



## 2025 National Gold Medal Public Agency Application Questions & Judging Criteria

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This document provides the 2025 National Gold Medal Award application questions with assigned point values, maximum word count per question, and the criteria used to assist the National Gold Medal Award Judges assess the applicant's responses. 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 agency 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 public park and recreation agency is unique in its purpose, mission, culture, financing, enabling legislation, etc., describe what your agency does well in managing its resources to meet its stated goals.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM 15 POINTS

This question is for the agency to explain in broad terms what they judge they do well. Why do they believe they are a national leader in managing their agency? This is question is **not** about the magnitude of their resources (budget, revenues, grants, staff, facilities, etc) but how well they fulfill their mission and serve their community using the 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 agency was created to do with how effective they are at managing their resources to achieve its mission.

- 2. Based upon your response to Question #1, what measurements is your agency employing to evaluate what you say you are doing well? Cite three examples of the agency measurements and how the data is being used in decision-making.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

In Question #1 the agency is asked to state why it is a leader in managing its resources to meet its stated goals using the resources it has. The magnitude of the resources is not important; what is important is how effectively

they manage their resources to achieve their mission. Agencies are to provide three examples of the types of data collected and how it is being used in their decision-making.

- 3. Well managed park and recreation agencies know the source(s) of its funds, *regardless of the amount*, and plans how it will utilize those funds. Describe the agency's fiscal management strategies and cite two examples of how the agency allocates its funds to respond to its stated mission and goals.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

This question seeks to learn the agency's overall fiscal planning and management philosophy and how it applies the money it receives or generates to meet its stated mission and goals. This question is **not** about the amount of funds the agency receives. The focus is on what the agency does with the funds it does receive. Response should share the agency's fiscal management philosophy as well as two management strategies it uses in allocating its funds.

- 4. Well managed park and recreation agencies 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. Cite three examples undertaken in the last three years of *internal* initiatives or actions that demonstrate how the agency communicates, engages, and connects with its team members. Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

The intent of this question is for the agency to identify actions it is taking to communicate and/or connect *internally* 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 undertaken, did the agency identify the desired outcome(s) and how are they being measured?

- 5. Enlisting and engaging with *external* entities, i.e., community members, customers, businesses, partners, or coalitions, can expand an agency's resources and influence. Cite three examples undertaken in the last three years that demonstrate the agency's efforts to increase its resources or influence by involving *external* partners (i.e., community members, customers, businesses, or coalitions). Explain the intended outcomes and how they are being measured.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

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

- 6. Park and recreation agencies 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 agency has measured; background about the outcome(s); and the results achieved.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

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

- 7. Park and recreation agencies should focus on creativity and innovation. Cite three innovations implemented by your agency within the last three years that have had a significant impact on either service delivery, programs, customer satisfaction, partnerships, financial condition, fiscal sustainability, maintenance practices, and/or internal operations.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

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

- 8. Cite initiatives or actions agency has undertaken in the last three years that center equity in programs, policies, and practices to ensure all community members have fair and just access to the benefits of quality programs and services.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 150 / MAXIMUM FIVE POINTS

The intent of this question is to ensure that everyone in the community has fair and just access to quality parks, facilities, recreation programs and services regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, identity, religion, socioeconomic status, age, language, or physical or mental abilities.

Is there an equitable delivery of facilities and recreation programs throughout the community and has the agency identified any barriers that need addressing to ensure equity? Does the agency recognize and celebrate differences and ensure community members / visitors feel welcome? The agency can submit it has identified inequities if it reports how it is now addressing them.

- 9. Park and recreation agencies manage gathering spaces that connect community members to essential programs, services and spaces that advance health, wellness and improve the quality of life. Cite efforts of community-focused solutions that connect community members to programs, services and spaces that inspire health and wellness.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 150 / MAXIMUM FIVE POINTS

Park and recreation agencies play a vital role in meeting the evolving health needs of their community. 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. The core of this work is equity, ensuring all people have the opportunity to achieve positive health and well-being outcomes.

- 10. Cite initiatives, practices, or actions your agency has undertaken in the last three years that advance or support environmental resiliency and greater sustainability.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 150 / MAXIMUM FIVE POINTS

Implementation of community-wide sustainability measures that improve the environment as well as promote human and ecosystem health can include protecting the natural habitat, stormwater management and lowering of water usage, focused maintenance practices, reducing or eliminating use of carbon-based energy, reducing landfill waste, providing programs that educate and engage community members, and intentional communications through websites, social media, brochures, and signage.

- 11. Each park and recreation agency faces challenges due to internal or external influences. What challenges has your agency faced in the last three years and what action(s) has it undertaken to address these challenge(s)?**

Cite the agency'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 #11 as each agency and community is different which means the challenge(s) an agency faces will be unique. This question has three components: identification of the challenge; how the agency responded; and the measurement(s) used to evaluate effectiveness. The challenges may be manmade, weather, unprecedented growth, government changes, pandemics, civil or political unrest. These ideas are not inclusive but are provided as possibilities.

TOTAL WORDS: 2610

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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