SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

SUSTAINABLE RECREATION, TOURISM, AND EQUITABLE OUTDOOR ACCESS

GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Updated June 2025

Directed Grant Program

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The mission of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is to initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra-Cascade Region, its communities, and the people of California. The Strategic Plan of the SNC identifies a Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access goal aimed at enhancing, promoting, and developing equitable and sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities in the Sierra-Cascade Region.

The bipartisan Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act (Act), enacted in 2004 and commencing with Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 33300, established the SNC; Sections 33343 and 33346 set forth the authority for SNC to award grants of funds in order to carry out the purposes of the Act.

The statute that created the SNC emphasizes the importance of carrying out the mission in an integrated and complementary manner and the important role an organization providing strategic direction and resources to the Region can play. The SNC's activities fall under seven statutorily mandated program areas:

1. Increasing the opportunity for tourism and recreation in the Region
2. Protecting, conserving, and restoring the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources
3. Aiding in the preservation of working landscapes
4. Reducing the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfire
5. Protecting and improving water and air quality
6. Assisting the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program
7. Enhancing public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public

The SNC Strategic Plan (Plan) is developed in accordance with the Act and provides direction for SNC activities and the Grant Guidelines (Guidelines). The Plan identifies four Regional Goals:

1. Healthy Forests and Watersheds
2. Resilient Sierra-Cascade Communities
3. Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access
4. Conservation and Stewardship of Natural & Working Lands

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access goal concentrates on efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities in the Sierra-Cascade Region. The Region offers tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities that both rely on healthy watersheds and forests and support

tourism and economic growth in California's rural communities. For many of the communities in the Region, revenue from recreation and tourism represents the largest portions of their economies, and jobs from recreation provide residents with the opportunity to work and thrive in their communities. The Sierra-Cascade's outdoor recreation spectrum runs the full gamut: from highly developed ski resorts to backcountry wilderness; thousands of miles of trails for off-highway and over-snow vehicles, mountain biking, equestrianism, and hiking; world-class fishing and hunting opportunities for a wide range of game; golf courses, marinas, wineries, and public parks; wildlife refuges; caves; and wild rivers. There is also a rich collection of cultural, historic, heritage, and tribal tourism attractions that are tied to both Californian and national history. Today, however, many of these benefits are at risk. A changing climate will likely affect recreational activities dependent on snow, as well as summer activities dependent on water resources. If the size and scope of severe fire and tree mortality continue to grow due to climate change and drought, these resources and economic contributors may disappear and take centuries, if ever, to return. A strategic approach to the development of sustainable recreation and tourism is necessary to enable both economic and natural resource resiliency against these challenges. Actions under this goal are intended to support recreation planning and infrastructure, including on public lands; help communities anticipate, avoid, and mitigate challenges associated with high recreation use and recreation-based economies; and improve outdoor access for communities that have not traditionally had equitable access to nature.

The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment, needed policy changes, and increased infrastructure. This comprehensive effort is organized and coordinated by the SNC in close partnership with other federal, state, and local agencies, as well as diverse stakeholders, and aims to increase the pace and scale of restoration in the Region. The SNC has established the WIP as the SNC's overarching initiative, providing a holistic approach to SNC's mission, recognizing the inherent interrelationships and dependencies between the Regional Goals.

Related State Priorities

The California Climate Adaptation Strategy ("Strategy") links together the state's existing and planned climate adaptation efforts, showing how they fit together to achieve California's six climate resilience priorities. The Strategy is organized around outcome-based priorities, enabling a coordinated, integrated approach to building climate resilience.

Through California's Outdoors for All Initiative and Strategy, Governor Gavin Newsom has prioritized building a California for All, where all the state's residents can thrive. Enabling equitable access to nature and the outdoors is a key component for advancing this commitment and is the fundamental purpose of the Outdoors for All Initiative. California's Outdoors for All Initiative is expanding parks and outdoor spaces in communities that need

them most, supporting programs to connect people who lack access, fostering a sense of belonging for all Californians in the outdoors, and much more.

