

PROVIDER ORIENTATION PACKET



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QUICK LINKS



Nature Challenge Main Site naturechallenge.tamu.edu



Nature Challenge Additional Information tfsweb.tamu.edu/naturechallenge/information



Badge Templates & How To's - Google Drive https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1G_cp2-xztl-hbjqPosa5vjy15cL3c00u



Nature Challenge Promotional Graphics- Google Drive https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1T01S6E-kOUBkfXdofj5HMQBYBvrUS00t?usp=sharing

A MESSAGE TO OUR PROVIDERS

Thank you for joining Nature Challenge!

Nature Challenge is a community for all things "outdoors" where naturerelated organizations can come together and easily promote their services, opportunities, and activities all in one place- And, it's 100% free to use.

This tool is the result of a shared vision between Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas Children in Nature Network, Texan by Nature as well as a rapidly growing community of environmental service providers that creating a more sustainable world begins with bringing nature back into the everyday lives of the people.

The health benefits and connectedness that nature provides cannot be overstated, and it is here that our community finds its greatest opportunity. A sustainable world begins with adventures. It begins with smiles and new discoveries. It begins with opportunities to face fears, to solve problems, and to see the environment not as separate, "out there", or distant, but as part of our lives- Because, in the end, we protect what we love. We love only what we understand, and we only understand what we are taught.

Global environmental issues will not be solved in a day, nor can they be solved by a single organization. Rather, it is through partnerships such as these and the coalition of resources that will make us all successful in realizing a more sustainable way forward.

Sincerely,

In this packet, you'll find everything you need to get started.

Now, let's get outside again!

The Nature Challenge Team

WELCOME TO NATURE CHALLENGE

What is Nature Challenge?

Nature Challenge (formerly Texas Nature Challenge) is an interactive platform that connects communities with opportunities to learn, explore, and engage with the natural world.

Nature Challenge is part of an initiative of Texas A&M Forest Service, Texan By Nature, Texas Children in Nature, and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department to promote opportunities for all Texans to develop a relationship with natural resources and appreciate the public's role in keeping natural resources healthy and sustainable.

Nature Challenge contains a searchable map and directory that connects people to fun learning and service opportunities, such as activities that help people:

- Get active in the outdoors
- Learn new skils
- Clean up our environment
- Support wildlife
- Protect and conserve natural resources

Mission Statement

The mission of Nature Challenge is to bring the benefits of nature back into the everyday lives of communities by connecting people with new and exciting ways to experience the outdoors and take an active role in improving the health and sustainability of natural resources and vital ecosystems.

Nature Challenge Admininstrators

Nature Challenge is maintained and administered by Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas' state forestry and all-hazard response agency dedicated to the conservation and protection of the state's forests and woodlands, as well as leading the state in enhancing forest literacy among all Texans so that forests can remain sustainable for future generations.

Texas A&M Forest Service Headquarters 200 Technology Way Suite 1281 College Station, Texas 77845 (979) 458-6650 | tfsweb.tamu.edu

Nature Challenge Administrator Contact

Conservation Education Coordinator | Jacey Tosh naturechallenge@tfs.tamu.edu

Design and Development

Nature Challenge was developed by Texas A&M Forest Service in close partnership with Texas Children in Nature and Texan by Nature.

Contibutors

Texas A&M Forest Service

Shruthi Srinivasan - Geospatial Analyst

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Texas Children in Nature

Sarah Coles - Executive Director

Texan by Nature

Joni Carswell - CEO & President

Christie Cowan - Program Manager

Lauren Hart - Junior Program Manager

Additional Partner Organizations: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Ecorise

Partners & Contributing Organizations













Want to include your organizations? Send logo to naturechallenge@tfs.tamu.edu

The Definition of a Challenge

The "challenge" in Nature Challenge refers to activities, games, or any other opportunities to get involved and engaged in the protection and conservation of our state's vital natural resources.

Challenges can be anything and draw on resources that providers already have, such as worksheets, outdoor interpretation materials, story walks, virtual resources, and classroom materials. The opportunities are endless

Providers are given the freedom to be creative in designing their own challenges, including locations of a challenge, the intended audience, necessary materials, completion metrics, as well as whether or not to offer a digital badge. opportunities, activity, excursion, adventures that connects people with nature and fosters a spirit of exploration and responsibility toward the environment.

