



2021 National Gold Medal Questions & Judging Criteria

(Updated March 10, 2021)

Provided in this document are the 2021 National Gold Medal application questions with their assigned point value and maximum word count.

This document provides judging criteria to assist the National Gold Medal Judges in assessing the agency's response to the application questions. It is intended as a guide; judges may apply their own experiences and knowledge in their assessment.

Agencies may use this document as a guide in framing their responses however, they are encouraged to remember their community is unique in its enabling legislation, resources, constituents, and challenges. The National Gold Medal Award seeks to identify those agencies who believe they are excellent in managing and delivering high quality parks and recreation services.

PLEASE NOTE: There are changes to the 2021 Gold Medal questions including word count and points. Be sure to note the total word count and point value for each question.

- 1. Recognizing each public park and recreation agency is unique in its purpose, mission, culture, financing, enabling legislation, etc., what does your agency do really well in managing its resources, programs, or personnel?**

TOTAL WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM POINTS 15

The intent of this question is for the agency to explain in broad terms what they do really well. Why do they believe they are a national leader? This question is not about the magnitude of their resources but how well they fulfill their mission and serve their community using whatever resources they have. Their response should be linked to their enabling legislation, their master plan and their mission. Enabling legislation of an agency gives it the authority and responsibility to carry what they were created to do. How well do they execute, demonstrate,

and measure advancement towards their mission? The response relates what they are created to do and then how efficient and effective they are at getting that completed.

- 2. Cite 3 examples of internally-focused initiatives, actions, or programs your agency has undertaken in the last 3 years that demonstrate how it connect(s) with your community and your constituents and customers. Describe how you measure the outcome(s) of these efforts.**

TOTAL WORDS 240 / EACH EXAMPLE WORTH UP TO 3 POINTS / MAXIMUM POINTS 9

The intent of this question is to solicit examples of internal initiatives, actions, or programs that your agency has taken in the last 3 years to improve its internal procedures, methods, or systems. These would demonstrate that the organization is becoming more efficient and effective, ultimately benefiting your agency's abilities to serve your constituents. This *could* include efforts that address budgeting, customer service, energy efficiency, emergency management, employee development and training, automations, etc. The agency should describe their desired outcome(s) and how progress is measured and communicated.

- 3. Cite 3 examples of externally-focused initiatives, actions, or programs your agency has undertaken in the last 3 years that demonstrate its relationship with decision-makers, commissions/boards, business community, partners, nonprofits, etc. Describe how you measure the outcome(s) of these efforts.**

TOTAL WORDS 240 / EACH EXAMPLE WORTH UP TO 3 POINTS / MAXIMUM POINTS 9

The intent of this question is to identify how the agency is externally networking with other players in the community to develop relationships with decision-makers, commissions/boards, business community, partners and/or nonprofits. Did these efforts results in pooling resources, new agreements, new partners? The agency should describe why these desired outcome(s) and how progress is measured and communicated.

- 4. Park & recreation agencies are increasingly being called upon to demonstrate the results of their services and practices to decision-makers and the general public. Cite 3 results, impacts, or outcomes achieved in the last 3 years that your agency has measured; background about the outcome(s); and how the results were achieved.**

TOTAL WORDS 300 / EACH EXAMPLE WORTH UP TO 3 POINTS / MAXIMUM POINTS 9

Park and recreation agencies are constantly being questioned about the value and impact to their community. The intent of this question is to determine if the agency identified and demonstrated their benefits to the community and/or decision makers with measurable outcomes. The agency should describe why these desired outcome(s) and how progress is measured and communicated.

- 5. Park & recreation agencies focus on creativity and innovation. Cite 3 innovations implemented by your agency within the last 3 years that have had a substantial impact on service delivery, customer satisfaction, partnerships, financial condition, and/or internal operations.**

TOTAL WORDS 300 / EACH EXAMPLE WORTH UP TO 3 POINTS / MAXIMUM POINTS 9

One of the strengths of the parks and recreation profession is it is constantly reinventing itself and adapting to change. Change may be forced upon the agency internally or externally. How has the agency reinvented / adapted by creating new innovations, delivery methods, partnerships, etc? The intent of this question is to identify any new innovations that the agency may have created over the last three years.

- 6. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years to ensure all people within your community have equal access to the benefits of quality parks and recreation, focusing on equity at the center?**

MAXIMUM WORDS 120 / TOTAL POINTS 3

The intent of this question is to ensure that everyone in the community has equitable access to parks and recreation opportunities. This includes all people regardless of age, gender, religion, national origin, economic or any other types of barriers including physical.

There are two issues with this question: is there an equitable delivery of parks, facilities and recreation programs throughout the community and has the agency identified any barriers that need addressing to ensure equity? The agency can submit it has identified inequities as long as it reports how it is addressing them.

- 7. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years to advance community health and wellness education and promotion? Cite efforts undertaken for personnel and /or community members.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 120 / TOTAL POINTS 3

Health and wellness is more than physical activity. Health and wellness can include nutrition education such as healthy food and snacks; substance abuse prevention; mental health; air and water quality. Initiatives mentioned should address efforts for personnel and community members.

- 8. What initiatives or actions has your agency undertaken in the last 3 years in planning, managing, promoting, and educating in support of conservation, environmental stewardship and sustainability practices.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 120 / TOTAL POINTS 3

Conservation is more than dealing with climate change, preservation of open space, or offering environmental education programs. Conservation can include efforts such as habitat conservation, agriculture, easements, transportation, urban forests, recycling, energy efficiencies, landscape design, and partnerships.

9. **What challenge(s) has your agency experienced in the last 3 years and what action(s) has your agency undertaken to address these challenges? Cite agency’s role in the challenge(s), the steps/actions undertaken, and the measured effectiveness of the effort(s).**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM POINTS 10

There is no specific answer to question 9 as each agency and community is different which means the challenge(s) an agency faces will be unique. What to look for with this question are three parts: identification of the challenge; the impact to the agency; and how the agency responded. The challenges may be manmade, weather, unprecedented growth, government changes, civil or political unrest. These ideas are not intended to be inclusive but are provided as possibilities.

TOTAL WORDS: 2040

TOTAL POINTS: 70

Definitions:

Undertaken implies action has begun, launched, started, attempted

Outcomes are measurable changes in behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, conditions or skills.

Community is meant to be the agency’s service area.

The National Gold Medal Award Program is governed and managed by the [American Academy for Park & Recreation Administration](#) in partnership with the [National Recreation and Park Association](#) and proudly sponsored by [Musco Lighting](#)

