



ARKANSAS
— OFFICE OF —
OUTDOOR RECREATION

MATCHING GRANT APPLICATION GUIDE



OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANTS PROGRAM

This guide is designed to assist you through the application process.
All Outdoor Recreation Matching Grants are administered by the
Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact us.

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CONTENTS

Program Overview

What is the Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant?	1-2
How does the Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant work?	
Who is eligible to receive an Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant?	
How much funding is available?	
What kinds of projects are eligible for funding?	3-4
What may an applicant use as their Match?	
How do I get a Grant?	

Application Process

Step 1: Access the Website	5
Step 2: Set Up Account on Foundant Portal	
Step 3: Submit Your Application	
Step 4: Application Review and Scoring	
Step 5: Grant Hearings	5
Step 6: Committee Review & Recommendations	
Step 7: Grant Award Announcements	5
Important Dates to Remember	6

Application Materials

Application Materials	7
Application Checklist	7
Committee Criterion	8-10
Required Materials	10-13
Matching Grant Documentation	14-15

Appendices

A. Matching Grant Requirements.....	16
B. Land Acquisition Information.....	17-18
C. Example Forms.....	19-25
D. Matching Grant Point System.....	26-27
E. Committee Guidebook.....	28-32

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant is administered by the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT) through the Office of Outdoor Recreation. This application guide is designed to provide communities with a clear, detailed understanding of how to navigate the grant process—from determining project eligibility to submitting a competitive application aligned with statewide outdoor recreation priorities.

Outdoor recreation plays an essential role in Arkansas' identity, economy, and quality of life. Communities with strong recreation assets experience measurable benefits: healthier residents, more vibrant downtowns, stronger tourism economies, improved workforce retention, and greater stewardship of natural landscapes. This guide explains not only how to apply for funding but why certain projects score more competitively, how public engagement strengthens proposals, and how applicants can align with the statewide goals represented in the Arkansas Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

This guide reflects the updated standards and scoring methodology found in the ORGP Committee Guidebook (shown in Appendix E), ensuring applicants understand exactly how Committee members evaluate applications.

What is the Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant?

The Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant is a reimbursable matching grant designed to expand Arkansas' system of public parks, natural spaces, and outdoor recreation assets. The program reimburses up to 50% of eligible project costs after development occurs. Funding comes from our state's Real Estate Transfer Tax, ensuring long-term investment in public outdoor recreation throughout Arkansas.

How Does the Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant Work?

Because this is a reimbursable grant:

- Applicants must pay initial costs.
- Reimbursements occur only after eligible work is completed.
- Applicants may request reimbursement in phases or at project completion.
- Grant awards cannot be increased later—careful budgeting is essential.

Applicants should plan financially for upfront costs and ensure long-term maintenance capacity.

The Committee strongly favors communities with:

- Realistic budgets
- Documented financial readiness
- Long-term management strategies.

Who is Eligible to Receive an Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant?

Funding assistance through an Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant is available to all incorporated municipalities and counties in Arkansas. Applications must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer – Mayor, City Manager, or County Judge – of the local government unit applying for assistance. Consultants may assist with application development but cannot serve as the applicant.

Community partners such as nonprofit groups, friends-of-parks organizations, civic clubs, and foundations may provide donations or volunteer labor; however, all reimbursable expenses must be paid directly by the eligible local government, and applications must be submitted by the municipality or county that will receive funding.

How Much Funding is Available?

There is no minimum or maximum amount that an applicant may request. However, because the Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant is a reimbursable 50/50 program, applicants must be prepared to cover the full project cost upfront and provide an equal match to the grant amount. The program reimburses only half of eligible expenses, up to the awarded amount.

Although there is no upper limit on award size, funding decisions are competitive and based on several considerations, including the overall quality and feasibility of the project, the strength of the demonstrated community need, alignment with program and SCORP priorities, and the amount of funding available in a given grant cycle. Projects that are well-planned, clearly justified, and financially supported by the applicant will be the most competitive for funding.

The amount of funding available is based upon the State's yearly tax receipts. The final funding amount will be determined in by staff before the Grant Hearings.

What Kinds of Projects are Eligible for Funding?

All eligible projects fall into one of three categories:

1. Development – Includes construction, renovation, or replacement of outdoor recreation facilities.
2. Acquisition – Involves purchasing or receiving donated land for outdoor recreation.
Applicants must follow guidelines for appraisals, deeds, title insurance, and public access.
3. Combination – Includes both development and land acquisition.

The Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant is designed to elevate the kinds of projects that provide the greatest public benefit, advance statewide outdoor recreation goals, and strengthen Arkansas' natural-resource-based recreation economy. This priority reflects both public demand, as documented in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and long-term economic data showing that nature-based outdoor recreation generates substantial local and statewide returns.

Highest Priority Projects

Projects receiving the highest consideration are those deeply connected to Arkansas' natural environment and capable of offering year-round, multi-use public benefit. These include facilities that:

- Expand or enhance **multi-use trail systems** (hiking, biking, running, equestrian) and trailheads that support navigation, safety, and visitor orientation.
- Provide **climbing infrastructure**, bouldering features, or access improvements linked to natural rock formations.
- Improve **hunting or shooting-sports facilities**, including ranges, blinds, or access points that support outdoor traditions and wildlife-based recreation.
- Create or upgrade **campgrounds and RV parks**, supporting extended outdoor stays and increasing tourism appeal.
- Build or enhance **fishing piers, bank fishing access, docks, or ADA-compliant angler facilities**, expanding opportunities for all ages and abilities.
- Improve **water-access infrastructure** such as boat launches, river access points, kayak/canoe launches, or waterfront restoration that supports safe and equitable use of Arkansas' lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Expand or enhance **playground structures and facilities**.

These high-priority categories align most strongly with statewide recreation trends. They draw residents and visitors, promote physical activity, attract outdoor-oriented businesses, and contribute directly to Arkansas' \$7.3 billion outdoor recreation economy. Because these projects often become regional destinations, they help small and rural communities grow their tourism base and enhance long-term economic resilience.

Other Projects Considered

Some project types—such as dog parks, ballfields, restroom facilities, amphitheaters, and community pools—serve smaller user groups, offer limited outdoor recreation impact, and may carry higher long-term maintenance costs. These projects remain eligible but are generally less competitive.

