

Open Project Selection Process



IDAHO'S OPEN PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

The National Park Service requires a public review process for establishing criteria for LWCF grants. That process is called the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP). It is meant to assure that statewide priorities identified in Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plans (SCORTP) are the priority focus in the LWCF grant process. OPSP also recognizes local priorities. Priorities change over time, so it is important that states go through the OPSP process on a regular basis in conjunction with SCORTP so that outdoor recreation grant criteria are in alignment with actual needs.

Review of proposed changes by the LWCF Advisory Committee, SCORTP Task Force and State and Federal Aid Program staff is a part of that process.

Listening to Grant Recipients

IDPR planners met with potential grant recipients at the Idaho Recreation and Parks Association's annual conference in 2011. Their consensus was that the Regional Priorities section of the 2006-2010 Rating Criteria was a poor reflection of actual regional needs and that, in any case, regional needs did not necessarily reflect local park and recreation needs. This group of potential grant recipients recommended that we eliminate regional criteria entirely.

Funding for a statistically valid survey sample at the regional level was not available for the 2012-2016 SCORTP, so the issue was moot. IDPR has dropped the regional criteria.

Matching Ranking Criteria with Public Need

The draft criteria for ranking Idaho's LWCF projects were created using a combination of public input and the expertise of a cross-section of outdoor recreation professionals. Our public input started with an opinion leader SWOT analysis to identify outdoor recreation issues and opportunities in Idaho. A facilitator visited each of Idaho's six regions and worked with elected officials and local recreation professionals to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of outdoor recreation in Idaho.

Using the ranked results from the SWOT analysis as a starting point IDPR developed a web-based public participation tool to allow any citizen to vote up or down on ideas generated from the SWOT analysis, as well as propose ideas of their own.

Public input continued with the development of a survey to gauge the importance of outdoor recreation issues identified in the SWOT analysis and using the public web tool. That survey was sent to randomly selected Idahoans 18 or over. There were 488 respondents. At least two-thirds of the respondents agreed that the 16 issues/opportunities on the following page were important or very important.

Issue or Opportunity	Percent rating important or very important
Protecting water quality	91%
Ensuring motorized vehicles stay on trails and roads	79%
Providing youth with opportunities for education in outdoor recreation	78%
Access to community trails	77%
Providing youth with recreation safety instruction	77%
Providing expanded opportunities for spontaneous camping (reservations are not required)	74%
Providing nearby community parks	74%
Providing youth with opportunities for natural resource and environmental education	74%
Controlling aquatic and terrestrial invasive species	72%
Providing trail etiquette education to the public to decrease user conflicts	71%
Rehabilitation of community outdoor recreation facilities	71%
Protecting endangered species on outdoor recreation lands	70%
Providing recreational facilities to encourage exercise and improve health	70%
Educating adults about natural resources and the environment	69%
Creating community open space	67%
Providing recreational trails to connect communities to outdoor recreation areas	67%

General State Priorities

While LWCF grants can have little impact on some issues, many can be directly addressed in rating projects submitted for grants. The Open Project Selection Process Statewide Criteria are presented below. Grant applicants could potentially receive up to 105 points. Realistically they would likely receive up to the maximum number of points in one or more categories.

Points	
16	Facilities are designed to decrease runoff pollution. Examples: Water permeable materials are used in parking lot and hard path construction. Vegetated rooftops and rain barrels are used.
16	Facilities and/or landscaping are designed to incorporate water saving techniques. Examples: Reuse of gray water. Use of native vegetation and/or drought tolerant species to conserve water. Use of innovative irrigation technologies.
15	Acquisition or development of land to create connecting pathways.
11	Project is designed to minimize the impact of invasive species. Examples: Non-invasive alternatives are used in landscaping, i.e. western crab apple used instead of European Hawthorne. Native species are used in landscape plantings. Project incorporates a vessel cleaning station.
8	Project provides a new recreational opportunity in an area where little or no recreational opportunities exist.
8	Project provides recreation facilities to encourage individual participation in exercise for the improvement of health. Examples: Outdoor fitness station. Mile markers on pathways.
8	Rehabilitation of existing recreation facilities.
8	Project creates new community open space.
5	Project contains a natural resource education component.
5	Project provides new access to water-based recreation. Examples: Providing ADA compliant fishing docks for increased access by wheel chairs. Providing a new launch opportunity that is more convenient to a populated area.
5	Project provides new access to water-based recreation

Local Priorities—Maximum 20 points

Local needs, of course, are most important to communities. IDPR will gauge how a project meets those needs by allowing applicants to supply documentation in **either** of two forms. Though optional, applicants providing this documentation will receive additional points as indicated. A statistically valid survey* of randomly selected residents in the service area of the proposed project shows that the recreational activities the project will provide are the highest priority of the community. **20 Points**

A statistically valid survey of randomly selected residents in the service area of the proposed project shows strong support for the recreational opportunities the project will provide, though not the highest priority of the community.

15 Points

OR

Results gathered in the course of a community planning process incorporating a series of opportunities for public participation show the recreational activities the project will provide are the highest priority of the community.

20 Points

Comments gathered at one or more public meetings shows that the recreational activities the project will provide are the highest priority of the community. **15 Points**

Comments gathered at one or more public meetings shows strong support for the recreational opportunities the project will provide, though not the highest priority of the community. **10 Points**

*The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation's Comprehensive Planning, Research and Review section will, upon request, assist communities in developing surveys and provide them with information on how to assure that results are scientifically accurate. Communities may also find expertise at nearby colleges and universities.

Administering the Program Fairly

In order to better serve the public and assure that grant money is administered more efficiently, State and Federal Aid Program staff at the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation recommended two changes in the Open Project Selection Process. The changes are:

- 1). Entities with unresolved Land and Water Conservation Fund conversion issues will not be considered for grants until those issues are resolved, unless the National Park Service negotiates a special condition on the original project agreement.
- 2). Projects will only be considered if they are primarily for use by the general public. Property must be readily accessible and open to the public during reasonable hours and times of the year.

LWCF Evaluation Committee Project Evaluation Form

Project Name: _____

Date: _____

Evaluator's Name: _____

General State Priority Points (Maximum 100 points)	
Local Priority Points (Maximum 20 points)	

Please evaluate the project on the basis of the following criteria:

- 7-8 = Excellent or Extensive
- 5-6 = Good or Considerable
- 3-4 = Fair or Moderate
- 1-2 = Poor or Little
- 0 = None or Missing

A. Degree to which project benefits the public in general	
B. Degree to which benefits compare with costs	
C. Degree to which the property/design is suitable for intended uses	
D. Degree to which project costs are reasonable and accurate and relate to project benefits	
E. Degree to which the facility will encourage handicap accessibility beyond minimum requirements	
F. Degree to which the facility will be open and usable for outdoor recreation during reasonable hours	
G. Degree of sponsor's financial commitment for ongoing operation and maintenance	
H. Degree of urgency due to potential resource damage, or health and safety concerns that may cause an opportunity to be lost if no action is taken.	
I. Degree to which the project creates new recreational opportunities not currently available in the area	
J. Degree to which project is reflected as a user need in current comprehensive outdoor recreation plans	
K. Degree of matching funds in hand or investment in the project from applicant and other sources	
L. Degree to which the project brings outdoor recreation activities closer to users	
M. Degree to which the project is sensitive to environmental concerns	
TOTAL	

Do you feel that this project meets the criteria and general quality necessary to merit approval by the Idaho Park and Recreation Board? Yes No

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: