

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

National Park Service

Department of Interior

Last Updated: 09/14/2026

This FAQ document provides detailed information about the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grant Program, administered by the National Park Service. Information provided includes application procedures, eligibility requirements, and project guidelines. Please contact your State Liaison Office or email ORLP_Inquiries@NPS.gov if you have any questions that are not addressed in this document.

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Application Process

When will the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) be released?

- The Notice of Funding Opportunity was released on June 8th, 2026. It is five-year notice, which means the NOFO will be open until 2030, with a single application review period per year.

When are applications due?

- For directly eligible applicants (State and Territorial Lead Agencies, federally recognized Indian Tribes¹, Native Hawaiian communities or organizations, and Alaska Native communities or organizations) - Applications are due to the NPS each year on November 1st, by 11:59 pm ET. Applications are submitted via Grants.gov.
- For eligible sub recipients applying through a state or territorial lead agency (Municipalities, Special Purpose Districts)) - Each lead agency has their own deadline and process for state-level competition. Be sure to check with your lead agency for full details and deadlines.
- Urban Indian organizations may choose whether to apply through an eligible Tribal government or State and Territorial Lead Agency. In either case, each lead agency and Tribal government may have their own deadline and process for competition. Be sure to check with your lead agency or tribal government for full details and deadlines.

Where and how do I apply?

- If you are applying for a project in Census-Designated Urban Area, or as a Political subdivision of a State or Territory, you should contact your State or Territorial lead agency, and they will submit your application on your behalf. Applications for projects in Census-Designated Urban Areas that were not submitted through a lead agency are ineligible and will not be considered for funding.
- If you are applying as a federally recognized Indian Tribe, Native Hawaiian community or organization, or Alaska Native community or organization, you can submit your application directly via the Notice of Funding Opportunity in Grants.gov.
- Urban Indian organizations may choose whether to apply through an eligible Tribal government or State and Territorial Lead Agency.

Who is my State or Territorial lead agency?

- You can find your State or Territorial Lead Agency on the NPS [LWCF Contact List](#). Please reach out to ORLP_Inquiries@NPS.gov if you have questions.

¹ [Federal Register: Indian Entities Recognized by and Eligible To Receive Services From the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)

How are applications reviewed?

- National Park Service staff initially review each application to verify that it meets basic program eligibility requirements. If the application meets these requirements, it is moved forward to merit review. During merit review, an external review team evaluates and scores each application using the criteria in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Applications are then ranked based on their scores. These rankings help guide which applicants are selected for the ORLP program funding. To learn more about the merit review process, read to the “Merit Review Process” FAQ section.

When are selections announced?

- We anticipate announcing selections each May, following the November 1st deadline.

Eligibility Requirements & Eligible Applicants

What are the eligibility requirements for ORLP funding?

- ORLP only has one eligibility requirement; Projects must be located in a “qualifying area,” defined as:
 - A. An Urban Area with a population of 25,000 or more;
 - B. OR two or more adjacent Urban Areas with a combined population of 25,000 or more.
 - C. OR an area administered by an Indian Tribe or an Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian communities or organizations.
- The US Census Bureau maintains a list of all [qualifying urban areas](#) in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Insular Areas, which is available [here](#).
- Entities applying under “option C” above (Federally recognized Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiian communities or organizations, and Alaska Native Corporations and Organizations) **are NOT** subject to this population requirement and can apply regardless of population.

How do I determine whether my project meets the population requirement?

- To demonstrate that a project is in an Urban Area with a population of at least 25,000, use the Census Bureau’s [TIGER web tool](#). Full instructions are on page 12 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- To demonstrate that a project is eligible under the “two or more adjacent Urban Areas with a combined population of 25,000 or more,” option, applicants must:
 - State which adjacent Urban Areas the project qualifies under;
 - Demonstrate the combined population exceeds 25,000;
 - Show where the project is located in relation to the adjacent Urban Areas.

Are annual Census population estimates a valid data source to meet the Urban Area population requirement between official Census years? **(added 9/14/26)**

- Yes. Applicants can use intermediary Census population estimates to meet ORLP's population threshold. The [Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program](#) provides annual population estimates for states, counties, cities, and towns. Note that they do *not* estimate urban area populations. If applicants opt to use a population estimate, they will need to:
 - 1) Demonstrate that their project is in or abutting an existing urban area.
 - a. To demonstrate that a project is in an existing Urban Area use the Census Bureau's [TIGER web tool](#). Full instructions are on page 12 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
 - 2) Provide documentation of the updated population estimate directly from a Census data source, e.g. a [QuickFacts search](#), or an approved [Population and Housing Unit Estimates Table](#).
- For example, Royse City, Texas is a census-designated Urban Area with a population of 13,922 from the 2020 census. However, the [2025 population estimate](#) for Royse City is 28,307. This updated population estimate is acceptable and makes them eligible for ORLP.

