



Empowering Property Care
Growing Today's Youth into Tomorrow's Leaders

NextGrounds Employee Handbook

Growing Today's Youth into Tomorrow's Leaders

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Employee Handbook Acknowledgment and Overview

This Employee Handbook ("Handbook") is intended to provide you with important information regarding your employment with NextGrounds, LLC ("NextGrounds"), including workplace policies, employee benefits, expectations, and general working conditions. This Handbook applies to all employees—both exempt and non-exempt.

It is your responsibility to read, understand, and comply with all provisions of this Handbook. It outlines your responsibilities as a team member and introduces you to various programs and practices designed to support your personal and professional growth within the company. One of our primary goals is to maintain a work environment that promotes safety, integrity, development, and mutual respect.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS HANDBOOK IS PROVIDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. IT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT, NOR DOES IT CREATE ANY EXPRESS OR IMPLIED GUARANTEE OF EMPLOYMENT OR CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT, UNLESS ALL PARTIES INCLUDING, AN AUTHORIZED NEXTGROUNDS COMPANY OFFICER, AGREES IN WRITING AND THE TEAM MEMBER/EMPLOYEE HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY HIRED.

Unless covered by a separate, binding agreement or collective bargaining agreement, all employment with NextGrounds is "at-will." This means that either you or NextGrounds may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice. Nothing in this Handbook modifies or alters this at-will employment relationship.

The policies and procedures contained in this Handbook are subject to change or revision at the sole discretion of NextGrounds, with or without prior notice. No supervisor, manager, or representative of NextGrounds, other than an authorized company officer, has the authority to alter or amend the policies contained herein. Any such modification must be in writing and signed by a NextGrounds Officer to be valid.

NextGrounds reserves the right to interpret, apply, and enforce the policies outlined in this Handbook as it deems appropriate. All prior employee handbooks, policies, or procedures that conflict with the provisions contained herein are hereby revoked and replaced.

NextGrounds also reserves the right to determine the appropriate disciplinary action—including suspension or termination of employment—for any violation of the policies and procedures set forth in this Handbook.

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Introduction

Welcome to NextGrounds!

We're excited to welcome you to the team. At NextGrounds, we're more than just a landscaping and property care company—we're a mission-driven organization dedicated to professional service and youth leadership development.

We provide real-world job opportunities for high school and college students, helping you build valuable skills, strong character, and meaningful experience that will serve you far beyond your time with us.

Whether this is your first job or one of many, your journey here is about more than earning a paycheck. It's about building confidence, learning responsibility, and contributing to a team that is making a positive impact in our community—one project at a time.

Mission, Vision & Core Values

Our Mission

Growing Today's Youth into Tomorrow's Leaders.

We provide meaningful work experiences that help young people develop strong character, valuable job skills, and leadership qualities.

Our Vision

To build a community of empowered young adults who take pride in their work, lead with integrity, and make a positive impact—one job site at a time.

Our Core Values

- **Integrity** – Do what's right, even when no one is watching.
- **Responsibility** – Be dependable and own your actions.
- **Service** – Lead by serving others with care and respect.
- **Growth** – Stay open to learning and committed to improvement.
- **Teamwork** – Collaborate with purpose and support one another.
- **Resilience** – Overcome challenges with determination and a positive mindset.

These values guide how we work, how we lead, and how we treat each other—on every job, every day.

About NextGrounds

NextGrounds is based in Puyallup, Washington and offers a wide range of professional landscaping and property services—yard clean-up, tree and hedge trimming, junk removal, planting, gutter cleaning, pressure washing, and more.

What makes us different? Our services are delivered by motivated high school and college students, supported by mentors and trained with care. We are licensed, bonded, insured, and committed to doing high-quality work with a purpose.

NextGrounds: Exceptional Service with a Purpose—Led by Tomorrow's Leaders.

Our Leadership Program Philosophy

At NextGrounds, leadership is more than a title—it's a mindset. We believe that every team member, regardless of experience or position, has the capacity to lead by example, take initiative, and make a positive difference.

We intentionally structure your work experience to help you develop 15 essential leadership traits. Through hands-on training, mentorship, and reflection, you will grow into a capable, confident leader prepared to succeed in any future career or community role.

Leadership at NextGrounds means:

- Taking initiative without being asked
- Leading by example
- Supporting and uplifting others
- Learning from mistakes
- Being open to growth, feedback, and self-improvement

You don't have to be perfect to lead—you just have to be willing to grow.

Team Values & Leadership Traits

Here are the 15 core traits we help you develop during your time at NextGrounds:

1. **Integrity** – Be honest, ethical, and trustworthy in everything you do.
2. **Responsibility** – Own your work and follow through on your commitments.
3. **Self-Discipline** – Make smart choices and stay focused, even when it's hard.

4. **Communication Skills** – Speak clearly, listen actively, and collaborate well.
 5. **Empathy** – Understand and respect the feelings and needs of others.
 6. **Initiative** – Step up, seek out ways to help, and solve problems proactively.
 7. **Resilience** – Bounce back from setbacks and keep a positive attitude.
 8. **Humility** – Stay open to learning and value the contributions of others.
 9. **Time Management** – Prioritize tasks and balance your responsibilities wisely.
 10. **Collaboration** – Be a team player who works well with others to achieve shared goals.
 11. **Curiosity** – Stay eager to learn, ask questions, and grow.
 12. **Adaptability** – Embrace change and adjust when things don't go as planned.
 13. **Confidence (Without Arrogance)** – Trust yourself while remaining grounded and coachable.
 14. **Problem-Solving Skills** – Think critically, stay calm, and find effective solutions.
 15. **Service-Mindedness** – Lead with kindness, purpose, and a desire to help others.
-

What Makes Us Unique

At NextGrounds, we offer more than just a job—we offer a meaningful opportunity to build your future.