They may still be funded when there is strong community need, meaningful public involvement, clear SCORP alignment, or when paired with natural-resource-based improvements.

The Matching Grant Program prioritizes projects that strengthen Arkansas' natural outdoor recreation assets to ensure the greatest long-term public benefit.

Ineligible Projects

Community centers and indoor facilities that do not directly support outdoor recreation are not eligible for funding. Programming, staffing, and other ongoing costs (such as routine maintenance) are likewise ineligible.

What May an Applicant Use as Their Match?

Along with monetary funds from the applicant's bank account(s) and verified cash donations, the match may come from materials purchased by the applicant, employee labor provided by the applicant, and the use of equipment owned by the applicant. Donated labor, services, equipment use, material, and/or the value of donated land acquired for the project may also be submitted as match.

How Do I Get a Grant?

Applicants must submit all required materials before the application deadline to be considered for a grant award. The highest scoring applications will require presentation to the Committee for funding consideration.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Step 1: Access the Website

Visit www.outdoorgrants.com to access the Matching Grant application portal and resources.

Step 2: Create or Log In to a Foundant Account

Applicants must use the Foundant online system to create, submit, and track applications. Visit the website above to find the Foundant application link.

New Users

Please click on the "Create New Account" button to complete the registration process and create your login credentials.

Returning Users

Please login using the email account associated with your profile.

Note: Only cities and counties are eligible to apply for our grants. Applications must be submitted by the City or County seeking funding. Consultants or other third parties may not submit applications independently. If a consultant or third party is assisting, the City or County must create an online account and add the third party as a collaborator.

A video tutorial about the Foundant application process can be found by clicking on the link available on the login page of the portal.

Step 3: Submit Your Application

All applications must be submitted online in the Foundant portal by the August 28, 2026. Applicants should keep a PDF copy for their records.

Step 4: Application Review

After submission, ORGP staff will review each application for completeness or deficiencies.

Step 5: Grant Hearings

Once applications are scored, applicants will be notified whether they have been selected for an interview by the ORGP Committee in October.

Presentations:

- Are limited to eight minutes (Five minutes for presentation, three minutes for questions)
- May include slides, video, or static visuals

Applicants should prepare to present without technology if needed.

Any representative of the applicant may appear before the Committee. The Chief Executive Officer is encouraged (but not required) to be present to answer any questions regarding funding/maintenance.

Step 6: Committee Review & Recommendations

Committee members evaluate applications using the scoring criteria from the Committee Guidebook.

Step 7: Grant Award Announcements

Applicants are notified of award.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

May 1, 2026

Matching Grant Applications Open

August 28, 2026

Application Deadline

October 28-30, 2026

Grant Hearings

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Below is a brief checklist of all required application items.

Applicants are only required to upload each document once in the Foundant system. Items such as the Site Plan, Project Boundary Map, Site Location Map, Volunteer Documentation, or Resolutions may be referenced in multiple scoring categories, but applicants should upload the file a single time using the Application Materials section and designated upload fields. ORGP Staff evaluate only what is clearly demonstrated in the materials uploaded in the application.

Documentation:

- ☐ Estimated Project Cost
- ☐ SCORP Priority Assessment
- ☐ Resolution
- ☐ Proof of Land Control
- ☐ Site Location Map
- ☐ Site Plan
- ☐ Project Boundary Map
- ☐ Letter from Relevant Design Professional
- ☐ Community Outreach
- ☐ Volunteer Activity
- ☐ Parks Committee
- ☐ Improved Barrier Free Access and/or Play Equipment
- ☐ Fund Source Assurance
- ☐ Grant History and Open Projects
- ☐ Maintenance Plan
- ☐ Project Timeline
- ☐ Priority Classification

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

	Required for Application	Required for Points
Estimated Project Cost	✓	✓
SCORP Priority Assessment	✓	
City Council Resolution or Quorum Court Order & Documents	✓	✓
Proof of Land Control	✓	
Site Location Map	✓	
Site Plan	✓	✓
Project Boundary Map	✓	
Letter from Design Pro.	✓	✓
Community Outreach		✓
Volunteer Activity		✓
Parks Committee		✓
Fund Source Assurance		✓
Grant History and Open Projects		✓
Maintenance Plan		✓
Project Timeline		✓
Priority Classification		✓

Required documents have been aligned to illustrate where they are listed under five scoring categories used by the Outdoor Recreation Grant Advisory Committee (Committee): **Project Need, Project Impact, SCORP Alignment, Community Involvement, and Project Readiness**. This alignment has been provided to help applicants clearly understand how each document contributes to scoring by the Committee.

COMMITTEE CRITERION

Criterion 1: Project Need

This criterion evaluates how clearly the applicant demonstrates a compelling community need for the project. Project Need scores are based on evidence of a documented recreational gap, local data, survey results, or planning documents showing demand, explanation of safety, accessibility, or capacity issues, alignment with high-priority outdoor recreation types, such as trails, water access, climbing, hunting/shooting sports, campgrounds, fishing infrastructure, etc.

Projects that address an urgent, well-documented need and provide broad natural-resource-based outdoor recreation access receive the highest scores.

ORGP Staff will review based on completion of the Site Location Map and Project Boundary Map and whether the project meets the alignment with high priority outdoor recreation types.

Committee will utilize the above to score based on regional context, distance to other facilities, and service area. They will also score based on narrative. Written sections of the application should describe:

- Existing recreation gaps or lack of comparable facilities
- Conditions of current facilities (undersized, inaccessible, failing, unsafe)
- Local data, survey results, or planning documents that show demand

Criterion 2: Project Impact

This score evaluates the anticipated benefits of the project, including increased outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, improved quality of life and public health, strengthening of community identity and local pride, potential economic benefits such as increased visitor spending, tourism growth, and workforce attraction. Projects that meaningfully impact community well-being and regional outdoor recreation economies score highest.

ORGP Staff will review based on completion of the Estimated Project Cost table.

Committee will utilize Estimated Project Cost to evaluate feasibility. They will use the Site Location Map, and Project Boundary Map to help understand the project's reach, connectivity, and potential regional influence. Committee will also score based on expected project impact narrative.

Written sections of the application should describe:

- Increased outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors
- Quality-of-life and public health benefits (found in the health outcomes calculator on the Office of Outdoor Recreation website)
- Anticipated tourism and economic impacts (e.g., visitor spending, workforce attraction), (found in the economic impact calculator on the Office of Outdoor Recreation website)
- Revitalization of underused natural areas or key connections (trails, water access, etc.)