Do project sites need to be within the boundaries of a qualifying Urban Area?

- Generally, yes, projects meeting eligibility as a “qualifying urban area” must be within the boundaries of an urban area.

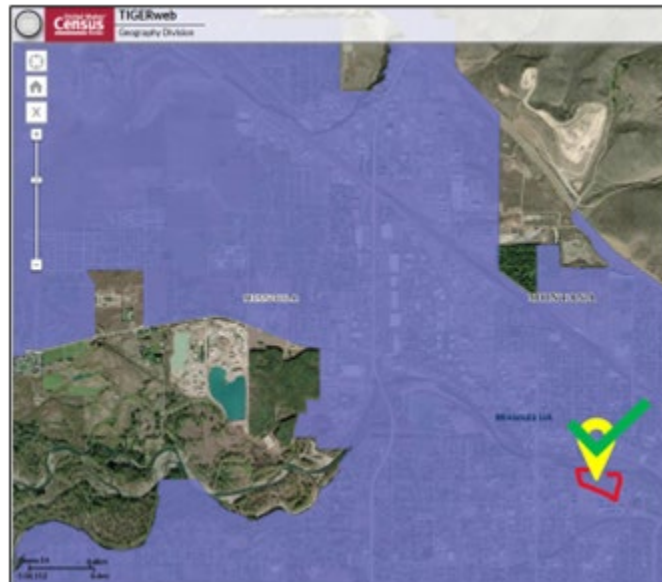


Figure 1. Example of a project that is fully within the boundaries of a qualifying urban area (Missoula, MT UA, population of 88,109), and eligible for ORLP.

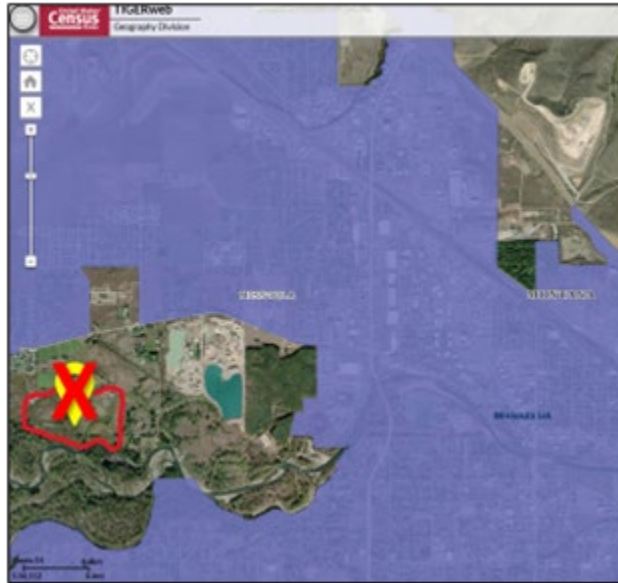


Figure 2. Example of a project that is fully outside the boundaries of a qualifying urban area, and ineligible for ORLP.

Are there any exceptions if a project falls outside an urban area boundary?

- Yes. Proposed project sites outside the boundaries of a qualifying urban area are allowable *if* the project site directly abuts the boundary of a qualifying urban area. In this situation, applicants must show that the project site can be directly accessed from the qualifying urban area—for example, by explaining existing rights-of-way, roads, or paths that connect the urban area to the project site.

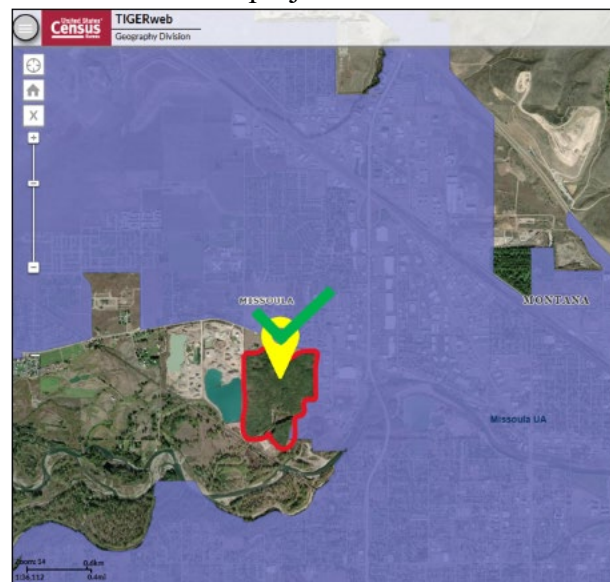


Figure 3. Example of a project that abuts the boundary of a qualifying urban area and is eligible for ORLP.