Here's what sets us apart:

- **Youth-Led with Mentor Support** – You'll be guided by experienced mentors while gaining real responsibility on the job.
- **Purposeful Work** – Every shift is a chance to grow in professionalism, character, and work ethic.
- **Hands-On Leadership Training** – From Crew Lead roles to feedback sessions, you'll be given opportunities to grow.
- **Community Impact** – You'll see the direct results of your work in the homes and neighborhoods we serve.
- **Support for Student Success** – We offer flexible scheduling and resources (like discounted childcare) to support our student team.

At NextGrounds, you're not just clocking in—you're building something bigger. You're developing into a strong worker, a dependable teammate, and a future leader.

Employment Policies

At NextGrounds, we are committed to maintaining a respectful, safe, and inclusive workplace. These employment policies are designed to protect your rights, promote fairness, and create a professional environment where every team member can grow.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

NextGrounds is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We hire, train, and promote individuals based on merit, performance, and leadership potential—not personal characteristics.

We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other protected class under federal, state, or local law.

This policy applies to all aspects of employment, including:

- Hiring and onboarding
- Promotions and training
- Scheduling and job assignments
- Compensation and disciplinary actions

We are also committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities in accordance with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** and Washington State law.

If you believe you need a workplace accommodation, please speak with your supervisor or the HR representative. We will work with you to support your success.

Youth Employment Guidelines

NextGrounds proudly employs high school and college students. We comply with all federal and state youth labor laws to protect the well-being, education, and development of our younger team members.

For employees under age 18:

- Hours are limited during school weeks
- Certain hazardous tasks are restricted
- Work permits may be required
- Proper supervision and safety training are provided

We also offer flexible scheduling to ensure your job supports your academic and personal success.

Harassment & Discrimination Policy

NextGrounds is committed to a workplace free from harassment, discrimination, bullying, and retaliation. All employees are entitled to work in an environment where they feel respected and safe.

Prohibited behaviors include:

- Sexual harassment
- Derogatory jokes or slurs
- Bullying, intimidation, or gossip
- Physical threats or unwelcome advances
- Any conduct that creates a hostile or uncomfortable environment

If you experience or witness harassment or discrimination:

1. Report the issue to your supervisor, team lead, or company director
2. Your report will be handled promptly, professionally, and confidentially
3. Retaliation for reporting concerns is strictly prohibited

Respect is a core value. Everyone deserves to be heard, supported, and treated with dignity.

Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace

NextGrounds maintains a **zero-tolerance** policy regarding the use of drugs and alcohol in the workplace. This policy applies to all employees at all times during working hours, including breaks and while representing the company.

Prohibited conduct includes:

- Use, possession, or sale of illegal drugs or controlled substances
- Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, or other impairing substances
- Use of prescription drugs that impair your ability to work safely (unless disclosed and approved)

If you are taking prescribed medication that may affect your job performance, notify your supervisor immediately. This information will be treated confidentially and used only to ensure your safety and the safety of others.

Testing & Enforcement:

- Employees may be subject to drug or alcohol testing under certain conditions, such as after an accident, based on reasonable suspicion, or as part of a treatment follow-up

- Refusing a required test may result in disciplinary action or withdrawal of a job offer
- A first positive test may result in referral to counseling or a treatment program; failure to comply may result in termination
- A second positive test may result in immediate dismissal

Tobacco & Vaping:

Use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, or vaping products is prohibited on all job sites, in company vehicles, and during work hours.

Your safety is our priority. Substance use on the job puts everyone at risk and will not be tolerated.

Privacy and Personnel Records

We respect your right to privacy and are committed to protecting your personal information.

What we collect and store:

- Employment applications and documentation
- Emergency contact information
- Timecards, evaluations, and performance records
- Legal and tax forms (e.g., W-4, I-9)

How we protect it:

- Records are stored securely and accessible only to authorized personnel
- Your personal information will not be shared without your consent, unless required by law

Updating your information:

You are responsible for keeping your records current. Notify your supervisor promptly if you change your:

- Name or phone number
- Address or emergency contact
- School enrollment or availability

Accurate records help ensure your pay, benefits, and communications are correct.

If you have any questions about these policies, your supervisor or the HR representative is available to help. We are here to support you—and ensure a respectful, fair, and safe workplace for everyone.

Professional Conduct

At NextGrounds, how you show up—your attitude, appearance, and behavior—reflects on you and the entire organization. We expect all team members to uphold high standards of respect, responsibility, and professionalism on every job site and in every interaction.

Code of Conduct

Our workplace values are built on **integrity, responsibility, and respect**. As a NextGrounds employee, you are expected to:

- Be honest and trustworthy in your actions
- Follow all instructions and safety procedures
- Treat clients, coworkers, and supervisors with courtesy and respect
- Work efficiently and stay focused during shifts
- Use company tools and equipment responsibly
- Speak and act professionally—**no profanity, gossip, or disrespectful behavior**

Note: Swearing, inappropriate language, or hostile conduct is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

Leadership is demonstrated through professionalism, even when no one is watching.

