



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Outdoor Recreation and Legacy Partnership Program

Posted Date: December 01, 2023

Proposal Due Date: 11:59 PM, March 01, 2024

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Full NPS Notice Of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) found [HERE](#)

I. Introduction

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is pleased to announce this funding opportunity through the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program. This initiative can provide up to 50% matching for eligible projects (minimum award - \$300,000, maximum award - \$15,000,000) that target the improvement of recreational opportunities within underserved communities.

Background & Purpose:

Created in 2014 by the National Park Service (NPS), the ORLP Program is a nationally competitive grant program wherein states (in partnership with municipalities and federally recognized Indian tribes) can submit proposals for land acquisitions or improvements that will provide or significantly improve recreational opportunities in economically disadvantaged communities. This initiative is consistent with the purposes and requirements of the LWCF Act and the [LWCF Manual](#).

In Perpetuity Requirement:

As a condition of this grant funding, the NPS requires that language be recorded against the deed of the assisted park/recreation property advising that the property was acquired and/or developed with Federal funds from the LWCF and that the property must be preserved for outdoor recreation uses in perpetuity and cannot be converted to any use other than public outdoor recreation use without the written approval of the Secretary of the Interior. Before seeking a LWCF grant, project sponsors should carefully consider their ability and willingness to comply with this provision of the law.

II. Applicant and Project Eligibility

A. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

In accordance with the LWCF Act, only the State's lead agency for the program (in this instance, DEEP), may apply to the Federal Government for ORLP grants. DEEP is seeking proposals from eligible subrecipients (AKA project sponsors). Those include the following in the state of Connecticut:

- Cities or towns with a population of at least 30,000 people (based on the 2020 Census)
- Federally recognized Native American Tribes located within a city or town of at least 30,000 people; and
- [Regional Planning Groups](#) applying for a project within a city or town with a population of at least 30,000 people



Any applications submitted directly to the Federal Government by entities other than the State Lead Agency for LWCF will not be considered. Individuals, nonprofit organizations, and other private entities are not eligible as applicants or sub-recipients.

B. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

The ORLP Program is designed to provide recreational opportunities to economically disadvantaged communities. Therefore, there are a number of criteria that project proposals must meet in order to be considered eligible for these awards. Projects must:

- Meet recreation goals as identified in Connecticut’s State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2024-2029 ([SCORP](#)). Projects must align with at least one priority within SCORP.
- Be located within an incorporated city (or town) having a population of 30,000 or more, and
- Be located within a community (Census tract) that is determined to be disadvantaged per the [Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool](#) Project area must be located within a tract marked as disadvantaged.

III. Award Information and Cost Match

Estimated Total Funding for this award round is \$224,145,000. Awards will range based on the project, with a minimum award of \$300,000, and a maximum of \$15,000,000. It is expected that 40 projects will be selected for award. Awards will be made upon NPS’ final review and approval of the full application. LWCF ORLP awards are given as grants to the State Lead Agency, then the State Lead Agency grants a sub-award to subrecipient which sponsored the project.

Awards are given at a rate of 1:1 match funding for projects, with applicants/subrecipients providing matching contributions totaling 50% of the project total. Eligible match contributions are to be outlined in the Budget Narrative, and can include:

- Cash
- In-kind contributions of land
- Materials
- Volunteer services

Matching share must be secure or firmly committed at the time of application and be confirmed in a signed letter from the donor describing the type and amount of contribution. If matching funds exceed the 1:1 requirement, the Budget Narrative must indicate how the additional funds and in-kind contributions will be used.

IV. Submission Information

A. APPLICATION SUBMISSION TIMELINE/INFORMATION



The State will make an initial determination about which applications to submit to the NPS for consideration in the national competition. As such:

The State submission deadline is earlier than the Federal ORLP submission deadline.

This allows for the State's LWCF review board to conduct the initial review of proposals for completeness and eligibility requirements. If deemed complete and eligible, DEEP will evaluate and prioritize proposals according to the criteria used for the competition. Based on this evaluation DEEP will choose the top projects for submission to NPS. If your project is chosen for submission, DEEP will provide constructive feedback and allow time for applications to be improved prior to submission to the NPS, increasing their chances of being selected for funding.

PLEASE NOTE: DEEP will review projects on a rolling basis for completeness and eligibility. The earlier DEEP receives an application, the sooner DEEP can start the required reviews.

RFP Official Announcement: December 01, 2023

Projects must be submitted to CT DEEP no later than: 11:59PM March 01, 2024

DEEP Final Selection of Projects to be Submitted to NPS: By or Before March 15, 2024

DEEP Final Submission Deadline to NPS: 11:59 PM Tuesday, April 30, 2024.

For Questions and to Submit Applications: Email Cameron Clegg at Cameron.clegg@ct.gov

B. NPS ANTICIPATED ANNOUNCEMENT

NPS selected projects will be announced **November 1, 2024**. Selected projects must submit a full application for NPS final review within one year of the announcement (**Nov. 01, 2025**) to remain eligible for funding.