Are projects eligible that partially overlap with an urban area, but aren't fully located in the urban area boundaries?

- Yes, a project that partially overlaps with an urban area would be eligible for ORLP. The entire parcel would be eligible for acquisition or development, not just the area of overlap.

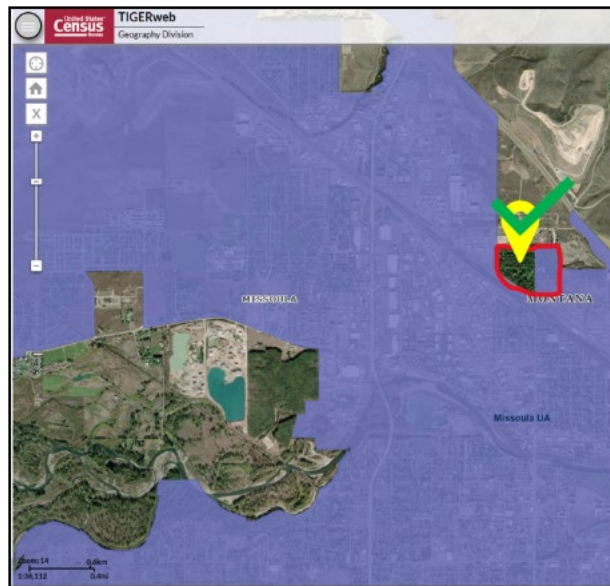


Figure 4. Example of a project that overlaps with a qualifying urban area and is eligible for ORLP.

In what cases can “adjacent” Urban Areas combine to meet the 25k population requirement?

- Applicants combining Urban Areas must have a compelling rationale for how the project will serve all the proposed populations. A compelling rationale includes demonstrating that user groups have proximate access to the site, or that the project will have some form of shared use, e.g., a long-range bike path that connects communities.

What if the park project is between two cities, can I add together the population of the two cities to meet the population requirement?

- The proposed project must be within a qualifying area. If two cities are combining population to meet the requirement, the project must still be in a qualifying Urban Area or an area administered by a federally recognized Indian Tribe, Native Hawaiian community or organization, or an Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian community or organization.

What if I do not meet the population requirement?

- Unfortunately, you are not eligible to apply for ORLP. Visit [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) to explore other federal funding opportunities that could be a fit for your project.
- Federally recognized Indian Tribes, and Alaska Native Corporations and Organizations **are NOT** subject to this population requirement and can apply regardless of population.

What are application best practices for projects that are combining adjacent urban areas?

- For projects combining adjacent urban areas or communities, applications should have a clear and compelling rationale demonstrating how the proposed project will serve the populations of all participating areas. This may include demonstrating that residents of each area have reasonable and proximate access to the project site, that the site will support shared use among the participating communities, or both. Some best practices for demonstrating this shared use include, but are not limited to, letters of support from the communities, existing partnerships, etc.

How do multiple urban areas submit an ORLP application together?

- Work with your State Lead Agency to determine how they would like to handle an application with multiple urban areas. Only the directly eligible applicant (a State Lead Agency) will be listed on the SF-424 as part of an ORLP application package, and they are responsible for coordinating the application. A State Lead Agency may ask for proposed subrecipients to collaborate on other aspects of the application, such as the project narrative, budget, and any supporting documentation.

What types of organizations can apply?

- State agencies, cities, towns, other local units of governments and special purpose districts, urban Indian organizations, Federally Recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), Alaska Native Organizations (ANO), Native Hawaiian Communities, and Urban Indian Organizations are eligible to apply for ORLP funding.
- Special purpose districts must be an entity created by a legislative authority with a stated mission that includes acquiring, developing, owning and managing recreation areas. Special Purpose Districts must be able to demonstrate that it can meet the perpetual protection requirement of the LWCF program.