Relationships & Workplace Etiquette

At NextGrounds, we are committed to maintaining a respectful, focused, and inclusive workplace. As a youth-centered organization, it's essential that all team members feel safe, supported, and free from distractions that could impact performance, morale, or the professional environment.

Personal Relationships at Work

While friendships are encouraged, romantic relationships between coworkers are **strongly discouraged**. Romantic or flirtatious interactions in the workplace can lead to discomfort, distractions, favoritism, or conflict—all of which negatively affect the team.

If you choose to pursue a personal relationship with a fellow employee, the following rules apply:

- All behavior during work hours and on job sites must remain professional.
- Public displays of affection, flirtatious conduct, or inappropriate conversations are not acceptable while on duty.
- Relationship-related drama, arguments, or conflicts **must not** be brought into the workplace.

- If a relationship disrupts team cohesion, job performance, or creates discomfort for others, NextGrounds reserves the right to reassign or terminate one or both employees involved.
- Romantic relationships between supervisors and the team members they oversee are strictly prohibited.

Romantic Relationships with Clients

Employees are **prohibited** from pursuing or engaging in romantic or flirtatious relationships with clients or customers of NextGrounds. Doing so creates a serious conflict of interest and may result in:

- Loss of client trust
- Perception of favoritism or unprofessional conduct
- Legal and liability concerns for the company
- Immediate reassignment or removal from client-related duties

Any employee who engages in an inappropriate relationship with a client may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Social Media & Relationship Boundaries

Online behavior reflects on our company just as much as in-person conduct. To protect your privacy, your team, and the reputation of NextGrounds:

- **Do not post about romantic relationships with coworkers or clients** on social media platforms in connection with the company.
- Avoid posting work-related content that includes inside jokes, flirtatious remarks, or inappropriate captions about teammates or supervisors.
- Refrain from tagging coworkers in personal or suggestive content without their permission.
- If a personal relationship ends, do not engage in public arguments or share private details online—especially if your coworker or client is tagged or identifiable.

Employees are reminded that **social media activity that affects the workplace**—even if posted outside of work hours—may lead to disciplinary action if it violates company values, professionalism, or trust.

Summary

You are expected to maintain professionalism, maturity, and respect—both on and off the job. If you are unsure whether a relationship or online post is appropriate, ask a supervisor or HR representative.

NextGrounds is a place to grow your skills, character, and future—not a place for workplace drama or blurred boundaries. We count on you to help keep our environment positive, respectful, and focused on our shared mission.

Attendance & Punctuality

Punctuality and dependability are critical traits in the workplace—and essential to leadership development.

- Arrive on time, in full uniform, and ready to work
- Notify your supervisor as early as possible if you are running late or unable to attend
- Excessive tardiness or unexcused absences may result in disciplinary action

Your team is counting on you—being reliable builds trust and opens doors for advancement.

Dress Code & Personal Appearance

Your appearance should reflect your role as a professional, safety-conscious team member. All employees must follow the dress code outlined below:

Required Attire:

- A clean NextGrounds t-shirt or approved workwear
- Closed-toe work boots or sturdy shoes (**no Crocs, sandals, or slides**)
- Work pants or shorts in good condition—no dresses, skirts, or shorts above knee
- Company or vendor-branded hats only (if worn)

Prohibited Attire:

- Ripped, sagging, or see-through clothing
- Crop tops, tank tops, or shirts with inappropriate images/text
- Jewelry that poses a safety hazard

Additional Appearance Guidelines:

- Hair should be tied back if it could interfere with tasks
- Use deodorant and maintain good hygiene—hair and teeth brushed, no obvious body odor
- Shirts must be worn at all times while working
- Rain gear is not provided—please bring your own as needed

Failure to meet appearance standards may result in being sent home or required to wear company-provided gear.

Phone & Internet Use

While we understand phones are a part of daily life, your full attention is required during shifts for safety and productivity.

General Rules:

- Personal phone use is not allowed during work hours unless approved for emergencies
- No texting, scrolling, or calls while on the job
- Phones may be used only during designated breaks
- No headphones or earbuds during work—**one earbud only** for music, if approved

Music must be kept at a low volume and cannot interfere with communication, safety, or professionalism. Singing or playing music with profanity is not permitted.

Company Devices & Communication Tools

Company phones, email accounts, or internet access may only be used for work-related purposes. Misuse of these tools (including sending inappropriate messages or accessing unauthorized websites) may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Solicitation Policy

To ensure a distraction-free environment, employees are not permitted to:

- Ask coworkers to buy items, sign petitions, or support causes during work hours
- Distribute flyers or promotional materials on job sites
- Allow non-employees to enter the worksite for promotional purposes

You may distribute approved materials (e.g., community flyers) after work hours at the office, but only with permission and in a tidy manner.

Confidentiality

As a team member, you may have access to private information. You are expected to treat all sensitive information with discretion and respect.

Confidential information includes:

- Client names, addresses, or private property details

- Employee schedules, personal contact information, or concerns
- Company processes, pricing, vendor information, and internal documents

Never share, post, or discuss company or client information on social media or with individuals outside of NextGrounds. Doing so may result in disciplinary action or termination.

If you're ever unsure whether information is confidential, ask your supervisor before sharing it.

Social Media Policy

Using social media in ways that reflect negatively on NextGrounds—whether on or off the clock—may result in disciplinary action.

You are prohibited from:

- Posting or sharing internal company matters, schedules, or client information
- Using company photos, logos, or branding without permission
- Making negative or disrespectful comments about the company, coworkers, or clients

We encourage professionalism online just as much as in person.