V. Application Requirements

MULTI-STEP APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process for ORLP is Multi-Step:

1. DEEP receives proposals from eligible subrecipients and determines eligibility of proposals. DEEP Staff work with subrecipients to produce complete and high-quality applications for submission to NPS by the State.
2. Each NPS submitted application is reviewed and scored by an independent merit panel and technical reviewers.
3. Based on the reviews of an independent merit panel, the Director of the NPS determines which projects are selected and invited to submit a full application for NPS review.



4. The State will work with subrecipients on NPS selected projects to prepare a full application (NOFO pg. 15-16) for NPS' final review and funding determination. A full application will require additional disclosures, forms, and information; including, but not limited to:
 - Conflict of Interest Disclosure
 - Uniform Audit Reporting Statement
 - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
 - Overlap or Duplication of Effort Statement
 - Additional/Other Budget information
 - Federal NEPA Review and Cultural Compliance
 - Financial Capability and Evaluation of Risk

-Final applications (listed in Step 4 above) must be submitted to NPS within one year of the NPS public announcement of the project's selection to remain eligible for funding.

Selected projects will be issued a Notice of Award by NPS and subrecipients will need to sign a contract with DEEP. No project work or cost should be incurred until subrecipients have received Notices of Award from NPS and signed contracts with DEEP.

FEDERALLY REQUIRED INITIAL PROPOSAL ELEMENTS (NOFO pg. 11):

Applications for this grant program require a number of forms and supporting documents, listed below. Further detailed instructions for each element are listed in the Updated Notice of Funding, with specific pages called out after each element. Standardized federal submission forms will be filled out by the State for submission to NPS.

PLEASE NOTE: Supporting document page limits are **absolute**, with no exceptions. **Information beyond the page limit for specific elements will NOT be reviewed.**

1. [Standard Form](#) - Project Abstract Summary
2. [Project Narrative](#) (**max 10 pages, 12-point font**) to include the following:
 - A) Project Data Page (**1 page**, NOFO pg. 12)
 - B) Project Overview (**2 pages**, NOFO pg. 13)
 - C) Responses to the Project Criteria (**remaining pages**, NOFO pg. 13; 19-20)

It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED by DEEP and NPS that subrecipients' Project Narrative include sections labeled by criterion and bulleted topic detailed in the NOFO, page 19.

3. [Budget Narrative](#) (**max 5 pages**, including tables, NOFO pg. 14)
 - Budget items should be \$25,000 or less for breakdown.
 - Contingency costs (up to 10%) are allowed with explanation and justification.
 - Pre-Award costs (up to 3 year prior to the listed start date) are also allowed.
4. [Project Timeline](#) (**max 1 page**, NOFO pg. 15) to complete the tasks/activities under the proposal.



5. Photos provide context such as current site conditions, the surrounding environment, etc.

6. Maps (2 minimum, NOFO pg. 11)

a. Map (or Aerial Photo) Delineating Project Area and Proposed Boundary - must clearly indicate area to be acquired and/or developed, as well as the proposed boundary of the larger park/recreation area that would be subject to the perpetual protection provisions of the LWCF Act ([54 U.S.C. 200305\(f\)\(3\)](#)), all known outstanding rights and interests in the area held by others, total acres within the boundary(ies), and a north arrow.

b. Plan or Sketch of the Site Features identifying location of planned recreational improvements and other features such as where the public will access the site, parking, etc.

7. Letters of Support Documenting Secured Contributions/Matching Share clearly stating the amount and type of contribution. Contributions from project sponsor must also be confirmed.

8. General Letters of Support (Optional)

9. Feasibility Report (If available)

10. SHPO Determination of Effect Letter (if available)

11. Environmental Species Reviews

A. NDDDB Determination letter or Confirmation of Submission (NDDDB Information)

B. Confirmation of IPaC Report Submission to USFW (IPaC Website)

VI. ORLP 2024 Project Priorities and Scoring Criteria

A. NPS PROGRAM COMPETITION PRIORITIES (NOFO pg.5)

This competition will prioritize the selection of projects that:

- **Are Nature-Based Projects (5 Point Bonus)** – These projects create green and blue spaces, increase tree cover help to cool the air, reduce pollution, and have positive effects on mental and physical health. Nature-based projects are those where nature is a major element of, or strongly supports, the proposed recreational activity.
- **Expand public-private partnerships to leverage matching share resources** (e.g. money or donated lands, supplies or services);
- **Provide economic benefits to the local community** (e.g. short or long-term jobs or stimulation to local business near the park);
- **Use sustainable design/materials;**
- **Include site features that consider the needs of all demographics, and/or;**
- **Involve the redevelopment of a blighted or distressed property.**

B. SCORING CRITERIA (NOFO pg. 19-21)

The NPS evaluates projects based on two criteria: Project Merit and Technical Excellence. Criteria are weighted on a 50-point scale and graded according to the rubric on page 21. The total point value of the criteria is 100 points. Fully explain how the project meets the criteria within Section C of the Project Narrative. A minimum of 4 reviewers will independently review each proposal, with all final scores compiled and averaged to create a final score. All proposals



will be compiled into a ranked list. Generally, proposals will be recommended in the ranked order.

DEEP is committed to helping applicants produce complete and high-quality applications for submission to NPS. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to DEEP with any questions related to any aspect of their applications.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to Cameron Clegg with any questions:
Cameron.Clegg@ct.gov