What is an Urban Indian Organization? *(Added 8/27/26)*

- An Urban Indian Organization (UIO) is an Indian Health Service funded organization that is responsible for establishing and administering an urban Indian health program and related activities as described in Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. For more information, visit the Indian Health Service's [UIO page](#). A list of eligible UIOs is available through [Indian Health Services](#) and the [National Council of Urban Indian Health](#).

Can other state agencies that are not the State Lead Agency be subrecipients for an ORLP award?

- Yes, other state agencies can apply as a subrecipient. State Lead Agencies would remain the directly eligible applicant and recipient.

Can a local government agency apply?

- Yes, local government agencies are eligible to apply through their State or Territorial Lead Agency. Contact your Lead Agency for more details and requirements.

How are grants with multiple urban areas administered?

- If an application from multiple urban areas is selected for an ORLP award, State Lead Agencies are responsible for determining which entit(ies) will be listed as subrecipient(s) on the final grant agreement. State Lead Agencies may opt to have one subrecipient, (such as the landowning entity), or multiple subrecipients, depending on the proposed project.

Can a Native American Tribal Government or Native American Tribal Organization apply?

- Federally recognized Indian Tribes², Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), Alaska Native Organizations (ANO), and Native Hawaiian Organizations/Communities can apply directly for ORLP funding through this Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Urban Indian Organizations are eligible subrecipients for ORLP projects.
 - Urban Indian Organizations can choose to apply through a directly eligible tribal applicant from the list above, or a State or Territorial Lead Agency.

Can private landowners, for-profit organizations, or businesses apply?

- No, private landowners, for-profit organizations and businesses are ineligible to apply. If you fall into one of these groups and have an idea for a project, collaborate with an eligible applicant, such as a local government, to help support the development of an application. You could also support project development through monetary or in-kind donations.

Can non-profit organizations apply?

- No, non-profit organizations are ineligible to apply. Non-profit organizations are encouraged to collaborate with an eligible applicant, such as a local government, to help support the development of an application.

Do government entities need to own the land for an ORLP project, or can non-profits own the project land? *(added 9/14/26)*

- A nonprofit can own the land that an ORLP project is occurring on. In these cases, the eligible sub-recipient and the nonprofit would need to have a permanent recreation easement, and a long-term management plan or MOU, with the understanding that this site must be kept open for outdoor recreation use in perpetuity (Refer to LWCF Manual Ch.3 Section B for more information). The stewardship responsibilities of the site would

² [Federal Register:: Indian Entities Recognized by and Eligible To Receive Services From the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)

be the responsibility of the eligible sub-recipient for the grant, and ultimately the State, should that eligible sub-recipient be unable to meet LWCF Act requirements.

- As eligible subrecipients, Urban Indian Organizations can own the land for an ORLP project without any additional easement or management plan required but must still meet all relevant LWCF Act requirements.
- However, direct recipients (State Lead Agencies, federally recognized tribes, etc.) may have stricter land ownership requirements for sub-recipients. For example, some states and tribes may only accept applications from sub-recipients that own their proposed project land.

Project Eligibility

What types of projects are eligible?

- ORLP funds land acquisition, site development, and projects that combine acquisition and development. These projects can cater to a diverse range of public outdoor recreation activities and facilities required to enhance the use and enjoyment for the public. These include, and are not limited to:
 - Community Parks
 - Campgrounds
 - Playgrounds
 - Sport fields and Courts
 - Picnic Areas and Open-air Pavilions
 - Trails and Tracks for Hiking, Walking, Skating, or Biking
 - Water based Recreation Facilities for Swimming or Boating
 - Fishing and Hunting Facilities
 - Pools and Splash Pads
 - Publicly Accessible Nature Preserves or Conservation Areas
 - Community Gardens
 - Spectator Facilities such as Amphitheaters or Bandstands
 - Renovations of Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

What types of projects and costs are ineligible?

- Acquisition of lands, or interests in lands, that completely restrict access to specific persons (e.g., non-residents of a community).
- Acquisition support costs such as appraisals or title work.
- Funding for recreation programs, equipment, team or individual participation fees, or support of any sports leagues are ineligible.
- Indoor facilities such as recreation centers or facilities that support primarily non-outdoor purposes like dining facilities or overnight accommodation (such as a lodge or hotel), nature centers, community centers, or education centers are also ineligible.

- Facilities that support semi-professional or professional athletics such as baseball stadiums or soccer arenas are ineligible.

