

Best Practices

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

The [Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program \(SPP\)](#) is a competitive grant program creating new parks and new recreation opportunities in underserved communities across California. Applicants will utilize the SPP Application Guide to craft their applications. The SPP Application Guide, found on the SPP webpage, 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 conducted over 100 focus groups, public hearings, application workshops, and reviewed over 1,000 applications over four rounds of SPP. From these experiences, here are essential points to consider:

1) The Application Guide simplifies grant writing.

To ensure a fair process, the 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 the key.

Competitive applicants use the SPP Application Guide to plan a competitive project. They review the guide as early as possible, ask questions of their Competitive Review Team Project Officer, and attend an application workshop.

1. Some applicants will decide to create a new project concept to fit SPP. They will find a new project site and follow the Project Selection Criteria.
2. Some applicants will have a pre-determined project; these applicants consider new concept and design improvements to score more Project Selection Criteria points.
3. Some applicants with predetermined projects do not make any adjustments. A pre-determined project, with no adjustments based on the Project Selection Criteria, may miss some 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 to plan how to be competitive.

- This may mean making minor or even major changes to a pre-determined project.
- This may mean realizing that they 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 (guidelines) to plan a competitive project.** Technical assistance is built into the guidelines. The application requirements lead applicants to plan successful projects.

1. Become familiar with the Application Guide months ahead instead of a few

weeks before the application deadline.

2. Ask the Competitive Review Team Project Officer questions early. Attend Application Workshops.
 - Project Officers are assigned by county that the project is located. Find your Competitive Review Team Project Officer in the green column by following this link, [Project Officers by County](#)
3. 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 for applicants that use 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 for tips and guidance.
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. Inform the residents about the program, its parameters, and even the grant award amount you are seeking, providing this can help them shape their visions.

Recognizing that California is an enormous and diverse state, the State is not prioritizing one type of recreation facility over another. 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 in the guidelines encourages applicants to really look 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 the [Competitive Review Team Project Officer](#) for review before the application deadline.