Audiences

Nature Challenge partners believe that access to nature is a right for all, and therefore strive to offer something for everyone, regardless of age, location, or ability level.

Example audiences include PreK-12 students, families, college students, senior citizens, veterans, teachers, Scouts, naturalists, gardeners, outdoor enthusiasts, environmental activists, and more.

Types of Challenges

- 1. Place-Based Challenges Complete at a specific location
- 2. Anywhere (Statewide) Challenges Complete anywhere outdoors
- 3. Virtual Challenges Complete online or virtually
- 4. At Home or At School Complete in your own space

Who makes the challenges?

Challenges are submitted by a network of providers including nature centers, zoos, education institutions, state agencies, parks departments, and more.

Challenges are submitted using Survey 1,2,3 - a geospatial data collection software from Esri's ArcGIS platform.

Visit the *Information for Providers* section for more about how to submit challenges.

Do participants need to register?

No, participants do not need to register prior to accessing challenges. Anyone can participate.

Participants can work alone or in a team, and there is no limit to the number to the number of individuals that can work together to complete challenges.

Benefits for Providers

Challenge Badges

Providers have the opportunity to offer digital badges to participants that have completed a challenge or group of challenges. Badges are designed by providers and are uploaded with the challenge submission survey.

Participants fill out a *Challenge Progress Report* to receive badges. On the form, participants select which challenges they have completed, upload their proof, and then the digital badges are delivered to the email provided. Badges are sent both a PDF and image formats to a participant's email. Badges can then be printed and displayed, and participants are encouraged to keep track of the badges they earn.

Note: Challenges are not required to offer badges, but including a badge allows Nature Challenge to track public participation on specific challenges and gather data that can be used to improve public engagement in the future.

Automated Badge Delivery

The badge verification and delivery system is automated, meaning that it's less work on providers to offer badges to participants.

Tracking Badge Metrics

While providers will not have access to a participant's personal contact information, metrics surrounding challenge participation and voluntary demographic data will be made available in the public analytic dashboard. (Dashboard launches summer 2021.)

HOW IT WORKS For Participants

1

TO FIND A CHALLENGE, BROWSE THE MAP OR DIRECTORIES

The map has location-specific challenges, while the directories are organized by category. Click on a challenge for more information and a guide to complete it.

2

PICK AND COMPLETE A CHALLENGE

Select a challenge, download the necessary resources, and get to learning!

Share with others and post your adventure on social media with #NatureChallenge

3

EARN DIGITAL BADGES

Earn and collect badges for completed challenges.

Visit the Earn Badges page and submit a **Challenge Progress Report** along with your creations or photos.

HOW IT WORKS

For Providers

1

COME UP WITH A CHALLENGE THAT EDUCATED & ENGAGES

Challenges are no longer limited to location-specific activities. Get creative and use the resources and program materials that you already have, or invent something new.

2

SPECIFY A CHALLENGE TYPE AND COMPLETION METRIC

Place-based | Anywhere | Virtual | Home & School

How can a participant prove they have completed your challenge?

Examples: complete a worksheet, submit a photo of your challenge/creation, post to social media with a hashtag, link to an iNaturalist post, etc.

3

SUBMIT YOUR CHALLENGE

Using the Survey 123 form, submit your challenge, link to your site, and upload any supplementary material participants will need.

If your challenges offers a badge, upload the .png file. After submission, the challenge will be reviewed by administrators and appears on the map or directory.

There is no deadline to submit. The form is active year-round.

4

PROMOTE THE CHALLENGE AND STAY CONNECTED

Provide challenge information on your pages and link back to Nature Challenge.

Post to social media with #NatureChallenge #TexasNatureChallenge

We'll keep track of analytics and communicate with challenge providers.

Challenges can be edited by administrators at any time.

INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS



"Provider" is a term used to refer to official agencies, departments, companies, educational institutions, non-profits, and related environmental education organizations such as zoos, nature centers, libraries, non-profits, schools, and city parks departments, and more.