Are projects on school grounds eligible, e.g. schoolyards?

- Yes—sometimes. Projects on school grounds can receive LWCF funding only if the outdoor recreation area is meant for public use, not just for school programs. Here's what that means:
 - Outdoor areas on school property can be eligible as long as they are public parks or recreation spaces that the community can use.
 - Projects are not eligible if the facilities are only meant to support the school's regular physical education or athletic programs.
 - Schools can reserve certain facilities (like athletic fields, tennis courts, or swimming pools) for classes or competitions at specific times, but public use must remain the main purpose, and the public must have access at least 50% of the time.
 - Applications must include a plan or schedule that demonstrates when the public can use the facility.

Is public access to the funded site also a requirement for tribal applicants? (Added 8/27/26)

- Yes, public access requirements apply to all ORLP-funded projects, including projects proposed by Tribal and Indigenous applicants. What public access looks like may vary depending on the type of recreation area, the project, and the needs of the community. For example, public access does not necessarily mean that every facility must always be open or used in the same way—sites may have reasonable closures or restrictions for cultural, religious, ceremonial, community, safety, maintenance, or other appropriate purposes.
- At a minimum, all ORLP projects must be maintained and accessible for public outdoor recreation use in perpetuity. This means all projects sites must:
 - Be kept open for public use at reasonable hours and times of the year, according to the type of area or facility.
 - Be reasonably open, accessible, and safe for public use.
 - Remain accessible to the general public, including non-residents of the project area
- For additional requirements, see the [LWCF Manual](#) to learn more. Chapter 3 describes eligible types of projects, facilities, and uses in addition to outdoor recreation. Chapter 8 explains long-term post-completion stewardship requirements.
- For more information on how recreation access is considered during application scoring, see merit review criterion #1 – Increasing Access to Outdoor Recreation Opportunities on page 18-19 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Can Tribal Governments place land acquired with LWCF funds through the ORLP program into trust? *(added 9/14/26)*

- Tribes may apply for LWCF financial assistance to develop lands held in trust for public outdoor recreation purposes. There is no general prohibition for lands developed or acquired with LWCF funds through ORLP to be held in trust. The Secretary of the Interior makes final determinations about whether lands can be brought to trust. Tribes interested in transferring fee lands to trust after acquisition should work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to complete the application process.

Match and Budget

How much funding is available for a project?

- ORLP awards range from \$300,000 to \$15 million per project. This is just for the amount of federal funding available at award. Total project costs can exceed \$15 million.

Will we receive our award funds upfront once the grant agreement is finalized?

- No, ORLP is a reimbursement program. Grant recipients must initially use their own resources to pay for all project costs.
- The grant recipient will then receive reimbursement after they have spent their own funds.

What are the cost sharing requirements for this grant?

- ORLP grants are 50% matching grants.
- For example, if a project has a total cost of \$500,000, then ORLP could reimburse up to \$250,000 and the applicant would provide the other \$250,000 from other sources.
- The applicant's match must come from eligible (typically non-federal) sources.
- American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands **do not** need to provide 50% non-Federal cost share. These areas can receive full (100%) federal funding.

What can be used to meet the cost sharing requirements?

- Projects can combine many sources of funding to meet the 1:1 match requirement, including city, state, private, and/or philanthropic dollars.
- Non-monetary contributions can also count towards a project's total match amount. Examples include land donation or bargain sale, cash, in-kind contributions, and volunteer services.

Can other federal funds be used as the “nonfederal” match?

- Yes, in specific instances. Communities can leverage other federal programs for matching dollars, if a program has the existing legislative authority to do so. Common options include [HUD's Community Development Block Grants](#), [HUD's Indian Community](#)

Development Block Grant Program, and Federal Highway Administration's Recreation Trails Program.

Does cost share need to be secured at the time of initial application?

- No, applicants are not expected to have cost share finalized in their initial application. At a minimum, applicants must describe their plan for securing cost share, including the source(s), anticipated amount(s), and status of cost share discussions. Cost share sources must be finalized to receive a grant award.

What should I include in the budget narrative?

- Applicants are encouraged but not required to use the Budget Narrative Template that is published through this Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Regardless of the format used, all budget narratives must include a description and justification for all costs listed in the budget. The budget narrative should only reflect the costs related to activities to be completed under an ORLP grant and must include total estimated costs, non-Federal cost share, third-party contributions, indirect cost rate (if applicable), and any pre-award costs.