Criterion 3: SCORP Alignment

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a 5-year road map for improving public outdoor recreation in Arkansas. The full document can be found on the Office of Outdoor Recreation's website. The SCORP was produced through research and a large-scale survey of Arkansas citizens and recreation providers (e.g., local park directors) in the state. The SCORP Priorities reflect the survey and provide an idea of what kinds of projects the people of Arkansas would like to see in their communities. This criterion measures how well the project advances SCORP 2025–2030's five statewide priorities: **Sustain Community Investment** – strengthening outdoor infrastructure and local economies, **Improve Accessibility to Outdoor Recreation** – reducing physical, economic, and social barriers to participation, **Foster Outdoor Innovation** – creatively adapting facilities, technology, and programming, **Support Public Wellness** – advancing physical, mental, and community health through outdoor activity, and **Promote Environmental Stewardship** – protecting natural resources and ensuring long-term conservation and maintenance.

Applications that clearly illustrate these themes receive higher scores.

ORGP Staff will review based on completion of narrative responses.

Committee will score based on context of narrative responses, and whether the project physically improves connectivity, access, and stewardship within the site and surrounding area.

Narrative responses should:

- Clearly describe how the project advances SCORP 2025–2030 priorities (self selected by applicant in Foundant):
- Community Investment – strengthening outdoor infrastructure, local economies, and long-term public value
- Accessibility – improving equitable access to outdoor recreation by reducing physical, economic, and social barriers
- Innovation – fostering creative design, adaptive reuse, and technology-driven outdoor solutions
- Public Wellness – supporting physical, mental, and community health through outdoor recreation
- Environmental Stewardship – protecting natural resources while ensuring sustainable management and long-term maintenance

Criterion 4: Community Involvement

This category evaluates the depth and quality of public engagement during project development, including community outreach meetings, documented volunteer involvement, public meeting transparency, and participation from parks committees or stakeholder groups.

Strong applications demonstrate that residents shaped the project and show commitment through input, volunteer effort, or local contributions.

ORGP Staff will score based on completed documentation of Community Outreach, Volunteer Activity, City Council/Quorum Court Resolution & Documentation and Evidence of a Parks Committee or local stakeholder participation.

Committee will score based on additional contextual factors in narrative and supporting documents that show:

- How community members speak about the project during the hearing
- Whether local leaders show unified support
- Whether the project reflects local values and long-term vision

Criterion 5: Project Readiness

The readiness score reflects whether the project is feasible, planned, and financially supported. Readiness includes secured local matching funds, commitment to using a Licensed Design Professional, a proportionally accurate, ADA-compliant advanced site plan with cost estimates, clear implementation timelines and maintenance plan.

Projects that demonstrate strong planning, financial stability, and professional preparation earn maximum points.

ORGP Staff will review based on completed documentation of Fund Source Assurance, Land Control/Acquisition information, Maintenance Plan and Licensed Design Professional Commitment Letter, Maintenance Plan, Project Timeline and Grant History and Phasing Eligibility.

Committee will score based on their assessment of the applicant's actual capacity to execute the project and whether the applicant demonstrates convincing readiness through leadership, planning competence, presentation clarity, and long-term maintenance commitment from narrative and supporting documents.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. Estimated Project Cost

Applications must include a cost estimate based on quotes from equipment vendors and contractors, with all listed facilities and project elements forming the basis of the Contract Agreement. Costs are determined through estimates from design professionals, local suppliers, contractors, or park equipment vendors. The budget should provide a clear, realistic line item breakdown that includes installation, freight, taxes, and contingency, with items prioritized for partial funding scenarios. Estimates should favor slight overestimation to avoid underbudgeting. Costs are separated by location when similar work occurs at multiple parks.

For land acquisition, the method and estimated property value are included, though a formal appraisal is not recommended at this stage.

Administrative fees are capped at 10% of development costs, and design professional fees at 12%, with reimbursement allowed only after equivalent development work is completed.

2. SCORP Priority Assessment

Applicants are encouraged to describe the way(s) in which their project meets one or more of the SCORP Priorities. Access to the current SCORP documents are available on our website. Points in this category are only relevant to applicants who are invited to the Grant Hearings.

3. City Council/Quorum Court Resolution

All applications must be accompanied by a City Council Resolution or Quorum Court Order from the current application year authorizing the project application. Please include the wording as shown in the example in Appendix C.

4. Land Control and Acquisition Documentation

Applicants must demonstrate clear legal authority to develop or acquire the proposed project site. All applications—whether development, acquisition, or combination—must include documentation showing current or pending land control. The following consolidated standards apply:

Acceptable Forms of Land Control

Applicants must provide **one** of the following:

1. Deed (Ownership)

Required when the applicant already owns the property.

The deed must show:

- Full legal ownership by the city or county
 - Exceptions can be made for trail connectivity or linear recreation facilities, where a permanent public recreation easement provides equivalent development and access rights and is held with participating parties (example - school districts, nonprofit organization, or other relevant property owner).
- Generally, reversionary clauses or restrictions incompatible with long-term public outdoor recreation use are not allowed. Additional deeds or supporting documentation may be requested during review.

2. Lease (State or Federal Agencies Only)

Eligible only when leasing from a state or federal agency.

Applicants must include:

- A copy of the fully executed lease or land-use agreement
 - Evidence that the lease allows development and public outdoor recreation
- Private-party leases are not eligible.

3. Easements

Easements may be used as an acceptable form of land control when they provide the applicant with sufficient legal authority to develop, operate, and maintain public outdoor recreation facilities. The easement documentation must include:

- A fully executed easement agreement granting the city or county the legal right to construct, maintain, and operate outdoor recreation facilities within the easement area
- A legal description and map of the easement boundaries
- Confirmation that the easement allows public access for outdoor recreation in perpetuity
- Assurance that no reversionary clauses or restrictions conflict with long-term public outdoor recreation use

Easements are most commonly used for trail connectivity, access corridors/points, or linear recreation facilities. The easement must provide rights comparable to fee-simple ownership for the purposes of public outdoor recreation development and long-term maintenance.