Key Takeaway:

Your conduct on the job shapes how clients see our company—and how others see your potential as a leader. Uphold our values, act responsibly, and lead with respect.

Safety & Operations

At NextGrounds, safety is a top priority. As a youth-centered company, we place a strong emphasis on safe work habits, proper equipment use, and responsible behavior at every job site. Every team member plays a critical role in protecting themselves, their coworkers, and the clients we serve.

General Safety Policies

- Always follow instructions and safety protocols.
- Ask questions if you're unsure how to do something.
- Report unsafe conditions, broken equipment, or hazards immediately.
- Horseplay, running, or reckless behavior is strictly prohibited.
- Never use tools or machinery without proper training and authorization.
- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.

Safety is part of leadership. Each team member is expected to lead by example when it comes to protecting themselves, their crew, and the community.

CPR & First Aid Certification Requirement

All team members are required to complete a CPR and First Aid certification course (online or in-person) **prior to starting work**. Certification must be current and documented. This is at the employee's expense unless otherwise arranged.

Job-Site Conduct & Equipment Use

- Treat all tools, machinery, and property with care and respect.
- Use equipment only as instructed and under supervision.
- Clean and return all tools to the designated location after use.
- Report broken, damaged, or missing equipment to your supervisor immediately.
- Stay in marked safety zones and use designated walkways.
- Do not engage in off-duty landscaping work using company resources or contacts.

Misuse of equipment, unsafe behavior, or damage to property may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Customer Relations

- Refer all customer questions or concerns to your Foreman.
 - Do not promise services, timelines, or changes directly to clients.
 - Maintain a polite, professional attitude at all times.
-

Use of Company Property & Equipment

- Company property (tools, equipment, vehicles, etc.) is for **authorized work use only**.
 - Do not take company property off-site without permission.
 - Do not use company phones, email, or internet for personal matters unless approved.
 - No sales, solicitations, or side business activity is allowed during work hours or on company time.
 - Personal calls and messages should be limited and not interfere with job performance.
 - Desks, lockers, vehicles, and storage areas are subject to inspection.
-

Weather Policies & Emergency Procedures

Working outdoors means weather can impact safety. We monitor conditions daily and adjust schedules as needed.

- In cases of **extreme heat, cold, storms, or lightning**, work may be delayed, rescheduled, or canceled.
- Stay hydrated and take breaks during hot conditions.
- If weather shifts unexpectedly, **follow supervisor instructions immediately**.

In an emergency:

- Remain calm and notify your team lead or supervisor.
 - Follow evacuation plans or safety procedures.
 - Know where the **first aid kit** and **emergency contacts** are located in all vehicles.
-

Transportation & Vehicle Use

Some employees may ride in or drive company vehicles. All transportation must be safe, respectful, and approved.

- Only authorized drivers may operate company vehicles.
- All passengers must wear seatbelts.
- No eating, roughhousing, or loud music in vehicles.
- Company vehicles must be kept clean and inspected daily.
- Keys must be returned to the office at the end of the day.

Vehicle Maintenance & Inspections:

- Drivers are responsible for basic cleanliness and inspections.
- Weekly inspection checklists must be submitted to the Foreman.
- Any damage or issues must be reported immediately.

Fuel & Reimbursements:

- Gas purchases must be approved in advance.
- Valid receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.
- Company vehicles must be refueled as needed during work shifts.

Personal Transportation:

- All employees are responsible for arriving on time at the office.
- Foremen do not pick up team members.
- If you drive yourself to a job site, your shift ends when you leave the site.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is essential to your safety and must be worn as required for specific tasks.

Examples of required PPE:

- Work gloves
- Safety glasses

- Closed-toe work boots
- Ear protection (when using loud equipment)
- Face masks (for dust, allergens, or air quality concerns)

Failure to wear assigned PPE may result in being removed from the job site or sent home without pay.

Injury Reporting & Return-to-Work Plan

If you are injured on the job—even slightly—you must notify your supervisor immediately.

If an injury occurs:

- Report the incident to your supervisor **as soon as it happens**.
- A written **incident report** will be completed.
- First aid will be provided, and emergency contacts will be notified if necessary.
- If medical attention is needed, we will assist in coordinating care.
- All injuries are reported to our Workers' Compensation insurance provider.

Returning to work:

- A doctor's note may be required to confirm your ability to resume work.
- Modified duties may be provided if necessary.
- You must follow all return-to-work instructions issued by your care provider.

Your safety is our priority. Never hide an injury or “tough it out.” Speaking up is responsible—and expected.

Key Reminders

- **Safety is non-negotiable**—violations will result in disciplinary action.
- **Ask questions** if you're unsure—learning is part of growth.
- **Lead by example**—safe choices build trust and demonstrate maturity.

By following these policies, you help keep yourself, your teammates, and our clients safe while building strong habits for the future.

Employee Development

At NextGrounds, we are committed to helping every team member grow—personally, professionally, and as a leader. Every job here is more than a task; it's a step toward your future. We invest in your development through training, mentorship, and leadership opportunities that will benefit you now and in any future job or career.

