

2021 Grant Selection Criteria

NY State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) Environmental Protection Fund Grants Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage (EPF)

All eligible applications will be rated according to the Grant Selection Criteria. Applications will be evaluated to assess the degree to which they meet the elements of each criterion below. A successful grant proposal is not expected to meet all criteria. Within each region, applications are ranked according to project category, competing only against others in their region and category.

I. Project Impact (up to 30 points)

For Parks Projects:

A. Need, as determined by a statewide assessment (0-5):

- For recreation projects: SCORP Relative Index of Needs
- For open space/conservation projects: NYS Open Space Conservation Plan

B. Community Impact and Need (0-25):

Population Served: Assess whether the project will primarily serve a densely populated area, an area where a substantial proportion of the population is of low income, and/or a population that is otherwise disadvantaged or underserved with respect to existing recreational opportunities. For example, will it meet the needs of an aging population, encourage participation by youth and teens, respond to population and social changes in the community, and/or ensure open and reasonable access to persons of various abilities.

Need for Facilities: Assess the degree to which local recreation, conservation or open space deficiencies will be addressed by the project. Evidence of need can include documentation of:

- For recreation projects: number of similar facilities in the service area; level of use of existing facility and anticipated level of use of proposed facility; condition of facilities, including evidence of physical deterioration, decay, neglect or disinvestment; emergencies, mandates or development pressure;
- For open space/conservation projects: protection of watershed, aquifer, animal or plant species, significant natural communities, or other natural, scenic or open space resources that are unique, rare, or of statewide or regional significance; wetlands, shorelines, unique areas, biodiversity areas, wildlife habitats, forested wildlife, flood plains; improved access to water or public fishing rights, trails or greenways; increased land for active recreation in existing or new parklands, buffer zone/viewshed to enhance or protect existing recreational or environmental resources; or a recognized brownfield site for park development.

For Historic Preservation Projects:

A. Level of Significance (0-15). Points are awarded based on the level and area(s) of significance of the property (as recorded in the State/National Register nomination or in the National Historic Landmark documentation), consideration of the significance of the specific feature(s) of the property to be addressed in the proposed project (e.g., a primary contributing resource versus a secondary contributing resource), and the extent to which the project protects, enhances or impacts that property and feature(s).

B. Severity/Immediacy of Threat (0-15). Points are awarded based on the type (e.g., deterioration, damage, demolition, inappropriate development), extent (e.g., isolated, wide-spread, accelerated), severity, immediacy, and degree (e.g., recent, on-going, imminent) of threat to the property from negligence, development pressure, inappropriate treatment, etc., and the degree to which the project addresses that need and ensures the long-term preservation of the property.

For Heritage Area Projects:

A. Addresses significant Heritage Area resources (0-5). Points are awarded based on how well the project contributes to the preservation, restoration or enhancement of natural, historic or cultural resources related to the Heritage Area's interpretive theme(s) as established in its approved management plan.

B. Addresses Heritage Area goals (0-15). Points are awarded based upon how the project addresses the Heritage Area goals of preservation/conservation, education/interpretation, recreation, and economic revitalization. At a minimum, a Heritage Area project will address one Heritage Area goal, but a typical Heritage Area project addresses two or more. Therefore, points should reflect both the number of goals met and how well they are met.

C. Enhances the Heritage Area Experience (0-10). Points are awarded based upon the degree to which the project directly serves or benefits heritage area visitors and users, enhances the function and visual quality of the heritage area, and/or contributes to the local economy.

II. Planning Initiatives (up to 10 points)

A. Community Support: Points are based on evidence of community support of and involvement in the project, including efforts to publicize and/or engage the community in project planning, such as:

- letters of support, especially those from people directly impacted by the project
- official project endorsements/partnerships and other evidence that the project is supported by local elected officials and community groups, such as Land Trusts, recreation committees, environmental councils, preservation boards, Friends groups, local activists
- press releases/announcements/publicity
- plans for public outreach or fundraising campaign
- news articles
- records of public meetings including project-specific meetings (such as press event), official government reviews (e.g., Community Board, Planning Board, etc.) and presentations to a group such as a neighborhood association or interest group

B. Consistent with Plans: In determining whether the project relates or contributes to documented plans, examine documents cited and submitted. For planning documents more than five years old, look for evidence that the plans are current and applicable. Relevant documents include, but are not limited to:

- NYS Open Space Conservation Plan as a priority project
- New York State Historic Preservation Plan
- State or National Heritage Area Management Plans
- New York Statewide Trails Plan/New York Statewide Greenway Trails Plan
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)
- Recognized local Open Space Plan
- Local historic preservation ordinance/designations
- Community participation in the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program
- Other state/federal/local plans, such as Preserve America designation, Path Through History, etc.