Though it is not a requirement, many providers belong to the Texas Children in Nature Network and are part of regional collaboratives. To learn more about connecting with regional partners, visit:

Texas Children in Nature - Connecting with Regional Partners

Challenge Submission Process

Step 1 Submit your challenge using the *Nature Challenge Submission Survey For Providers* online or in the Survey 1,2,3 mobile app.

Step 2 Challenge is reviewed and approved by a Nature Challenge administrator.

Step 3 Challenge appears on the site in the map or directory for the public to enjoy!

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Who can propose challenges?

Only official organizations are allowed to submit challenges. This restriction is to ensure the safety and security of Nature Challenge participants and that all content is appropriate for users under age 18.

Official organizations include nature centers, zoos, education institutions, environmental education organizations & groups, service organizations, university & student associations, state agencies, parks departments, federal agencies, businesses and non-profits.

All challenge submissions are reviewed by a Nature Challenge administrator prior to going live on the map and directories. If a Nature Challenge administrator requires additional challenge information or proof of the official status of an organization, they will reach out directly to the contact designated in the challenge proposal form.

Does Nature Challenge cost anything?

No, Nature Challenge is free to use. Free to providers, free to the public, free period.

The service utilizes Texas A&M Forest Service licenses and is developed in Esri's ArcGIS Online Platform.

Note: Nature Challenge is free to use but does not restrict providers from charging entry fees at challenge locations.

Provider Responsibilities

Providers retain ownership of challenges and are responsible for maintaining challenge resources and field sites for use by participants.

Providers are responsible for:

- Maintaining challenge resources, such as worksheets, field sites, and on-site challenge materials, etc.
- Promptly communicating changes or issues to Nature Challenge administrators, such as changes to challenge requirements, locations & addresses, long-term site closures, or challenge contact information.
- Responding to participant inquiries about the use of your challenge, such as providing directions to challenge sites, further instructions on how to do an activity, etc.
 Public contact information will be collected in the challenge submission survey and made available under challenge information.

Can I edit a challenge once it's been submitted?

Providers can make edits to existing challenges. See the sections below, Submitting Challenges and Editing Existing Challenges for more information on how to request edits.

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SUBMITTING CHALLENGES



All challenges will be submitted through the ArcGIS Online data collection platform, Survey 123.

The *Nature Challenge Submission Form For Providers* is available on a web browser or via the Survey 123 mobile app.

How To Submit Using a Computer

From a browser

Step 1

Click the link below to route to the challenge submission survey

https://arcg.is/1eb54L1

Step 2

Enter challenge details and upload any necessary materials. If a place-based challenge, enter location information.

Step 3

Review your submission, click submit. After the system receives your entry, you will receive an email confirming your submission.

How To Submit Using A Mobile Device - Browser

From a mobile web browser

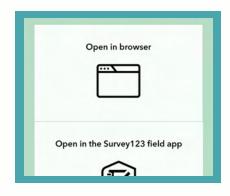
Step 1

From a mobile device, click the link below to access the mobile survey.

https://arcg.is/1z9iTj

Step 2

Select "Open in Browser" and continue to the survey page.



Step 3

Enter challenge details and upload any necessary materials. If a place-based challenge, enter location details.

Step 4

Review your submission, click submit. After you submit, you will recieve an email confirming your submission.

Note: You should not be prompted or required to login to ArcGIS to access the survey. If the link above does not take you directly to the survey, contact naturechallenge@tfs.tamu.edu.

How To Submit Using A Mobile Device - App

Step 1

Download the Survey 123 app, available for IOS and Android.



Step 2



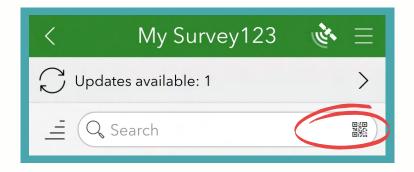
Open the app and select "Continue without signing in"

If you or your organization have an ArcGIS account, you can also login and save Nature Challenge to your list of available surveys.

Step 3

Using the bar code scan icon in the search bar at the top of the screen, search for the form using the survey QR code. (See below)

Step 3 Continued ...





Scan this QR code.

Step 4

Select "Open in the Survey 123 field app" and continue to the survey page.



Step 5

Enter challenge details and upload any necessary materials and location details.



