



2025 National Gold Medal Armed Forces Application Questions & Judging Criteria

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 installation program is unique in its financing, 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 armed forces installation program is unique in its purpose, mission, culture, and financing, describe what your program does well in managing its resources to meet its stated goals.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM 15 POINTS

This question is for the installation to explain in broad terms what they judge they do well. Why do they believe they are a national leader in managing their program? 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 master or strategic plan and their stated mission. How well does the installation plan, execute, demonstrate, and/or measure advancement toward their stated mission? The response is intended to tie what the program was created to do with how effective they are managing its resources to achieve its mission.

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

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

In Question #1 the installation program is asked to state why the program is a leader in managing its resources (i.e., budget, revenues, grants, staff, facilities, etc.) to meet its goals using whatever 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. This question asks the program to specifically explain what it is assessing and how it is

measuring its performance in the areas where it is excelling. Installation programs are to provide three examples of the types of data collected and how it is being used in their decision-making.

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

MAXIMUM WORDS 240 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

This question seeks to learn the installation program's overall fiscal planning 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 program receives. The focus is on what the program does with the funds it does receive. Response should share the program's fiscal management philosophy as well as two management strategies it uses to allocate its funds.

- 4. Well managed installation programs 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 program 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 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

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

- 5. Enlisting and engaging with *external* entities, i.e., community members, customers, tenant commands, businesses or other partners, can expand an installation's resources and influence.**

Cite three examples undertaken in the last three years that demonstrate the installation program's efforts to increase its resources or influence by involving *external partners* (community members, customers, tenant commands, businesses or other entities). 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 program is communicating or connecting with its community members, dependents, customers, tenant commands, and partners to build relationships, increase resources or influence. Whatever the initiative or action undertaken, did the program identify the desired outcome(s) and how are they being measured?

- 6. Armed forces installation programs are called upon to demonstrate the results of their services and practices to decision-makers and the individuals they serve. Cite three outcomes, results, or impacts achieved in the last three years that your installation program has measured; background about the outcome(s); and the results achieved.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 300 / MAXIMUM 10 POINTS

Armed forces installation programs can be questioned about their value and the impact they are having in their installation community and to its personnel, dependents, or customers. The intent of this question is to determine if the program has identified and demonstrated the benefits of their services and programs to its community and/or decision makers. The program should describe why these desired outcome(s) were chosen and how progress is measured and communicated.

- 7. Armed forces installation programs should focus on creativity and innovation. Cite three innovations implemented by your program 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 armed forces recreation profession is it is constantly reinventing itself and adapting to internal and external forces. How has the installation program reinvented/adapted by creating new innovations, delivery methods, partnerships, etc? The intent of this question is to identify any innovations the program has created during the last three years that have had a significant positive impact to the installation's community.

- 8. Cite initiatives or actions your installation program has undertaken in the last three years that center equity in programs, policies, and practices to ensure all personnel, dependents, and 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 installation community has fair and just access to quality 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 installation community and has the program identified any barriers that need addressing to ensure equity? Does the program recognize and celebrate differences and ensure users / potential users feel welcome? The agency can submit it has identified inequities if it reports how it is now addressing them.

- 9. Armed forces installation programs manage gathering spaces that connect personnel, dependents and community members to essential programs, services and spaces that advance health, wellness and improve the quality of life. Cite efforts of installation-focused solutions that connect personnel, dependents or community members to programs, services and spaces that inspire health and wellness.**

MAXIMUM WORDS 150 / MAXIMUM FIVE POINTS

Armed forces recreation programs play a vital role in meeting the evolving health needs of their community members. 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 cited should address efforts for personnel, dependents, and community members.

- 10. Cite initiatives, practices, or actions your installation program undertaken in the last three years that advance or support DoD and/or installation efforts to promote 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 armed forces installation program face unique challenges due to internal or external influences. What challenge(s) has your installation program faced in the last three years and what action(s) did your program undertake to address these challenge(s)? Cite the program'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 installation program is different which means the challenge(s) a program faces may be unique. This question has three components: identification of the challenge; how the program responded and the measurement(s) used to evaluate effectiveness. The challenges may be manmade, weather, command or installation changes, or pandemics. 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, volunteers.

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