4. Letter of Intent to Sell or Donate (see Appendix C)

Required for fee-simple acquisitions and/or private donations

The letter must come from the property owner and include:

- A clear statement of intent to sell and/or donate
- A legal description of the property
- Proposed purchase price (if applicable)
- Signatures from both the property owner and the applicant

This document establishes control at the application stage; the deed will be required later.

Additional Requirements for Acquisition Projects

If the project involves land purchase or donation:

1. Deed for Proposed Acquisition

Submit the current deed for the property being acquired.

2. Commitment for Title Insurance

Required only when the property does not come with a warranty deed.

Provide a signed letter from the applicant's CEO stating:

- Intent to purchase title insurance upon award
- Acknowledgment that insurance will be secured before reimbursement

3. Plan for Delayed Development (if applicable)

Required when development will occur at a later time.

The plan should describe:

- Intended future facilities or site uses
- Interim public access
- How basic accessibility will be ensured immediately upon acquisition

Important Restrictions

- Do not take title to property before the state contract is executed unless written approval is obtained from ADPHT.
- All land within the approved project boundary must remain in public outdoor recreation use in perpetuity.
- Donated land must be privately owned at the time of donation; publicly owned land cannot count as a donation match.

Additional information is available in Appendix B.

5. Site Location Map

A site location map should show the full extent of community boundaries and the exact location of the proposed project. The map should help staff and the Committee understand regional context, distance to other facilities, and service area. An example of a site location map is in Appendix C.

6. Site Plan (Scaled, ADA-Compliant if Accommodation is selected as one of the applicant's SCORP pillars)

A site plan of the proposed project area is required with your application. The site plan should show a proportionally accurate project area, drawn to scale. It should identify all application line items and ADA parking and associated pathway(s) providing barrier-free access to proposed facilities. Please identify all ADA parking and pathway(s) that will provide access to proposed facilities even if ADA parking and/or pathway(s) already exists. An example of a site plan is in Appendix C.

7. Project Boundary Map

The project boundary map is an outline of the full boundary of the proposed project area. If the site is located within an existing park, please include the entire park boundary unless advised otherwise. If awarded, the project boundary map will be used as a record to show that this proposed area will remain in outdoor recreation use in perpetuity. An example of a project boundary map is in Appendix C.

8. Letter from a Project-Relevant Design Professional

Applicants are required to attach a letter from the project-relevant design professional to state that they will assist with the grantee's project upon award. The letter must be on their company's letterhead. A design professional can be an architect, landscape architect, engineer, professional trail builder, contractor, or other appropriate infrastructure development professional. All licensed professionals must be registered in the state of Arkansas.

MATCHING GRANT DOCUMENTATION

The following items are used to score Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant applications.

1. City Council or Quorum Court Documentation

To receive points for a public meeting of the governing body (City Council or Quorum Court), the application must include the following documents:

- Meeting agenda and minutes showing the project or intent to apply as a separate item
- Proof of meeting advertisement that includes publication date and advertisement method such as website, social media, or other standard media outlet
- Sign-in sheet

In the case that the advertisement cannot be readily reproduced, there is an optional document that can be used to affirm method and date of advertisement, but a copy of the meeting agenda, minutes, and sign-in sheet are still required. A copy of this document is in Appendix C on page 25.

2. Community Outreach Documentation

Qualifying outreach may include one in-person meeting that asks for public input on the project. Documentation must include:

- Date of meeting
- Sign-in sheet and meeting minutes
- Print advertisement or screenshots of social media advertising for the meeting (with date, content, and comments) including, if applicable, a CEO statement summarizing any media broadcasts.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to conduct community outreach prior to their mandatory public meeting.

3. Volunteer Activity Documentation

A fully documented volunteer activity conducted after January 1 of the application year can earn points. A volunteer activity is any organized workday involving community members assisting with park improvements or beautification. Examples of activities include trash collection, painting or light repairs, equipment maintenance, and tree planting or landscaping.

Documentation must include:

- Location, date, and type of activity
- Number of participants (minimum two participants)
- Sign-in sheet
- Signature of the applicant's CEO

The volunteer activity must take place in the park for which the application is being submitted. If applying for your first project, you may conduct the activity on the proposed site—even if it is undeveloped or vacant. If that is not feasible, an outdoor volunteer activity elsewhere in the community will be accepted.

4. Evidence of Parks Committee or Local Stakeholder Participation (if applicable)

Any documentation that shows involvement by a parks committee, friends group, or stakeholder advisory group may support Community Involvement scoring.

5. Improved Barrier Free Access and/or Play Equipment

Improved Barrier Free Access: Points will be added for projects that will construct barrier free access to existing facilities within one or more parks.

Improved Play Equipment: Points will be added for projects that improve existing play equipment by meeting Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and/or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) safety standards. Examples of this include installing compliant impact surfacing and replacing non-compliant play equipment.

6. Fund Source Assurance

ORGP Staff will review the Fund Source Assurance form and assign points based on if the project's funding is all cash value or a combination of cash value and promised donations. Projects with all cash value will be prioritized.

7. Grant History and Phasing Eligibility

Grant History will be determined by the last time the applicant was awarded ORGP grant (FUN, Matching, Great Strides) from this program. State fiscal years are used as a determining factor. Phased projects are considered as well.

8. Maintenance Plan

The maintenance plan should describe how proposed project will be maintained with estimated costs and identified sources of funding for that maintenance.

9. Project Timeline

The project timeline should provide an estimated chronological listing of project milestones if grant project started in Spring 2027 (estimated June 2027).

10. Priority Classification

Priority classification defines priority level of the proposed project.

APPENDIX A

MATCHING GRANT REQUIREMENTS

If you receive an Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant, you must comply with the following requirements:

1. Do not begin construction or take title to property until a state contract has been executed, unless prior written approval has been granted by ADPHT.
2. Define and submit your park boundaries to ORGP Staff.
3. Grant-funded property must remain dedicated to public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.
 - If the property is converted to private or non-recreational use, the sponsor must replace it with land of equal or greater value and recreational usefulness.
4. Grant-assisted property must be safely maintained and kept in good repair to ensure continued public use.
5. Reasonable limits on types or levels of use (e.g., restricting hunters or motorized users) may be imposed when needed for maintenance or preservation.
6. Administrative, design, and professional fees (landscape architecture, engineering, architecture) are eligible for reimbursement only after the related development work is completed.
7. A permanent acknowledgement sign must be installed and maintained within the park indicating that the project was funded by an Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant. ADPHT will provide a small sign to be placed in a prominent location.