When entering location information, you have the option of dropping a pin to capture the exact coordinates of a field challenge. Just make sure your mobile device's location services are enabled.

Step 6

Review your submission, click submit. After you submit, you will recieve an email confirming your submission.

Saving Survey Drafts

While submitting a challenge, it may be necessary to exit the proposal survey and return to it at a later time.

Saving drafts in a computer or mobile browser

Survey 123 will store draft responses in the event that you accidentally closeout or must leave a browser session. Simply re-enter the survey through the survey link.

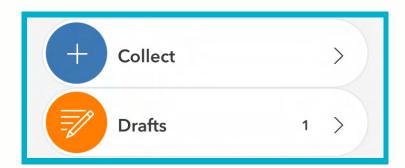
Note: This only works as long as the survey has not sent out an update and the browser's cookies have not been erased.

Saving drafts in the Survey 123 app



The mobile app allows users to manually save draft survey responses by clicking the exit survey button in the top left corner and selecting "Save in Drafts."

You can then re-enter any previous survey by selecting it from drafts.



Broken Survey Links

The submission survey may undergo occasional maintenance and edits, prompting for Nature Challenge administrators to update links. Links to previous survey versions will become inactive and may result in an error message or submission restriction.

Troubleshooting issues accessing the survey

If you click the survey link, but are directed to an error page, try the following:

Option 1

Make sure you're accessing the most up-to-date link. Current active links can be found at:

tfsweb.tamu.edu/naturechallenge/information

Option 2

Make sure your browser isn't accessing an old survey.

- Try clearing your browser's history and cookies
 - Or -
- Try opening the survey in a different internet browser

Option 3

If you're using the app, make sure the survey is updated. The app should automatically prompt users to update before entering data, otherwise update the app manually in your devices settings, and reopen the app.

You may need to restart your mobile device before updates go into effect.

EDITING EXISTING CHALLENGES

All changes to challenge information must be made by a nature challenge administrator. This is a security feature that allows us to keep Nature Challenge secure and safe for all users.

During the review process, Nature Challenge administrators will proofread submission responses and may make edits, as needed, to correct typos and misspelled words that impact sentence clarity.

Administrators are available to make changes M-F 8am-5pm.

Follow the instructions below to request edits to an existing challenge.

Additional information and questions

All additional editing questions can be directed to a nature challenge administrator, as these individuals have access to the backend functions and can make changes to submitted challenges.

Contact: naturechallenge@tfs.tamu.edu

Note: Future updates will allow providers to edit their own challenge information, but that functionality is not yet available.

How to edit an existing challenge

For major changes

Examples: wrong file upload, incorrect address, adding a badge, etc. Major changes can affect the usability of a challenge.

Send an email naturechallenge@tfs.tamu.edu

- Subject heading: "Major Change to Existing Challenge: (Name of challenge)."
- Include a provide a brief description of the requested changes. Where applicable, attach corrected files or information.

Major change request will be processed within <u>48 hours</u> (except on weekends,) and provider will receive a confirmation email when the changes have been made.

For minor edits

Examples: typos, misspelled words, contact changes, category switches, etc.

Send an email naturechallenge@tfs.tamu.edu

- Subject heading: "Edit an Existing Challenge: (Name of challenge)."
- Include a provide a brief description of the requested changes.

Minor change request will be processed within <u>72 hours</u> (except on weekends,) and provider will receive a confirmation email when the changes have been made.

CREATING CHALLENGES 101



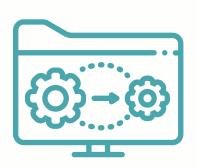
Challenges Can Be Many Things

Challenges can include wide variety of activities, games, physical and mental tasks, service opportunities, or other various projects that involve hands-on learning and new skills development. Providers have the freedom to decide what kinds of challenges as well as or how many they would like to offer.

Easy to make challenges can also be based on resources that providers already have, such as worksheets, activities, and facilities. Some examples include: scavenger hunts, games, seek & finds, service projects, work days, tree plantings, trash clean-ups, and more. There's no limit to what can become a Nature Challenge.

What makes a good challenge?

