

## **FY24 ORLP Rating System**

The grant rating system is taken directly from the National Park Service Notice of Funding Opportunity P24AS00498. The criteria below are copied from pages 19-20 of that document. It is highly recommended that all applicants review the NOFO thoroughly before completing this application. Massachusetts will use the same criteria to evaluate the applications it receives as well.

### **I. Criteria**

NPS will evaluate and consider only those applications that separately address each of the merit review criteria in the Project Narrative application requirement. Each applicant is required to provide a detailed project narrative, in accordance with section D.2., of the following criteria elements. It is HIGHLY recommended that the project narrative has sections labeled by criterion and bulleted topic.

#### **Criterion I – Project Merit**

#### **Maximum Points: 50**

This criterion assesses the quality of the proposed project in addressing the lack of outdoor recreation in, and wants and needs of, the target urban, disadvantaged community(ies). A five-point bonus will be awarded to nature-based projects (projects where nature is a major element of, or strongly supports, the proposed recreational activity). Otherwise, projects will be scored based on their ability to meet or surpass all of the following priorities: (1) demonstrating a high degree of effort or initiative to engage residents of the disadvantaged neighborhood(s) in the project's development, (2) demonstrating significant collaboration among the public and private sectors, including multiple levels of government, private/non-profit organizations, and community groups, and (3) having strong initiatives, policies, incentives, etc., to protect the area from gentrification (for more insight, see the National Recreation and Parks Associations' paper *Greening Without Gentrification* at <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/december/greening-without-gentrification/>). Please provide the following information:

- State if the project is, or is not, a nature-based park, and if so, provide a description of the natural elements and how these elements support the proposed recreation.
- Describe any additional relevant benefits to the disadvantaged community, beyond being nature-based, that the project will provide, such as transforming a previous brownfield, involving of new or non-traditional partners, reaching new user groups, etc.
- Describe the process that led to the development of this proposal. Focus on the efforts made to engage the disadvantaged community(ies) served, and their participation in the project's design as well as that of other interested/affected entities. Include details such as number of meetings held and number of attendees, number of community members contacted, number of responses received.
- Describe the partnerships or other collaborative efforts that have helped, or will help to,

facilitate the project.

- Describe initiatives and/or strategies that are in place to substantially limit gentrification of the project area.

## **Criterion 2 – Technical Excellence**

**Maximum Points: 50**

This criterion measures the project's conformance with LWCF requirements and its likelihood to be successful. Projects will be scored based on their ability to meet or surpass all of the following priorities: (1) directly aligning with at least one goal or need that is clearly identified in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), particularly any that are specific to urban or disadvantaged areas within the state or the area in which the project is located, (2) breaking ground within one year after award of a grant and be complete and open to the public within 2 to 3 years, (3) having a justified, reasonable, allowable and allocable detailed budget estimate that includes all information requested in Section D under "Detailed Budget Narrative", and (4) being managed by a qualified, experienced teams with federal grant awards and construction project experience, as well as having qualified entities to maintain the site long-term, both physically and financially. Please provide the following information:

- SCORP and any other relevant city, regional or stated plan goals or initiatives the project directly supports. State specifically, how the project supports each plan's priority or initiative (provide the plan title and date).
- Describe any other park or outdoor recreation plan (provide date of plan) that the project advances or supports, and state precisely how the proposed project aligns with it/each.
- Describe the status of planning referencing the milestones and measures in the timeline.
- Describe the non-recreational features within the project boundary such as leases or easements.
- Describe the basis/justification for the proposed budget estimates and identify who developed the budget estimates.
- Describe the qualifications of the parties responsible for managing the project, the grant, and long-term management and maintenance of the site (physically and financially).

## **2. Review and Selection Process**

NPS personnel, and in some cases independent reviewers, will review all proposals. All proposals for funding will be considered using the criteria outlined above. A summary of the review panel comments may be provided to the applicant if requested.

### **a. Initial Review**

Prior to conducting the comprehensive merit review, an initial review will be performed by NPS to determine whether: (1) the applicant is eligible for an award; (2) the information required by the NOFO has been submitted; (3) all mandatory requirements of the NOFO are satisfied; and (4) the proposed project is responsive to the program objectives of the NOFO (program

determination). If an applicant fails to meet the requirements or objectives of the NOFO, or does not provide sufficient information for review, the applicant will be considered non-responsive and eliminated from further review.

### **b. Comprehensive Merit Review**

All applications that satisfactorily pass the initial review will be eligible for the Comprehensive Merit Review, by a panel made up of professionals in fields related to the program criteria. The scores and reviewer evaluations will be used by the competition managers to produce a ranked list of proposals that will be recommended to the competition's selecting official for final selection.

Each criteria element will be scored on the 0 -50-point scale below.

Superior (40-50 points): The project strongly meets all priorities as well as providing several additional benefits for that criterion and/or has no technical weaknesses.

Good (30-40 points): The project strongly meets all priorities and/or contains only one or two minor technical issues.

Satisfactory (20-30 points): The project comes close to meeting all priorities and/or has a few minor technical issue(s).

Marginal (10-20 points): Project is weak in meeting more than one of the priorities and/or contains several minor issues or a moderate technical issue.

Poor (1-10 points): Application is far from meeting all priorities and/or contains one significant, or more than one moderate, technical issue(s).

Not Acceptable (0 point): Application does not address one or more priorities and is weak in meeting other priorities, and/or contains one significant, or numerous minor and moderate technical issue(s).

Applicants of selected projects must submit a full application within one year of the date of the NPS announcement of selected projects. The full application will be reviewed by the NPS for compliance with federal laws, most notably compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and with the National Historic Preservation Act. If these reviews reveal features of the project that affect its eligibility or viability, the NPS may remove the project from the competition.

During the full application review, budgets will be evaluated by program staff. Deficiencies identified, and adjustments suggested by the merit panel reviews, as well as corrections for unallowable or unreasonable costs, will be addressed with the State and may result in a reduced award.

### **c. Selection**

The Selection Official may consider the merit review recommendations and program policy factors to make a final determination about selections including:

- Availability of funding,
- Geographic distribution of projects and/or funds,
- Program objective and priorities (see Section A of this NOFO),

- The applicant's prior performance in managing LWCF grants and/or assisted sites,
- Issues uncovered during the NPS compliance review that cannot be resolved prior to the date of selection of projects,
- The amount of funds available to select applications for funding, and
- Benefits of acquisition and new development projects over rehabilitation projects.

**d. Discussions and Award**

The Government may enter into discussions with a selected applicant for any reason deemed necessary, including, but not limited to: (1) only a portion of the application is selected for award; (2) the Government needs additional information to determine that the applicant is capable of complying with the requirements of DOI Financial Assistance Regulations, and/or (3) additional specific terms and conditions are required. Failure to satisfactorily resolve the issues identified by the Government may preclude award to the applicant.