



## 2023 National Gold Medal State Park Questions & Judging Criteria

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Provided in this document is the 2023 National Gold Medal Award application questions with assigned point values and maximum word counts.

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

Applicants should 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 entities (public agencies, state park systems, and armed forces installation programs) that demonstrate excellence in managing and delivering high quality parks and recreation services.

PLEASE NOTE: The total word count and point value varies for each question.

- 1. Recognizing each state park and recreation system is unique in its purpose, mission, culture, financing, enabling legislation, etc., what does your park system do well in managing its resources to meet its stated goals?**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM 15 POINTS

This question is for the park system to explain in broad terms what they perceive they do well. Why do they believe they are a national leader in managing their resources? 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. The response should be linked to their enabling legislation, their master or strategic plan and their mission. How well do they execute, demonstrate, and measure advancement toward their mission? The response is intended to tie what the park system was created to do with how efficient and effective they are at achieving its mission.

- 2. Based upon your response to Question 1, what are your state park system's measurements and how are you measuring what you say you are doing well? Cite three examples of assessments or measurements and provide data.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / EACH EXAMPLE IS A MAXIMUM OF FOUR POINTS, FOR A TOTAL OF 12 POINTS

In Question 1 the park system is asked to state why it is a leader in managing its resources to meet its goals using the resources it has. Question 2 asks the park system to specifically explain what it is assessing and how it is measuring its performance in the areas where it is excelling. The park system is to provide three examples of what the system is measuring and data that supports its performance.

- 3. Successful and/or well managed state park systems consistently communicate internally to ensure their team members are informed and engaged; they are included in the decision-making processes; and they are motivated to succeed.**

**Describe three examples undertaken in the last three years of park system initiatives or actions that demonstrate how it communicates, engages, and connects with its team members. Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / EACH EXAMPLE IS A MAXIMUM OF FOUR POINTS, FOR A TOTAL OF 12 POINTS

The intent of this question is for the park system to identify action(s) it is taking to communicate and/or connect with its team members. Did these efforts result in improved staff morale, more efficient decision-making, and/or sharing of resources, etc.? Whatever the initiative or action that was undertaken, did the park system identify the desired outcome(s) and how are they being measured?

- 4. Enlisting and engaging with external entities, i.e., community members, customers, businesses, partners, or coalitions, can expand a state park system's resources and influence.**

**Describe three examples undertaken in the last three years that demonstrate the state park system's efforts to increase its resources or influence by involving community members, customers, businesses, coalitions, or partners. Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / EACH EXAMPLE IS A MAXIMUM OF FOUR POINTS, FOR A TOTAL OF 12 POINTS

The intent of this question is to identify how the park system is communicating or connecting with members of its community, customers, and partners to build relationships, increase resources or influence. Whatever the initiative or action undertaken, did the park system identify the desired outcome(s) and how are they being measured?

- 5. State park systems are called upon to demonstrate the results of their services and practices to decision-makers and the public. Cite three outcomes, results, or impacts achieved in the last three years that your park system has measured; background about the outcome(s); and the results achieved.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / EACH EXAMPLE IS A MAXIMUM OF FOUR POINTS, FOR A TOTAL OF 12 POINTS

State park systems are often questioned about their value and the impact they are having in the communities they serve. The intent of this question is to determine if the park system has identified and demonstrated the benefits of their services and programs to its communities and/or decision makers. The park system should describe why these desired outcome(s) were chosen and how progress is measured and communicated.

- 6. State park systems focus on creativity and innovation. Cite three innovations implemented by your state park system within the last three years that have had a significant impact on service delivery, customer satisfaction, partnerships, financial condition, fiscal sustainability and/or internal operations.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300, EACH EXAMPLE IS A MAXIMUM OF FOUR POINTS, FOR A TOTAL OF 12 POINTS

One of the strengths of the parks and recreation profession is it is constantly reinventing itself and adapting to internal and external forces. How has the park system reinvented/adapted by creating new innovations, delivery methods, partnerships, etc.? The intent of this question is to identify any new innovations that the park system has created during the last three years that has had a significant impact to the community it serves.

**7. What initiatives or actions has your state park system undertaken in the last three years to ensure all members of its communities have fair and just access to quality parks and recreation?**

MAXIMUM WORDS 150, MAXIMUM FIVE POINTS

The intent of this question is to ensure that everyone in the communities served have fair and just access to parks and recreation opportunities. This includes all community members regardless of age, gender identity, religious beliefs, heritage, economic circumstance, or mental or physical ability.

Is there an equitable delivery of parks, facilities and recreation programs throughout the park system and has the system identified any barriers that need addressing to ensure equity? The park system can submit it has identified inequities if it reports how it is now addressing them.

**8. What initiatives or actions has your state park system undertaken in the last three years to advance health equity, improve individual and community-level health outcomes, and quality of life? Cite efforts undertaken for team members and/or community members that encourage and inspire health and wellness.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 150, MAXIMUM FIVE POINTS

State park systems play a vital role in meeting the evolving health needs of the communities they serve. Health and wellness can include programs that provide access to healthy foods; physical activity; social connections; nature; substance abuse prevention; mental health; and improve air and water quality. Initiatives mentioned should address efforts for the community and team members.

**9. What initiatives or actions has your state park system undertaken in the last three years to address the impact of climate change through environmental stewardship, sustainability practices, and environmental programming? Cite efforts undertaken.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 150, MAXIMUM FIVE POINTS

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, air quality, traffic reduction, recycling, energy efficiencies, landscape design, and partnerships.

**10. What challenge(s) has your state park system experienced in the last three years and what action(s) has your state park system undertaken to address these challenge(s)? Cite the park system's role in identifying and addressing the challenge(s), the steps/actions undertaken, and the measured effectiveness of the effort(s).**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300, MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

There is no specific answer to Question 10 as each state park system is different which means the challenge(s) a park system faces will be unique. This question has three components: identification of the challenge; the impact to the system; and how the system responded. The challenges may be manmade, weather, unprecedented growth, government changes, pandemics, civil or political unrest. These ideas are not intended to be inclusive but are provided as possibilities.

TOTAL WORDS: 2370

TOTAL POINTS: 100

**Definitions:**

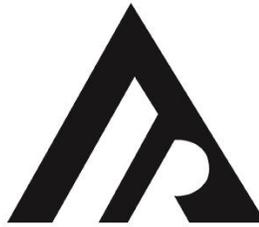
1. **Undertaken** implies action has begun, launched, started, attempted.
2. **Outcomes** are specific, measurable statements that communicate the goal has been met; they describe specific changes in conditions, behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, or skills expected to occur because of your actions.
3. **Community** is meant to be the agency's service area.
4. **Team members** refers to staff, full and part time, and volunteers.

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