Successful challenges follow the following suggestions:



DRAWS ON THINGS WE ALREADY DO



NOT STAFF
DEPENDENT
(COVID CONSCIOUS)



DESIGNED FOR A
VARIETY OF
AUDIENCES

Types of Challenges

Place-Based Challenges

Place-based challenges are designed to be completed at a specific location outdoors, such as at a park, a particular trail, forest, or at a provider's site.

Anywhere Challenges

Anywhere challenges are designed to be completed outdoors but can be done anywhere. For example, challenges about a particular theme or ecosystem, such as forests, can be completed at any location that meets the necessary requirements. These challenges are also called statewide challenges, though there is nothing limiting participants from participating across state or even international lines.

Virtual Challenges

Virtual challenges are designed to be completed online using a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Though Nature Challenge does encourage participants to get outdoors, it is not always easy or equitable for participants to do so.

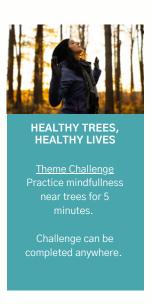
Virtual challenges are useful for those that don't have easy access to nature or are otherwise unable to participate in an outdoor challenge. These challenges also allow providers to take advantage of digital and virtual resources, such as digital field trips, online learning modules, videos, and website tools.

Home & School Challenges

Home and school challenges are designed to be done in the safety and comfort of a participant's own space both indoors and out. Individuals can participate in the at-home challenges while students and school groups can participate on their campuses. Examples of challenges include activities such as site investigations like energy and water audits, improving a home or school's wildfire readiness, art and nature design projects, creating pollinator gardens, campus clean-ups, and more.

Example Challenges









Selecting Challenge Categories

To make challenges easier to locate as well as to track, challenges are divided into different topics, ecosystems, and categories. Providers will select these categories and relevant topic when proposing a challenge via the Nature Challenge Submission Form.

Ecosystem theme options include: Forests/Woodlands, Grasslands/Prairies, Marine/Coastal, Freshwater, Desert, and Other.

Challenge topics include:

- Bees & pollinators
- Botany & gardening
- Energy
- Entomology & arachnology (insects & spiders)
- Green careers
- Geology
- Geography & maps
- Health & nature
- Holidays
- Indigenous voices
- Natural resource conservation & preservation
- Physical activity
- Trees & forestry
- Waste & recycling
- Wildfire education & prevention
- Wildlife
- Other

Additional categories include:

- Indoor challenges
- Outdoor challenges
- Climate action challenges
- Environmental justice challenges
- STEM skills challenges
- Art challenges
- English/language arts challenges
- Social studies challenges

Uploading Multiple Challenges

Though it is time-consuming, there is no way to bypass the provider information requirement at the beginning of the proposal survey at this time. Future updates to the challenge submission survey will allow providers to enter their information once in order to propose multiple challenges simulatneously, however that feature is not yet available.

Providers that wish to offer multiple challenges are encouraged to do so. There is no limit to the number of challenges a provider can submit.

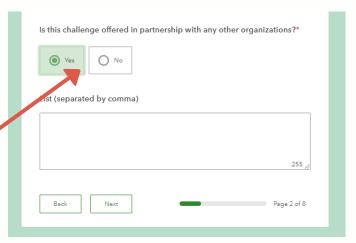
Adding Materials After Challenge Submission

(See section titled "Editing Existing Challenges.)

Challenges Featuring Multiple Providers

Challenge providers may with to work together with other organizations to offer badge collections or challenges featuring multiple sites.

To indicate this, select one organization to serve as the primary challenge contact and list all partner organizations under the multiple partners field on the challenge submission survey.



Challenge Completion Metrics

What is a completion metric?

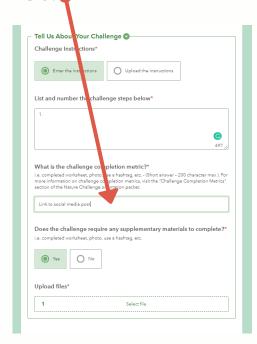
Challenge completion metrics are the proof required to verify that a challenge has been successfully completed. These metrics are specified by the challenge provider.

The most common completion metrics are:

- Uploading a photo
- Uploading a completed worksheet (.doc or .pdf)
- Pasting a link to a social media post, website, or other digital proof

Selecting a completion metric

When filling out the completion metric on the challenge submission survey, type in your desired completion metric into the free response field.