APPENDIX B

LAND ACQUISITION INFORMATION

Applicants may apply for a grant to acquire lands and waters to establish a new park, expand an existing park, establish a conservation area, or acquire any other property dedicated to outdoor recreation. Please contact your project officer as soon as possible if you are planning to acquire property.

Land may be acquired through fee-simple purchase or private donation.

Permanent public recreation easements may be used to establish land control when they provide the applicant with sufficient legal authority to construct, maintain, and operate outdoor recreation facilities. Easements must include a legal description, guarantee public access, and ensure perpetual outdoor recreation use. Considerations for development of easements include

- Determine maintenance, liability, insurance, and enforcement responsibilities within the easement documents and any accompanying agreements.
- Ensure a long-term stewardship and management plan for the defined easement area.

There are three types of acquisition projects:

- **Acquisition for immediate development** means the applicant intends to construct outdoor recreation facilities as soon as the property has been purchased.
- **Acquisition for delayed development** means the applicant will purchase land with the intention of constructing outdoor recreation facilities in the future. During the period of time between acquisition and development, the property must be open for public recreation purposes to the extent to which the land is suitable or which can be achieved with a minimum public investment. Non-recreational uses, such as farming, that occurs on the property at the time of acquisition must cease prior to a grantee's request for reimbursement.
- **Acquisition for preservation/protection** means the applicant intends to purchase land primarily for conservation or educational purposes. Projects in this category must install provisions for public access that meet accessibility standards.

Guidelines for Land Acquisition

1. Donated property must be in private ownership, not public ownership, at the time of acquisition.
2. Generally, reversionary clauses or any other clouds in a land title that are inconsistent with public outdoor recreational use are not allowed.
3. Title to the land should not be taken until a state contract authorizing Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant funding for the acquisition is completed, unless applicant has received prior approval from ADPHT.
4. The appraised value of property may be used as a portion or all of the project sponsor's match. Successful applicants will be required to submit either a finding of value or formal appraisal after grant approval.

NOTE: Applicants are not recommended to purchase an appraisal prior to receiving a grant award.

Finding of Value

For property with an anticipated value of \$25,000 or less, a written finding of value prepared by a knowledgeable person such as a real estate broker, banker, or local appraiser can be provided. This document should include a statement of the preparer's experience, qualifications, a short description of the factors considered, and the means by which a conclusion was reached. The written finding of value can be submitted after grant award.

Formal Appraisal

For property with an anticipated value of \$25,000 or more, a formal appraisal must be purchased after the grant is awarded. The appraisal must comply with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) <http://www.uspap.org>.

1. If acquiring land for any purpose, applicants are required to submit a letter of intent to sell or a letter of intent to donate from the property owner (see page 19).
2. If acquiring land without a warranty deed, applicants are required to submit a letter of commitment for title insurance.
3. If acquiring land for delayed development, Applicants are required to submit a plan for delayed development.

APPENDIX C

Resolution No. 12-3456

WHEREAS, SAMPLEVILLE, Arkansas seeks to improve the recreation facilities and wishes to seek grant funding assistance; and

WHEREAS, in order to obtain the funds necessary to develop and/or improve the site for such a recreation area, it is necessary to obtain an Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant from the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism; and

WHEREAS, the plans for such recreation areas have been prepared and the price therefore has been established; and

WHEREAS, this governing body understands the grantee and grantor will enter into a binding agreement which obligates both parties to policies and procedures contained within the Outdoor Recreation Matching Grant Application Guide, including, but not limited to, the following; the park area defined by the project boundary map, submitted with the application, must remain in outdoor recreation use in perpetuity, regardless if the property is bought or developed with matching grant funds and; all future overhead utility lines within the project boundary must be placed underground and; the project area must remain open and available for use by the public at all reasonable times of the day and year; facilities can be reserved for special events, league play, etc. but cannot be reserved, leased or assigned for exclusive use, and; the project area must be kept clean, maintained, and operated in a safe and healthful manner.

City Council/Quorum Court is well aware and apprised of the above-mentioned project, and will provide the local portion of the development cost of the entire project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council/Quorum Court of SAMPLEVILLE, Arkansas that the Mayor/County judge is hereby authorized to make application to the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism for assistance to develop recreational facilities for the City/County.

Passed this 1st day of July, 20 99.

APPROVED _____
Mayor/County Judge Clerk

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

Appendix C

June 30, 2099

The Honorable Mayor or County Judge's name
P.O. Box 1234
Sampleville, Arkansas 72960

Dear Mayor or County Judge's name

I am hereby submitting this letter confirming my intent to sell/donate to the City of Sampleville, a -acre parcel of land located at street address. The execution of this sale/donation is contingent on the City of Sampleville receiving a FY 2027 FUN Matching Grant from the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to develop a project site reserved for public outdoor recreation use in perpetuity.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at (123) 456-7890.

