients are welcome to apply but not at a startup grant level. Preferences will be given to initiative concepts that incorporate the following best practices:

- **Engage community volunteers such as [LPGA Amateurs](#) or course patrons**
- **Target high school age junior players**
- **Host pre/post round experiences**
- **Offer 4 or more days of mentoring rounds and serve at least 12 juniors/mentors**

Dates of note:

Grant Application Open: December 10, 2025 - January 9, 2026

Grant Webinar: Tuesday, December 16, 2025, 12:00 - 1:00 PM CT ([REGISTER HERE](#))

Recipients notified by: January 13, 2026

Grant Funding:

Grant awards are between \$1,500 - \$5,000 for use March - September 2026.



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The main intent behind grant funding is to provide financial support to:

- expand the golf mentorship movement
- increase course access and personal growth opportunities for juniors
- provide a meaningful volunteer and playing experience for adult golfers
- recruit and manage juniors and golf mentors

Essential allowable expenses include:

- **Tee times or fees for on-course experiences:** Walking or pull cart rate only; no simulator play
- **Mentor background checks:** Are available through Watson Links at \$25 per mentor; WL will help facilitate this process; not applicable for First Tee locations
- **Program manager stipend:** This budget line covers administrative and implementation time for your on-site point person. While we encourage this role to be filled by staff rather than interns, please include any planned stipend estimates in your application if an intern will be involved.

Optional allowable expenses include:

- **Paying additional PGA/LPGA instructor(s) to provide pre-round clinics:** Initiatives designed for beginners to on-course play should include these clinics for mentors/juniors.
- **Products for participants:** Limit is \$10 per participant. Viable products include items that support basic play and development: ball markers, tees, a golf ball, an alignment stick. Please note Watson Links does provide hats and bag tags to participants.
- **Prizes:** Initiatives do not need prizes, but some offer them. Grant funds can be used for limited prizes, but only through the [Watson Links Athletic Solutions](#) store. Gift cards are available to provide participants to choose from an array of wholesale cost, high quality products.
- **On course water and/or sport drinks, snacks**
- **Recruiting or Post-Round Experiences** boost recruitment efforts, help your program stand out, and can give participants more preparation, sense of belonging and purpose. Ideas include:
 - Mentor Meetups
 - Pairing party
 - Post-round ice cream sandwiches ([see Tom's history with these!](#))

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Transportation
- Paying golf mentors or First Tee chapter coaches to play
- Equipment/Facility Costs: Range balls, Golf Cart Rentals (with exception of courses that require carts). No golf clubs / bags
- Food/beverages outside of water/sport drinks/snacks/ice cream sandwiches; per person cost should not exceed \$15
- *For First Tee chapters:* courses that are free to your chapter, cannot incur a grant tee time
- Other: Cell phones or air time, office or utility expenses, physical assets, space rental or maintenance, or fundraising activities.



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Application process:

- Open through Google Form December 10, 2025. It will be linked here once live.
- Applicants who would like to learn more are encouraged to attend a group webinar on Tues Dec. 16, 2026. [Register via LinkedIn here](#). If no LinkedIn, email us at communications@watsonlinks.org to be forwarded the meeting link.
- Recipients notified by January 16, 2026

Questions:

- Reach out to Steph Shogren at: steph@watsonlinks.org