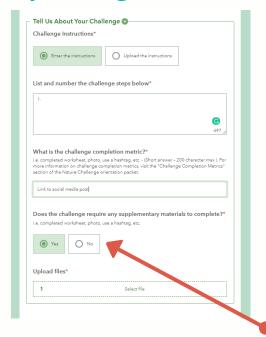


Participants will submit their proof via the Challenge Progress Reports.

This question is open-ended so that providers can be creative in what kind of proof they require. Nature Challenge administrators will manually make changes to the Challenge Progress Report based on a provider's preferences.

Selecting the upload button below will not influence the challenge completion metric. (See next section.)

Uploading additional materials



In the challenge proposal survey, providers are given the opportunity to upload additional resources, such as documents, photos, or other information resources that participants will need to download in order to participate in a challenge.

This includes things such as worksheets to be completed, photos of challenge materials, maps or instruction pages, etc.

If there are additional materials a provider would like to include, select "Yes" and a upload feature will appear.

If there are no additional materials required beyond the instructions listed above, select "No."

Creative Completion Metrics

Providers may desire to have participants write text to accompany upload images or links to social media posts. If so, indicate the writing requirements in the challenge instructions, include a worksheet with a space to write about a challenge experience, or instruct participants to add a description to photos posted to social media.

If providers opt to have participants post to social media as the completion metric, it is helpful to include instructions about which specific hashtags or page handles to tag.

For example: #NatureChallenge #TreeIDChallenge @TXForestService

CHALLENGE BADGES



Offering Digital Completion Badges

Providers have the option of creating and uploading digital badges to their challenges. These badges serve as incentives to participants and also allow Nature Challenge to gather participation information for a specific challenge or group of challenges.

Earning Badges

Providers earn badges by completing challenges and submitting a challenge progress report, in which they will select which challenges they have completed, submit the proof a provider requires, as well as enter an email to which the digital badges will be delivered.

Creating Badges

Providers create their badges and upload the .png files to a challenge submission survey.

For examples and instructions on creating badges, visit the Badge Creation google drive.

Badge Templates - Google Drive for Providers

Tip: It is best badges are in a .png file format with an transparent background and at least 72 DPI (or a 400X600 pixels) in size. When designing a badge, typical Instagram image size (1080X1080) are high enough resolution to meet this requirement.

ANALYTICS DASHBOARD

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Dashboard Coming Soon!

Full dashboard expected to launch early summer 2021.

What Is the Analytics Dashboard?

The analytics dashboard keeps track of all proposed Nature Challenges as well as public participation, and is informed by challenge submissions, challenge progress report surveys as well as other analytics built into the site.

From this dashboard, providers will be able to access data such as number of providers offering challenges per region, total challenge counts, challenge categories and ecosystem breakdowns, as well as other data like how many participants have completed badge challenges.

This data can then be used to improve future challenges and outreach in the future, as well as help partners, develop a closer collaborative network based on similar interests or programs.

How To Access the Dashboard

The dashboard can be accessed through the Total Challenges count button in the top right-hand corner of the Nature Challenge home page.



MARKETING & PROMOTION



Marketing & Promotional Materials

Nature Challenge wants to make it as easy as possible for providers to promote their challenges and the site via print and social media.

Promotional materials available for download can be found here:

Marketing & Promotional Materials Google Drive

Additional information and questions

Additional questions or suggestions for promotional materials, as well as conference presentation requests contact:

Sarah Coles - Texas Children in Nature Network
scoles@texaschildreninnature.org
Jacey Tosh - Texas A&M Forest Service
education@tfs.tamu.edu

Partner Social Media Handles

Texas A&M Forest Service



f @texasforestservice

@texasforestservice

② @txforestservice

tfsweb.tamu.edu

Texas Children in Nature Network



@texaschildreninnature

@texaschildren_innature

② @txchildren

texaschildreninnature.org

Texan by Nature



f @texanbynature

@texanbynature

@TexanbyNature

texanbynature.org

Happy Challenging!

Desktop App Launches

March 15, 2021

Mobile version coming soon!