Sincerely,

Owner signature

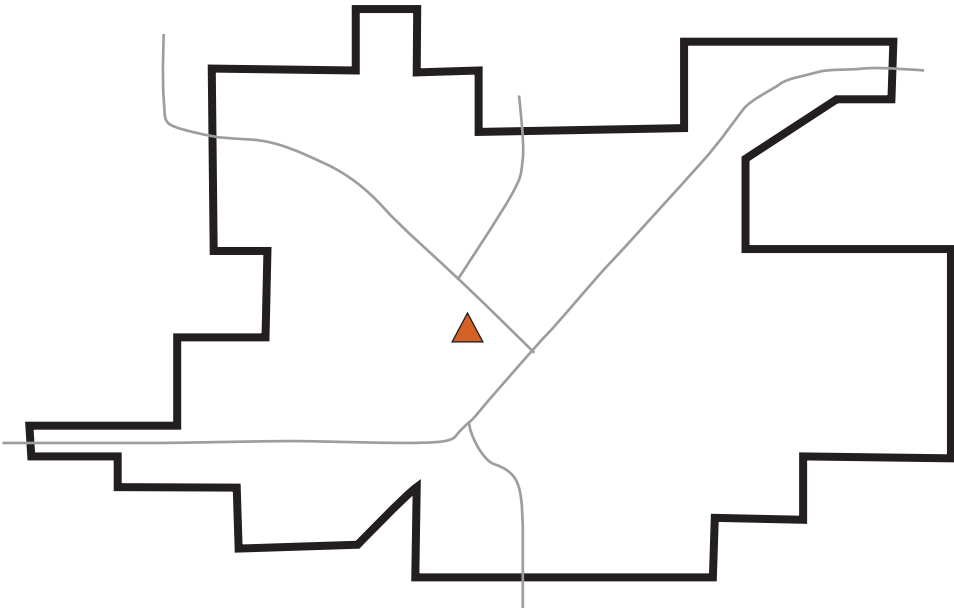
Owner name

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

Appendix C

SITE LOCATION MAP
City of Sampleville



-  **City Limits**
-  **Major Highways**
-  **Sampleville City Park**

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

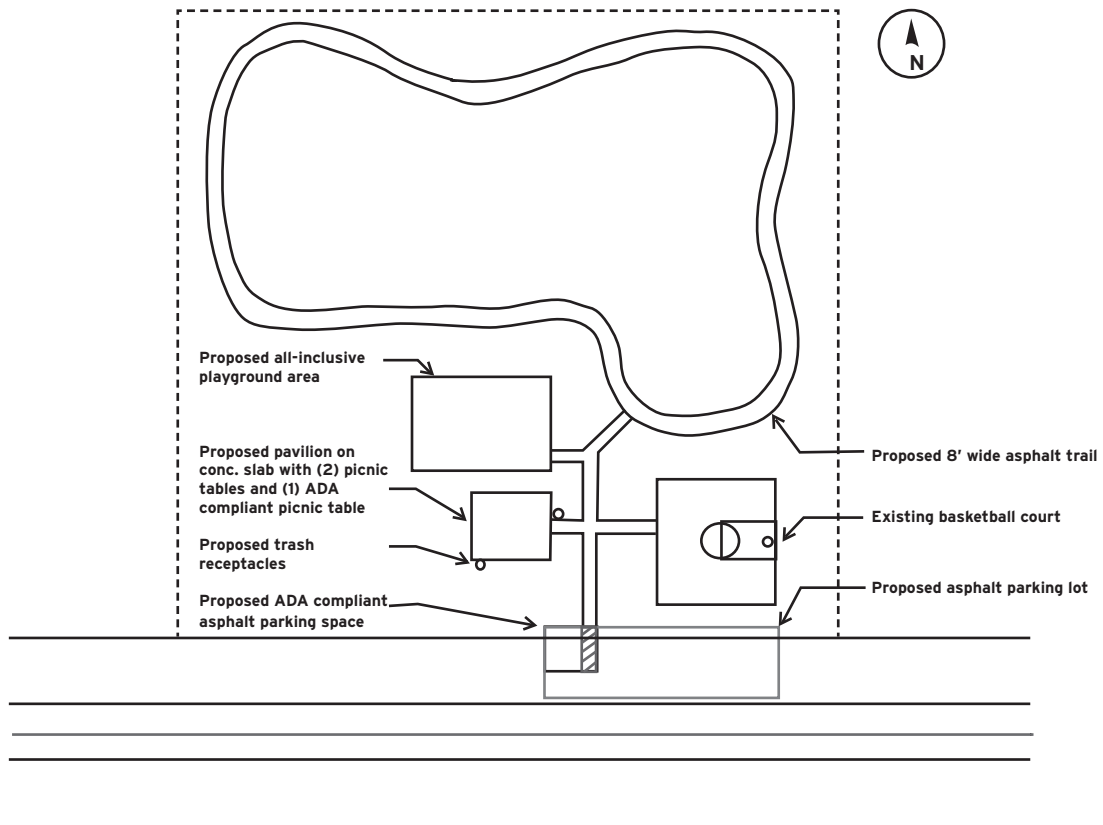
Appendix C

SITE PLAN

Sampleville City Park

Not to Scale

Date: March 1, 2099



EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

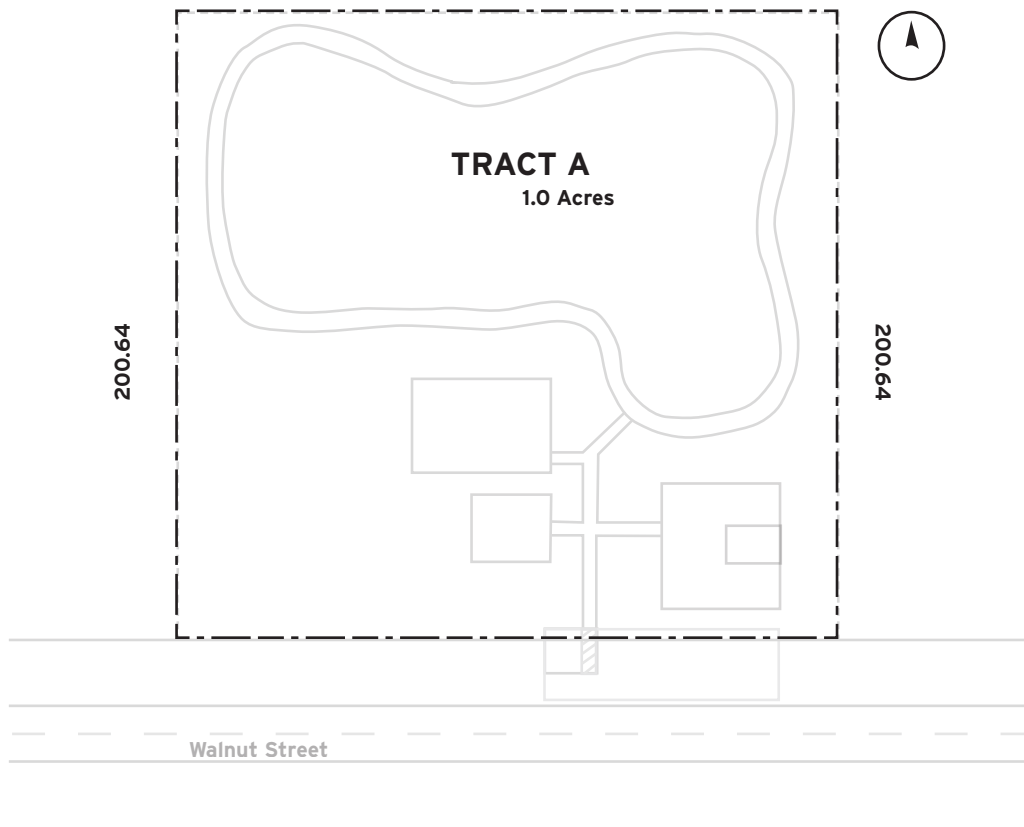
Appendix C

PROJECT BOUNDARY MAP

Sampleville City Park

Not to Scale

Date: March 1, 2099



EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

Appendix C

June 30, 2099

I am hereby submitting this letter confirming the City of Sampleville completed a volunteer activity pursuant to this grant application.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Trash Pickup

LOCATION: Sampleville City Park, 1234 Parks Rd., Sampleville, AR 77777

DATE: June 27th, 2099

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 9

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at (123) 456-7890.