Development Opportunities Include:

- **Hands-on job training** in landscaping, teamwork, and customer service
 - **Leadership mentoring** to build confidence, communication, and responsibility
 - **Workshops and check-ins** focused on resume building, goal setting, and career readiness
 - **Advancement opportunities** for those who consistently demonstrate leadership and reliability
-

Job Classifications

To keep expectations clear, all team members are categorized by employment type:

Introductory Employees

All new hires begin with a 30–60 day **introductory period**. During this time, your skills, reliability, and team fit will be evaluated. At the end of the period, your supervisor will provide feedback and determine eligibility for continued or seasonal employment.

Seasonal Employees

Seasonal employees are hired for peak work periods, such as spring, summer, or school breaks. These roles are temporary and may lead to future rehire or advancement based on performance.

Part-Time Employees

Part-time employees work on a consistent, non-full-time basis (typically evenings, weekends, and school holidays). They may be eligible for leadership roles depending on their commitment and reliability.

*All employees are considered **at-will**, which means either the employee or NextGrounds may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice or cause.*

Team Values & Leadership Development

At NextGrounds, we don't just talk about leadership—we grow it. We believe leadership is shown through action, attitude, and service—not just a title.

Our Core Values:

- **Integrity** – Do what's right, even when no one is watching
 - **Responsibility** – Be dependable and accountable
 - **Self-Discipline** – Stay focused and make strong choices
 - **Communication** – Speak clearly and listen respectfully
 - **Empathy** – Show kindness and understand others
 - **Initiative** – Take action without needing to be asked
 - **Resilience** – Keep a positive attitude during challenges
 - **Humility** – Stay open to learning and feedback
 - **Time Management** – Plan and prioritize effectively
 - **Collaboration** – Be a team player and support others
 - **Curiosity** – Stay eager to learn and grow
 - **Adaptability** – Embrace change and stay flexible
 - **Confidence (with Humility)** – Believe in yourself while staying grounded
 - **Problem-Solving** – Think critically and act wisely
 - **Service-Mindedness** – Lead by helping and supporting others
-

Leadership Development in Action

We develop leaders through hands-on experience, mentoring, and regular reflection.

Traits We Develop:

- Initiative
- Accountability
- Communication
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Service-Mindedness
- Responsibility

- Team-Building
- Problem-Solving
- Integrity

Leadership Roles You Can Earn:

- **Crew Leader** – Directs daily work and supervises peers
- **Trainer** – Helps onboard and guide new team members
- **Project Lead** – Oversees small job sites or tasks
- **Mentor** – Supports peers with goal setting and growth
- **Ambassador** – Represents NextGrounds at events and in the community

How We Support Your Growth:

- Bi-weekly leadership check-ins
- Workshops and growth activities
- Recognition and rewards for leadership traits
- Opportunities for promotion

Training & Performance Evaluations

Initial Training Includes:

- Job expectations and site conduct
- Safety procedures and equipment usage
- Orientation on company values and policies
- Hands-on guidance from experienced staff

Ongoing Training Opportunities:

- Job shadowing
- Leadership workshops
- Skill-building sessions

- One-on-one coaching and feedback

Performance Evaluations:

Evaluations typically occur every **30 to 90 days** and may affect:

- Raise eligibility
- Promotion opportunities
- Continued employment status

You'll be evaluated on:

- Attendance and punctuality
 - Job performance and skill mastery
 - Teamwork and leadership behavior
 - Communication and professionalism
-

Conflict Resolution Process

We believe respectful communication is key to solving problems and building a positive work environment.

Steps to Resolve Conflict:

1. **Speak directly** with the person involved, respectfully and privately
2. If the issue continues, report it to your **team lead or supervisor**
3. For serious concerns (e.g., harassment, threats), report immediately to a **manager or owner**

All concerns will be taken seriously and addressed professionally. You will never be punished for reporting a problem in good faith.

Our Expectations During Conflict Resolution:

- Stay respectful
- Listen with an open mind
- Focus on solutions
- Avoid gossip or blame

Formal Complaint Process:

If needed, a formal complaint can be submitted directly to leadership. All formal complaints will be investigated thoroughly and fairly. Resolution may include mediation, reassignment, or disciplinary action, depending on the circumstances.

Leadership Growth & Promotion

At NextGrounds, promotions are earned—not given. We promote team members who consistently lead by example, help others succeed, and embody our values.

What We Look For in Leaders:

- Strong field performance and job reliability
- Consistent display of core values
- Positive influence on team culture
- Supervisor and peer feedback
- Technical skill development and initiative

Promotable Roles Include:

- **Team Lead**
- **Trainer**
- **Project Coordinator**
- **Mentor**
- **Youth Ambassador**

Leadership at NextGrounds means serving others, owning your role, and staying humble.

Key Skills You Can Build at NextGrounds

Professional & Technical:

- Lawn care: mowing, edging, planting
- Tool safety: pressure washers, trimmers, blowers
- Site preparation and cleanup

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) usage

Work Ethic & Personal Growth:

- Reliability and punctuality
- Task follow-through
- Strong communication
- Time and priority management

Leadership & Communication:

- Team collaboration
- Conflict resolution
- Customer service
- Giving and receiving feedback

Career Readiness:

- Resume and reference development
- Interview preparation
- Professional behavior and etiquette
- Goal setting and long-term planning

Remember:

You don't have to be perfect to lead—you just have to be committed to growth. Every shift is a chance to show up, step up, and grow into the leader you're capable of becoming.

Compensation & Scheduling

At NextGrounds, we believe in rewarding your hard work with fair pay, flexible scheduling, and opportunities for growth. Our goal is to support your academic and personal success while helping you build real-world skills.