- Community comprehensive or master plans or other local plans
- Project implements a prior Planning grant

C. Project aligns with, reflects and/or advances the general principles and goals of downtown revitalization, strategic community investment and/or environmental justice practices.

III. Reasonableness of Cost (0-20)

Project planning, administrative structures and budget demonstrate fiscal prudence and readiness to proceed. Is there a logical justification for all expenses? Does the budget narrative include an explanation for each budget line and clearly support the applicant's need for additional financial resources to achieve project outcomes? Does the budget include the required matching funds? Does the proposal describe how the grant recipient will monitor expenditures during the life of the project to ensure that the project stays on schedule and within budget?

A. Budget

- Budget in the application is complete, detailed, computed correctly and contains no extraneous or ineligible expenses.
- The budget is based on a cost estimate from a reliable source.
- Matching funds are on hand and/or application evidences a reasonable expectation that matching funds will be available as and when needed.

B. Readiness

- Necessary project planning and document preparation has been completed.
- Qualified project professionals, properly procured/hired, are on hand.
- Proposed project/work is appropriate and conforms to accepted professional standards.
- Application evidences viable strategy and resources for implementing/operating and maintaining the project in the future.

C. Feasibility

- Administrative structures are in place to handle grants.
- Applicant has proven experience in projects of similar scale and/or scope.
- Timeframe presented in application is reasonable to accomplish all aspects of the work and grant administration (including any necessary fundraising).

IV. OPRHP Commissioner Priorities for 2021 (0-10)

A. Projects that restore or conserve the natural communities where land meets water. Priority projects would focus environmental stewardship efforts on this interface zone, including but not limited to wetland restoration, natural or nature-based shorelines, fish and wildlife habitat, and riparian buffers.

B. Projects designed to enhance inclusion by removing barriers, providing accommodation, and expanding the visitor experience to provide welcoming access for new visitors, including those previously marginalized. Examples include: enhanced gateways to parks and trails, multi-lingual and/or pictorial wayfinding signage; recreational and interpretive facilities serving people of diverse abilities; ADA compliance; private unisex bathroom facilities; reopening (i.e., modernize, rehabilitate, restore) shuttered recreational facilities in distressed neighborhoods, etc.

C. Projects that enhance and/or create opportunities for walkable public spaces for recreation, fitness, community gardens and open space in underserved neighborhoods (i.e., build green space, revitalize existing athletic and recreational facilities, create and enhance amenities at community gardens and schoolyards).

D. Projects that advance and/or complement transformational projects across the State, especially in disadvantaged communities, to address and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Priority projects would enhance outdoor recreation while: preserving open space; restoring natural communities, implementing climate resilient infrastructure, and reducing flood risk.

E. Projects that are undertaken by OPRHP Friends organizations or other partner groups that occur in State Parks or Historic Sites.

V. Regional Economic Development Council Assessment (0-20)

VI. Statewide Assessment “Commissioner Points” (0-10)

A. Geographic Distribution. Consideration may be given to projects in areas that have or have not received funding in recent cycles or where funding is not commensurate with the population of the area. This will be based on the proximity to other funded sites and the diversity of projects being funded on a regional and local basis, as well as the service area of the developed or planned facilities.

B. Maximize Use and Accessibility. Consideration may be given to projects where funding will allow underutilized facilities to be accessed or to develop underutilized resources for public use. This will be based on the resources offered by the facility, the use of those resources and whether the proposed project will help the facility expand and enhance its public use.

C. Special Engineering, Environmental, Preservation Benefits. Consideration may be given to develop particularly significant resources and facilities or to develop innovative approaches to preserve valuable resources. This will be based on the type of resource being developed or rehabilitated; its rarity on a local, regional, statewide and national basis; the ability of an innovative technology to address an emergency or mitigate future problems; how well a technology can be “exported” for use on other properties and resources; and how/if the project will allow public access that would not otherwise be available.

D. Past Performance. Consideration may be given to how timely an applicant completed previous projects, including its reporting requirements; how successful it was in outreach, especially to minority- and woman-owned businesses; the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of the property; and its cooperation in allowing OPRHP to complete inspections and other follow-up activities.

TOTAL (0-100)

VII. Project in a Hudson River Greenway Compact Community (5 percent bonus)

Award points if the proposed project is located in a Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact Community, and the application documents that the project is consistent with the Greenway criteria of natural and cultural resource protection, regional planning, economic development, heritage and environmental education, and/or public access to the Hudson River (for information, go to: <https://hudsongreenway.ny.gov/community-planning> or the Greenway map at <https://hudsongreenway.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2018/09/greenway-mapsept-2018.pdf>).