Sincerely,

Mayor/County Judge signature

Mayor/County Judge name

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

Appendix C

June 30, 2099

I am hereby submitting this letter confirming this grant proposal was a dedicated agenda item at the June 7, 2099 monthly meeting of the **City of Sampleville City Council / Sampleville County Quorum Court**. I also certify that the meeting was open to the public, was advertised in advance of the meeting, and that the grant proposal was explicitly noted in the advertisement, the method of which was as follows:

METHODS OF ADVERTISEMENT: Posted Notices

LOCATION: Sampleville Hardware Store, Sampleville Post Office,
Sampleville Grocery Store

DATE: Posted on May 30, 2099

A copy of the official meeting agenda is included with this application. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at (123) 456-7890.

Sincerely,

Mayor/County Judge signature

Mayor/County Judge name

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

APPENDIX D

MATCHING GRANT POINT SYSTEM (44 POINTS)

The following point system is used for application review.

Community Outreach Documentation

Documented outreach of in-person activity:

Fully Documented:	2
Insufficient Documentation	1
No Outreach	0

Volunteer Activity Documentation

Documented volunteer activity that involves community members assisting with park improvements.

Fully Documented	2
Insufficient Documentation	1
No volunteer activity	0

City Council/Quorum Court Documentation

Provided required documentation including the proposed grant project was presented as a dedicated agenda item at City Council/Quorum Court monthly meeting (per instructions in this this guide) and an official resolution.

Fully Documented	4
Insufficient Documentation	2
No public meeting	0

Evidence of a Parks Committee or Local Stakeholder Participation

Applicant has provided evidence of an active parks committee, friends group, or stakeholder advisory group.

Yes	1
No	0

Improved Barrier Free Access and/or Play Equipment

Project involves constructing barrier free access to existing facilities within one or more parks; or, project will replace or upgrade play equipment with new equipment that complies with Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines; or, access to proposed facilities being developed meets standards for barrier free access and/or CPSC guidelines:

Yes	1
No	0

Fund Source Assurance

Application's Project Fund Source Assurance reflects that the grant's total project cost will be:

All cash value, including promised donations	5
Combination of cash value and in-kind donations	3
Fund Source Assurance does not equal total cost of project	0

Letter From Licensed Design Professional

Provided a letter signed by a licensed design professional (landscape architect, architect or engineer) stating that they will oversee the project upon award.

Yes	4
No	0

Site Plan

Application includes a site plan with a proportionally accurate project area, identifies all application line items, and identifies barrier-free access to all proposed facilities, including ADA parking and pathway(s) leading to the proposed facility. Mark ADA parking and pathway(s) providing access to any proposed facility even if ADA parking and pathway already exist:

Yes	6
Some, but not all, requirements are met	3
No site plan	0

Grant History and Phasing Eligibility

Applicant has no open grants and has not received an Outdoor Recreation Grant in the past:

Never received a grant	3
8+ years and/or phased project	2
1-7 years	1
Open grant	0

Maintenance Plan

Provided description of how proposed project will be maintained with estimated costs and identified sources of funding for that maintenance.

Yes	4
No	0

Project Timeline

Provided estimated timeline of project milestones if project started in Spring 2027 (estimated June 2027).

Yes	4
No	0

Priority Classification

Defines the priority level of the proposed project as described by priority definitions listed in the Matching Grant Guide.

High priority project	8
Mixed priority project (includes high priority & low priority items)	4
Low priority project	1

APPENDIX E

ADVISORY COMMITTEE GUIDEBOOK

The Outdoor Recreation Grants Program (ORGP), a division of the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation within the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT), supports the enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities across Arkansas through advocacy, research, technical assistance, and grant funding. Outdoor recreation includes any outdoor leisure activity that engages individuals physically or mentally for enrichment and enjoyment. Communities rich in outdoor recreation experience benefits such as economic development, workforce retention, improved public health, stronger community identity, and conservation of natural assets.

The ORGP Committee evaluates the highest-ranked applications using the Committee's own scoring system, which is based on professional judgment, presentation quality, local context, and overall project merit. The Committee assesses factors that cannot be fully captured on paper, including community readiness, leadership capacity, and the real-world impact of the proposed project.

Following their evaluations and applicant presentations, the Committee ranks the applications and provides funding recommendations to ADPHT.

This Guidebook outlines the responsibilities of the Committee, the annual application and review process, and the detailed scoring criteria used during Committee evaluation.

Annual Grant Cycle Overview

1. **Spring Notice** – ORGP sends grant availability notices to all mayors and county judges announcing the opening date (May 1) and posting of Matching Grant and FUN Park Grant guides.
2. **Application Period** – Applications are due the last Friday in August.
3. **Staff Review & Portal Opening** – ORGP staff review submissions and open the Foundant portal for Committee review by October.
4. **Committee Scoring** – Committee members independently evaluate applications using the scoring criteria provided in this Guidebook.
5. **Public Hearings** – Highest ranked applicants for Matching Grants are invited to present before the Committee in late October. Prior to this, staff brief Committee members on applicant history and program updates.

6. **Award Recommendations** – Following hearings, the Committee submits funding recommendations to the Secretary and ultimately to the Governor.
7. **Award Notifications** – Successful applicants receive grant award letters; unsuccessful applicants receive constructive feedback for future submissions.

ORGP COMMITTEE DETAILED RATING CRITERIA

The matrix below describes each selection criteria as a numerical score for the ORGP Matching Grants. The maximum score for any application is 10 points, based on five equally weighted criteria. Each criterion is scored from 0–2 points.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Project Need	Project Impact	SCORP Alignment	Community Involvement	Project Readiness	TOTAL
2	2	2	2	2	10 points

1: PROJECT NEED

Applicants must clearly explain why the project is necessary and how it addresses the community's highest outdoor recreation need.