Age Requirement & Work Schedule

We hire students 15 years and older, starting at \$17.00 per hour. All work schedules follow Washington State Minor Work Laws and comply with local labor standards.

Scheduling Guidelines:

Ages 16–17:

- Up to 4 hours per school day
- Up to 8 hours on non-school days

Age 15:

- Up to 3 hours per school day
- Up to 8 hours on non-school days

All positions are part-time. We do not schedule during school hours. Shifts are offered on weekends and non-school hours only to prioritize academic success.

Pay Periods & Timekeeping

- Pay is issued bi-weekly (every other Friday).
- Use the approved timekeeping system (e.g., mobile app or timecard) to clock in/out for each shift.
- Do not clock in or out for others.
- Any errors or missing hours must be reported to a supervisor immediately.

Accurate timekeeping is essential. Your pay reflects your time, effort, and honesty.

Overtime & Holiday Pay

- Overtime (more than 40 hours in a workweek) is paid at 1.5x your regular rate.

- Overtime must be approved in advance by a supervisor.
 - Holidays are unpaid unless otherwise stated by the company.
 - Most employees will not work overtime or holidays unless scheduled.
-

Meal Periods & Breaks

Nonexempt (Hourly) Employees:

- 30-minute unpaid meal break for shifts over 4 hours
- One 10 minute paid rest break for every 2 hours on shift

Breaks are scheduled to support operations and should not interfere with job responsibilities.

Exempt (Salaried) Employees:

May take breaks at their discretion, as long as daily duties are completed and company operations are not disrupted.

Shift Scheduling & Availability

We aim to accommodate your school and personal commitments while maintaining team reliability.

- Weekly schedules are issued in advance based on your availability and business needs.
- You are expected to attend all shifts you accept.
- Notify your supervisor in writing of any changes (e.g., school events, exams, or extracurriculars).

We work as a team—good communication helps everyone succeed.

Attendance & Punctuality

Strong attendance shows responsibility and reliability.

Unscheduled Absences:

- Notify your supervisor before your shift if you're sick or unable to attend.
- For emergencies, contact your supervisor as soon as possible.
- Two days of no-call, no-show may be treated as voluntary resignation.

Scheduled Absences:

- Must be approved at least 7 days in advance
- Should be unavoidable and not disrupt work if rescheduling is possible

Partial Absences:

- Must be communicated at least one day in advance if known
- Leaving early without approval may be considered job abandonment

Unexcused absences or repeated tardiness may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

Raises & Promotions

Raises and promotions are earned based on performance, not just time worked.

You may be considered for advancement by:

- Demonstrating leadership, initiative, and professionalism
- Consistently completing quality work and helping others
- Maintaining excellent attendance and a positive attitude
- Completing training or learning new skills

Potential promotions include:

- Crew Leader
- Youth Trainer
- Project Coordinator
- Youth Ambassador

Performance evaluations may be conducted annually to review your contributions and advancement opportunities.

Personnel Files & Evaluation Access

You have the right to review your personnel file up to once every six (6) months during employment.

- Submit a written request to your supervisor
- Review will be scheduled within 7 business days
- You may request a free copy of the file
- After separation, you may review your file once annually for as long as it is retained

If you disagree with any document in your file, you may submit a written response (up to five pages) that will be included in the file.

Leaves of Absence

We support necessary time away for health, family, and civic responsibilities. Leave may be paid or unpaid depending on the reason.

Types of Leave:

- Military Leave (per USERRA regulations)
- Jury Duty (unpaid unless otherwise required)
- Funeral Leave (unpaid)
- Medical Leave (unpaid)
- School Conference Leave (unpaid)
- Other Legally Protected Leave (e.g., voting, crime victim leave)

Requests should be made in writing and in advance whenever possible. Documentation may be required.

Holiday Work

NextGrounds does not operate on:

The Friday before Memorial Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, October 31st, November 1st, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday following Thanksgiving Day, Dec 22nd, Dec 23rd, Dec 24th, Dec 25th, Dec 26th, Dec 27th, Dec 31st and January 1st

However, due to weather or scheduling needs, holiday work may be requested. Flexibility is appreciated, and we do our best to balance team and individual needs.

Benefits & Perks

At NextGrounds, we recognize that employment is more than a job—it's a stepping stone toward your goals. We are proud to offer benefits that support your success at work, in school, and in life. These programs are designed to encourage leadership, personal growth, and long-term achievement.

Youth Childcare Benefit Program

NextGrounds offers affordable childcare during scheduled shifts to support our employees who are also parents. This benefit is made possible through our partnership with **Wildwood Park Discovery School**.

- \$4 per hour per child, childcare discount rate is only applicable to employees on active shift
- Care provided during scheduled work hours
- Safe, nurturing environment for your child
- Designed to support young parents on their leadership journey

Childcare Referral Disclaimer

Please note that childcare enrollment and tuition are solely managed by *Wildwood Park Discovery School*. While **NextGrounds** is proud to partner with and refer team members to Wildwood Park for childcare support, all decisions regarding enrollment eligibility, placement, and availability are determined by the school's administration.

NextGrounds cannot guarantee childcare placement, as we serve only as a referral partner. Final approval is at the sole discretion of Wildwood Park Discovery School, based on space availability and whether the program is a good fit for the child's needs.

For detailed information regarding enrollment, tuition, and program requirements, please contact *Wildwood Park Discovery School* directly.

We believe in walking alongside our student team members through every stage of life—including parenthood—so they can confidently grow into the leaders we know they can become.