What are the rules around administrative and indirect costs?

- The EXPLORE Act limits ORLP projects' administrative costs to 7% of the total grant awarded. Additionally, the EXPLORE Act specifically excludes acquisition support costs (such as title research and appraisals).
- Indirect Costs – Applicants/Recipients must indicate in the budget how indirect costs will be charged, including the rate to be applied. Any rates that accompany the project budget must meet the requirements of 2 CFR Part 200, Section 200.414 and 2 CFR Part 200, Appendix III through Appendix VII, as applicable.

Is there a time limit on what's an eligible pre-award cost?

- There is no time limit on how far back pre-award costs can go but according to CFR 200.458, the pre-award costs must be “directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the Federal award where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work.” Pre-award costs are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and there is no guarantee the costs will be approved or that the project will receive funding. All pre-award costs are incurred at the recipient's own risk.

Which expenses count toward ORLP's 7% cap on administrative costs? Would expenses associated with grant management, project management, permitting, or inspections qualify as administrative costs? *(added 9/14/26)*

- Administrative costs are expenses associated with managing and administering the federal award, rather than direct costs tied to implementing the project's approved scope. General activities that would count towards the 7% Administrative Cost category include:
 - Grant management activities

- Financial Management
 - Preparing reimbursement requests
 - Maintaining grant records
 - Required grant reporting and monitoring
- The detailed budget template in the ORLP NOFO package has a category for “Administrative and legal expenses.” Applicants need to list all their planned costs under the scope of work and are expected to categorize their costs to the best of their ability. Costs that are incorrectly categorized will not impact a project in the eligibility review or merit review process.

Merit Review Process

How are applications evaluated?

- The application process for applications submitted by state lead agencies involves two competitive steps: 1) state-level selections, and 2) national competition. Applications must first be selected at the state-level to proceed for national consideration.
- Applications submitted by Federally recognized Indian Tribes³, Native Hawaiian Organizations/Communities, Alaska Native Corporations (ANC), and Alaska Native Organizations (ANO) will also be evaluated in the national competition.
- The initial review will be performed by NPS staff 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; (4) the proposed project is responsive to the program objectives of the NOFO (program determination); and (5) the proposed project is in compliance with all applicable executive and secretary orders
- All applications that pass the initial review will be eligible for the comprehensive merit review.
- During the comprehensive merit review, a panel of reviewers will evaluate and score each application for its alignment to the merit review criteria that is described on pages 17 through 21 of the NOFO.

What are the merit review criteria for ORLP applications?

- ORLP projects are evaluated on the extent to which they:
 - Increase Access to Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
 - Align with Community Needs
 - Leverage Resources in Support of Recreation
 - Promote Conservation and Ecological Benefits
 - Demonstrate Feasibility

³ [Federal Register: Indian Entities Recognized by and Eligible To Receive Services From the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs](#)

- Refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity’s “Merit Review Criteria” section for more information.

Who reviews applications?

- ORLP uses external merit review panelists who have subject matter expertise in recreation, development, design, natural resources, etc. Panelists weigh the strengths and weaknesses of each application based on the merit review criteria outlined in the notice of funding opportunity (NOFO).

Can I receive feedback on my application if my project is unsuccessful?

- A summary of the review panel comments will be provided to all unsuccessful applicants.

Other

What information is required as part of the “Site Analysis Map”? *(Added 8/27/26)*

- "Project Site Map and Renderings" are a required component of the grant application, but each item listed after "Site Analysis Map" is a suggested application component, not an item that is required. Applicants do not need to include every type of information, only what is relevant to their proposed project.
- A site analysis map is any visual that summarizes key geographic attributes of the project area, such as those listed in the NOFO (e.g., flood zones, storm data, slopes, conservation areas, tree canopy, nutrient-rich soils, impervious surfaces, view sheds, and impervious cover).
- In most cases, applicants will layer the relevant information on top of their proposed project boundary map to provide a clear visual overview of the constraints or opportunities present at the site. They may also choose to include additional details, such as utilities or rights-of-way.

What if I still have questions that have not been addressed?

- Reach out to your State or Territorial Lead Agency or email ORLP_Inquiries@NPS.gov.

Who can I contact if I have questions about Grants.gov functionality or need assistance submitting my application (i.e., creating an account, uploading attachments, etc.)?

- Please contact the Grants.gov Help Center at support@grants.gov or 1-800-518-4726 for assistance with Grants.gov access and functionality.