Strong proposals:

- Present a well-defined problem or gap in recreational infrastructure.
- Demonstrate major need, such as lack of facilities within a reasonable distance, undersized or inaccessible areas, or health and safety concerns.
- Show local efforts to understand or respond to recreational needs.
- Provide a conventional outdoor recreational facility.

Highest priority consideration should be given to conventional outdoor recreation projects—those that directly support interaction with Arkansas' natural landscapes and provide broad, multi-use public benefit. These include projects that expand or improve trails of all kinds (hiking, biking, running, or equestrian) and trailhead facilities; climbing infrastructure and related amenities; hunting and shooting-related improvements; RV parks and campgrounds that enable extended outdoor stays; and the construction or enhancement of fishing piers, bank fishing areas, and water-access points that allow residents and visitors to more fully utilize the state's rivers, lakes, and streams. These types of projects typically offer year-round recreation, bolster ecotourism, and contribute to long-term community health, economic vitality, and stewardship of natural resources.

Clear articulation of community-wide need, local engagement, and the unique role the project fills within the region is essential.

2: PROJECT IMPACT

Applicants must describe how the project will benefit the community, improve quality of life, and support tourism or economic development. Unlike “need,” which focuses on the problem being addressed, “impact” evaluates the scale and reach of the benefits produced.

When scoring Project Impact, the Committee evaluates the true scale and reach of the benefits the project is likely to generate—not just the benefits listed in the application. Staff score the impacts applicants document; the Committee evaluates whether those impacts are realistic, meaningful, and supported by local context and presentation.

High-impact projects create new opportunities for residents and visitors, enhance public access to the outdoors, and strengthen community appeal. They may revitalize underused natural areas, connect neighborhoods to parks or trails, or provide safe, inclusive spaces for families and underserved groups. A project with strong impact extends beyond recreation by supporting local business activity, increasing visitor spending, and contributing to workforce attraction and retention.

Outdoor recreation is a proven economic engine in Arkansas. Recent state data show the outdoor recreation economy contributes more than \$7.3 billion to Arkansas GDP and supports over 68,000 jobs, with visitor spending producing ripple effects across lodging, dining, retail, manufacturing, and service sectors. High-impact projects—particularly trail systems, improved water access, and regional outdoor amenities—can significantly increase non-local visitation, which in turn generates tax revenue and supports small businesses. Communities experiencing or anticipating major industry growth especially benefit from high-quality outdoor infrastructure, which enhances livability and supports workforce competitiveness.

3: SCORP ALIGNMENT

Applicants should describe how the project aligns to the current 2025-2030 Arkansas SCORP.

While staff evaluate SCORP alignment based on documented references in the application, the Committee assesses how effectively the project will overcome real barriers to outdoor access and create connectivity in practice. Committee members use their judgment to determine whether the project will meaningfully advance one or more of the five SCORP pillars.

High-scoring projects demonstrate how they remove physical, social, financial, or geographic obstacles to outdoor access. SCORP-aligned projects are those that connect outdoor assets, broaden access, and contribute to long-term sustainability of Arkansas' outdoor infrastructure.

Applicants must demonstrate:

- o **Community Investment** – strengthening outdoor infrastructure, local economies, and long-term public value
- o **Accessibility** – improving equitable access to outdoor recreation by reducing physical, economic, and social barriers
- o **Innovation** – fostering creative design, adaptive reuse, and technology-driven outdoor solutions
- o **Public Wellness** – supporting physical, mental, and community health through outdoor recreation
- o **Environmental Stewardship** – protecting natural resources while ensuring sustainable management and long-term maintenance

4: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement reflects the degree to which residents, volunteers, civic groups, and local officials have participated in shaping the project. Applicants must show that the public was meaningfully engaged in identifying priorities, refining concepts, and demonstrating support. Evidence may include documented outreach meetings, volunteer activities, public-meeting records, or participation from an active parks committee.

Staff score community involvement based strictly on documented outreach and volunteer activity. Committee members evaluate whether the project appears genuinely community-driven, using judgment to assess the sincerity, depth, and credibility of the engagement described during the presentation.

High-scoring applications show that the project is community-driven rather than agency-driven. They demonstrate that residents have contributed ideas, labor, or funding and that the project reflects shared values and long-term community goals. Strong community involvement builds public stewardship, reduces future maintenance challenges, and increases the likelihood of long-term success.

Committee members may consider additional contextual factors not captured in documents, such as:

- How community members speak about the project during the hearing
- Whether local leaders show unified support
- Whether the project reflects local values and long-term vision

5: PROJECT READINESS

The applicant should describe the community's ability to execute, including planning, funding, future maintenance, and staff availability.

Project readiness measures whether the applicant has the capacity, resources, and planning needed to successfully complete the project. A ready project has secured match funding, engaged licensed design professionals, and developed an accurate, proportionally scaled site plan that shows all elements of the project area and ADA-compliant access routes where applicable.

Project readiness in Committee scoring reflects the Committee's assessment of the applicant's actual capacity to execute the project, distinct from staff's document-based readiness score. While staff verify match documentation, site plans, and cost estimates, the Committee evaluates whether the applicant demonstrates convincing readiness through leadership, planning competence, presentation clarity, and long-term maintenance commitment.

High-scoring projects demonstrate reliable cost estimates, committed financial resources, clear implementation plans, and established maintenance strategies. Applicants with a history of completing successful projects or improvements are better positioned to deliver results. When a community shows strong readiness—through planning, staffing, budgeting, and professional design—the investment is more likely to be completed efficiently and provide long-term value.

Committee members may consider:

- Whether the applicant demonstrates realistic understanding of project logistics
- Whether staffing levels and maintenance plans seem credible
- Whether leadership appears capable and committed
- Whether the project scale matches the community's capacity

Applicants with a strong history of successful project implementation or effective park management may receive higher scores, even if those strengths are not fully documented in the application.

This guide is designed to assist you through the application process.
All Outdoor Recreation Matching Grants are administered by the
Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact us.

Office of Outdoor Recreation
Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism
1100 North Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
Email: ArkansasGoOutdoors@arkansas.gov
Website: www.outdoorgrants.com