

“Best Practices”
Planning a Competitive Project under the
Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization
Program (SPP)

SPP is a competitive grant program with specific goals and priorities. The “Application Guide” is crafted as a guide for applicants to reach these goals and priorities. The Application Guide includes a “Project Selection Criteria” section and a “Technical Assistance Section” to guide applicants for project concepts.

The SPP Team conducted over sixty focus groups, public hearings, application workshops, and reviewed 900 applications. From these experiences working with hundreds of applicants, 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 (actual project deliverables) instead of narratives.
- 2) **Project planning is the key.** Competitive applicants use the guidelines to plan a competitive project. They review the Application Guide as early as possible, ask questions, and attend Application Workshops. They are open to new ideas.
 - a. Some applicants decide to create a new project concept to fit SPP. They will find a new project site and follow the Project Selection Criteria.
 - b. If they have a pre-determined project, they still consider new concept and design improvements to score more Project Selection Criteria points.
 - c. On the other hand, 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.** 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. After understanding the grant program, some applicants realize 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 “Application Guide” (guidelines) to plan a competitive project.** Technical assistance is built into the Application Guide. The application requirements lead applicants to plan successful projects.
 - a. Become familiar with the Application Guide months ahead instead of a few weeks before the application deadline.
 - b. Ask the SPP Team questions early. Attend Application Workshops.
 - c. The “Competitive Chart” at www.parks.ca.gov/spp is a summary to plan the competitive project.
2. **Site Assessment:** Select a project site that meets the goals of Project Selection Criteria 1, 2, and 3 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. **Project Design with Residents:** After selecting a project site, have design meetings with residents reaching Project Selection Criteria #4 goals. Also use Project Selection Criteria 5 through 9 to shape the project concept.

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 #4-7 and 9 encourages projects that reflect each community’s unique needs and creativity.

4. **Project Timeline:** Getting projects ready for construction often requires layers of local reviews, permits, and other steps. The Project Schedule Plan in the Application Guide encourages applicants to start the pre-construction plan before grant awards.
5. **Application Checklist:** Use the Application Checklist in the Guide to organize the application. Except for the Project Selection Criteria response, draft documents may be sent to the SPP team for review before the application deadline.

The SPP Team looks forward to providing technical assistance. Please see www.parks.ca.gov/spp for contacts and technical assistance updates.

We look forward to our continued partnership to improve the quality of life for communities throughout California.