Work-Based Learning & Resume Support

Employment at NextGrounds includes intentional support for your future career:

- Hands-on experience in landscaping, teamwork, and customer service
- Resume-building guidance to help document your skills
- Interview coaching and goal-setting support
- Opportunities to build confidence and prepare for future employment

Our aim is for you to graduate from NextGrounds with practical experience, polished professional materials, and clarity about your next steps.

School-Year and Summer Work Options

We offer flexible scheduling to help students balance work and academics:

During the School Year:

- Weekend shifts
- Short weekday jobs scheduled around school and extracurricular activities

During the Summer:

- Expanded shift availability
- Opportunities for full-time or increased hours

We collaborate with you to create a schedule that works—whether you're part-time during the school year or full-time in the summer.

Team Appreciation Events

We work hard—and we celebrate hard work. Throughout the year, we recognize your contributions through team bonding and appreciation events:

- Seasonal barbecues and celebration lunches
- Leadership awards and achievement recognition
- Surprise treats and snack breaks
- Holiday events, giveaways, and team outings

These moments foster a fun, connected work culture that values and rewards effort.

Leadership Incentive Program

We reward student employees who demonstrate leadership, responsibility, and initiative through the following recognitions:

Driver's License Achievement Bonus

Earning a driver's license is a significant milestone in personal responsibility and independence. We recognize this achievement as a reflection of:

- Integrity and safe decision-making
- Time management and self-discipline
- Initiative, resilience, and service-mindedness

Students who obtain their license while employed at NextGrounds may be eligible for a leadership bonus.

Academic Excellence Bonus (GPA 3.5 or Higher)

Consistently strong academic performance reflects the same values we uphold at work:

- Responsibility and self-discipline
- Curiosity and adaptability
- Humility and resilience

A bonus may be awarded for each semester or grading period where a GPA of 3.5 or higher is maintained and verified.

High School Diploma or GED Completion

Graduating high school or earning a GED marks a significant life accomplishment. This reflects leadership values including:

- Commitment, follow-through, and integrity
- Adaptability and problem-solving
- Confidence rooted in perseverance

We recognize and reward this achievement with a completion bonus.

Community Service Recognition (20+ Verified Hours)

Students who complete 20 hours of verified community service are eligible for recognition and potential bonuses. Community service builds:

- Empathy, service-mindedness, and communication
- Leadership, resilience, and humility

- Real-world problem-solving and collaboration

Service must be verified through a signed record of hours.

Examples of Meaningful Community Service Activities:

Helping People Directly:

- Volunteering at food banks, soup kitchens, or senior centers
- Tutoring younger students
- Supporting blood drives or acting as translators

Environmental Work:

- Park cleanups or tree planting
- Volunteering at animal shelters
- Starting a recycling or garden program

Educational & Literacy Outreach:

- Reading to children or running book drives
- Creating educational materials or tutoring

Working with Local Organizations:

- Helping with local events, Habitat for Humanity, or nonprofit offices

Awareness Campaigns & Fundraising:

- Hosting fundraisers or awareness campaigns for causes you care about

Creative & Tech-Based Service:

- Designing flyers or digital content for nonprofits
- Providing basic tech support to seniors or community centers

We encourage all team members to find a cause they care about and give back to their community.

Termination & Resignation

At NextGrounds, we strive to maintain clear communication and mutual respect at every stage of employment—including when an employee's time with the company comes to an end. This section outlines the policies and expectations related to voluntary resignation, involuntary termination, and the exit process.

Voluntary Resignation

If you decide to resign from your position, we ask that you provide at least two weeks' written notice. This allows us to plan for a smooth transition and, when applicable, offer an exit interview.

During the notice period, you are expected to work all scheduled shifts unless otherwise agreed upon.

Failure to provide proper notice may affect your eligibility for rehire or future references.

All company property—including tools, uniforms, safety equipment, and any other issued items—must be returned on or before your last working day.

Involuntary Termination

Employment with NextGrounds is at-will, which means either the employee or the company may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, and for any lawful reason.

Termination may occur for reasons including, but not limited to:

- Repeated unexcused absences or tardiness
 - Violation of safety or conduct policies
 - Insubordination or disrespectful behavior
 - Theft, dishonesty, or destruction of property
 - Unsafe work practices or failure to follow directions
-

Disciplinary Action Policy

To promote professionalism, safety, and a respectful work environment, NextGrounds has established a progressive disciplinary process, which may include:

1. First Offense – Verbal warning (documented by your Foreman)
2. Second Offense – Written warning (signed by you and your Foreman)

3. Third Offense – Written warning and formal review by the Foreman; may result in suspension without pay or termination

Note: Depending on the nature of the offense, NextGrounds reserves the right to bypass steps and proceed directly to termination.

Job Abandonment

If you do not report to work for two (2) consecutive scheduled shifts without contacting your supervisor, it will be considered voluntary resignation due to job abandonment.

Prohibited Harassment Policy

NextGrounds is committed to a work environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Harassment or discrimination of any kind—especially on the basis of protected class status (race, gender, age, religion, disability, etc.)—is strictly prohibited.

Examples of prohibited harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal abuse, slurs, or derogatory jokes
- Intimidating or hostile behavior
- Offensive or inappropriate images or messages
- Sexual harassment in any form, including unwelcome advances or conduct

If you experience or witness any form of harassment, report it immediately to the HR Head or Company Owner. All reports will be handled seriously, confidentially, and without retaliation.

