



State of California - Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Office of Grants and Local Services

Planning a Competitive Project Under the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program

Best Practices

The [Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program](#) (SPP) is a competitive grant program that creates new parks and new recreation opportunities in underserved communities across California. The SPP Application Guide includes Project Selection Criteria and Technical Assistance sections to guide applicants in creating comprehensive and competitive application and project concepts.

The [Office of Grants and Local Services](#) (OGALS) Competitive Review Team has conducted over 100 focus groups, public hearings, application workshops, and reviewed over 1,000 applications over the last four rounds of SPP. Here are key points to consider:

- 1) The Application Guide simplifies grant writing.** To ensure a fair process, Project Selection Criteria responses require chart formats. The chart formats lead applicants to list brief facts and actual project deliverables instead of narratives.
- 2) Project planning is key.** Competitive applicants use the SPP Application Guide to plan competitive projects. They review the guide as early as possible, ask questions of their Competitive Review Project Officer, and attend an application workshop.
 - a) Some applicants will create a new project concept to fit SPP. They will find a new project site and follow the Project Selection Criteria.
 - b) Some applicants will have a pre-determined project; they may consider new concept and design improvements to score more points.
 - c) Some applicants with predetermined projects will not make any adjustments. A pre-determined project, with no adjustments based on the Project Selection Criteria, may miss program goals and priorities, and is usually less competitive.
- 3) Use the Project Selection Criteria as a concept-level guide.** Applicants should start as early as possible following the Project Selection Criteria in the SPP Application Guide to plan a competitive project.
 - This may mean making minor or even major changes to a pre-determined project.
 - This may mean realizing there is a need to pursue a different community, project site, and scope to be as competitive as possible.

Key Steps to Help Applicants Plan a Competitive SPP Project

1) Be open to using the SPP Application Guide to plan a competitive project.

Technical assistance is built into the guide and leads applicants to successful projects.

- a) Become familiar with the application guide months, instead of weeks, before the application deadline.
- b) Ask your assigned Competitive Review Project Officer questions early in the application process and attend an application workshop.
 - Project Officers are assigned by county of the project's location. Find your Competitive Review Project Officer (listed in the green column) by following this link: [Competitive Review Project Officer](#).
- c) Review the Competitive Chart in Documents under Technical Assistance Resources at www.parks.ca.gov/spp.
 - The Competitive Chart is an outline and planning tool. It uses "Yes" or "No" responses to see if a project meets the competitive priorities.

2) Conduct a site assessment. Select a project site that meets the goals of Project Selection Criteria #1-4 by using the Community Factfinder Tool. For more information, see the Community Factfinder Handbook at www.parks.ca.gov/spp.

3) Organize and hold community-based planning meetings with residents. After selecting a project site, hold design meetings with residents to reach Project Selection Criteria #5 goals.

- a) Inform residents about the program, its parameters, and even the grant award amount you are seeking. Providing this can help them shape their visions.
- b) Recognize that California is an enormous and diverse state, the State does not prioritize one type of recreation facility over another.
- c) Building a successful, sustainable park in an underserved community is like a work-of-art where the park becomes an expression and source of pride for the residents. Neighborhood residents have expertise about what will work in their community. Project Selection Criteria #4-8 and #10 encourages projects that reflect each community's unique needs and creativity.

4) Plan the Project Timeline. Getting projects ready for construction often requires layers of local reviews, permits, and other steps. The Project Timeline encourages applicants to look at each part of the entire project; pre-construction, construction, and completion.

5) Utilize the Application Checklist. Use the Application Checklist in the guidelines to organize the application. Draft documents, **except** for Checklist item #2 - Project Selection Criteria response, may be sent to your [Competitive Review Project Officer](#) for review before the application deadline.