We believe everyone deserves to feel safe and respected while working at NextGrounds. We do not tolerate harassment, and violations will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Return of Company Property

All issued items—including uniforms, tools, identification badges, and safety equipment—must be returned on or before your final day of work. Unreturned items may result in a deduction from final pay as allowed by law.

Final Paycheck

Your final paycheck will be issued on the next scheduled payday. It will include:

- All hours worked
 - Any approved and unpaid reimbursements
 - Earned bonuses (if applicable)
-

Exit Interviews

If time and availability permit, an exit interview may be offered to collect feedback about your experience. Your input helps us improve and better support future team members.

Acknowledgements & Agreements

Employee Handbook Acknowledgment

In consideration of my employment or participation with **NextGrounds, LLC** ("NextGrounds"), I, the undersigned employee or team member (or, if applicable, the parent or legal guardian of a minor team member), acknowledge the following:

- I have received a copy of the **NextGrounds Employee Handbook** and understand it contains important information regarding the company's policies, procedures, expectations, and my responsibilities as a team member.
- I have read, understand, and agree to follow the policies outlined in the handbook.
- I understand that the handbook is intended as a general guide and does not constitute a contract of employment, either express or implied.
- I acknowledge that NextGrounds may update, revise, or discontinue any policies within the handbook at its sole discretion and without prior notice.

I further understand and agree that:

- My employment with NextGrounds is **at-will**, which means either I or the company may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice.
- No supervisor, manager, or representative of NextGrounds—except the Owner or Authorized NextGrounds Executor in a signed written agreement—has the authority to alter the at-will nature of the employment relationship.
- If I am signing on behalf of a minor team member, I certify that I am their legal parent or guardian and accept these terms on their behalf.

In connection with my employment at NextGrounds, I voluntarily agree to the following:

- I acknowledge and accept the physical nature of landscaping and property care work, including potential risks associated with outdoor labor, tool use, and physical exertion.
- I understand that **NextGrounds is committed to providing training, supervision, and a safe work environment**, and I agree to follow all safety policies, use protective equipment as instructed, and report any unsafe conditions immediately.
- I voluntarily release and hold harmless **NextGrounds, LLC**, its owners, supervisors, mentors, and affiliates from any and all claims for personal injury, illness, property damage, or other losses that may arise in connection with my participation in work-related activities, **except in cases of gross negligence or willful misconduct**.
- If I am injured on the job, I agree to follow the company's **incident reporting and return-to-work process** and understand that **NextGrounds maintains workers' compensation coverage in accordance with Washington State law**.

Release and Waiver of Liability Agreement

For Participation and Employment at NextGrounds, LLC

As a condition of participation and employment with NextGrounds, LLC ("NextGrounds"), I, the undersigned (or parent/legal guardian if signing on behalf of a minor), voluntarily agree to the following:

Capacity to Consent

I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and legally competent to sign this agreement. If signing for a minor, I confirm that I am the parent or legal guardian of the team member listed below and that they are physically capable of participating in all required work and activities.

Assumption of Risk

I understand that landscaping and property care involve physical activity and may carry certain inherent risks, including but not limited to:

- Slips, falls, sprains, cuts, bruises
- Insect bites or stings
- Exposure to allergens, bacteria, viruses (including COVID-19)
- Other injuries or health complications related to outdoor labor or tool use

Voluntary Participation

I understand and accept these risks and voluntarily choose to participate (or allow the team member listed below to participate) in all work-related activities.

Medical Responsibility and Insurance

I certify that the team member has adequate health and liability insurance to cover any potential injuries or health events while working at or with NextGrounds. If not, I accept full financial responsibility for any resulting expenses. Known medical conditions have been disclosed, and I accept the associated risks.

Compliance with Safety Policies

I agree to comply with all company safety rules and procedures and to follow all instructions from NextGrounds staff. I understand that if signs of illness are present (e.g., fever, vomiting, rash), the team member may be asked to leave the job site and will not receive wage compensation for missed time. Return to work is permitted only once symptoms have fully resolved.

Waiver of Liability

To the fullest extent permitted by law, I release and hold harmless **NextGrounds, LLC**, including its owners, officers, employees, mentors, volunteers, and affiliates ("Released Parties") from any and all claims or liabilities for personal injury, illness, property damage, or loss arising from participation, **except in cases of gross negligence or willful misconduct.**

Indemnification

I agree to defend and indemnify the Released Parties against any claims, demands, or legal actions brought as a result of participation or presence on company property, except those caused by gross negligence or willful misconduct.

Media Release

I authorize NextGrounds to use photographs or video footage of the team member (or myself, if applicable) taken during work for promotional or marketing purposes. No compensation will be provided.

Severability

If any part of this agreement is deemed invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions will remain in full force and effect.

Arbitration Agreement

Any disputes related to this agreement that cannot be resolved informally will be submitted to binding arbitration in accordance with the rules of the **American Arbitration Association**, within 10 miles of the main NextGrounds location. Both parties waive their right to a trial by jury.

Acknowledgment of Waiver

By signing below, I understand that I am waiving significant legal rights, including the right to sue the Released Parties for any claim related to participation, **except where prohibited by law.**

If I am signing on behalf of a minor team member, I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor named below and that I understand and accept the terms of this agreement on their behalf.

By signing below, I confirm that I understand and accept the terms of both the Employee Handbook Acknowledgment and the Release and Waiver of Liability Agreement.

Employee or Team Member Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (if under 18): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____