The California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force includes a Sustainable & Accessible Recreation Key Working Group, which developed a Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Fire Resilience. The joint strategy provides a roadmap for improved access to sustainable outdoor recreation, with a focus on areas where wildfires are impacting those opportunities throughout California.

Program Funding

Proposition 68

California voters passed Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018, on June 5, 2018. Proposition 68 added Division 46 to the Public Resources Code, authorizing the state to issue bonds, and the California Legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for purposes identified in the Act. Proposition 68 recognizes the critical importance of recreation and tourism to California's economy and ecology and specifically directs funds to be used to support and expand recreation economies, opportunities, and access to outdoor recreation.

Public Resources Code, Section 80110, subd. (b)(9) allocates $30 million of the bond funds to SNC in accordance with SNC's governing statute for its specified purposes. It is the intent of the people of California that these funds be invested in projects that:

- Advance the purposes of SNC, as identified in its governing statute and Strategic Plan (Pub. Resources Code, § 80110, subd. (b)(9));
- Provide public benefits that address the most critical statewide needs and priorities (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, subd. (b)(1).);
- Leverage private, federal, or local funding or produce the greatest public benefit (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, subd. (b)(2));
- To the extent practicable, provide workforce training, contractor, and job opportunities for disadvantaged communities (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, (b)(5)); and
- To the extent practicable, measure greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestrations associated with projects (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, subd. (b)(7)).

Additionally, Proposition 68 states that:

- At least 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to Chapter 8 shall be allocated to projects serving severely disadvantaged communities (SDAC). (Pub. Resources Code, § 80008, subd. (a)(1)); and

- To the extent permissible under State General Obligation Bond Law and with the concurrence of the Director of Finance, up to 5 percent of funds available through Proposition 68 may be available for community access projects. (Pub. Resources Code, § 80008, subd. (c).) Proposition 68 defines community access as engagement programs, technical assistance, or facilities that maximize safe and equitable physical admittance, especially for low-income communities, to natural or cultural resources, community education, or recreational amenities.

Additional Funding Sources

If additional funding sources become available, with purposes consistent with SNC's Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed Grant Program as described in these Guidelines, SNC may direct those funding sources to the support of this grant program.

Project requirements or limitations tied to state law, specific funding sources or state budget allocations will be reflected in project development and grant agreements.

Program Objectives

The SNC recognizes the fundamental connection between equitable and sustainable recreation and tourism across the Region, the health and resilience of Sierra-Cascade communities, and the ecological health of California's watersheds and forests. Working with partners to strategically implement activities supporting recreation and tourism will protect these benefits and the resources that are unique to the Sierra-Cascade Region.

This program aims to support innovative, collaborative efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities and increase access to public lands in the Sierra-Cascade Region. Projects funded through this program should accomplish one or more of the following across a defined geographic region:

- Assess conditions, existing resources, needs, and opportunities to support or promote recreation and tourism throughout the Region and identify highest priority activities.
- Identify, create, and participate in partnerships to support the development of equitable and sustainable recreation and tourism throughout the Region.
- Support projects or collaboratives that achieve sustainable recreation and tourism objectives throughout the Region.

Community access projects that address collaborative recreation and tourism may be supported under this program. Public Resources Code, Section 80008, subd. (c) in Proposition 68 defines "community access" as engagement programs, technical assistance, or facilities that maximize safe and equitable physical admittance, especially

for low-income communities, to natural or cultural resources, community education, or recreational amenities. Such projects should include at least one of the following elements:

- Transportation
- Physical activity programming
- Resource interpretation
- Multilingual translation
- Natural science
- Workforce development and career pathways
- Education
- Communication related to water, parks, climate, coastal protection, and other outdoor pursuits

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access program is a directed grant program. Concept proposals are accepted on a continuous basis and projects are developed in conjunction with the SNC. There is no deadline-oriented Request for Proposals or competitive scoring review.

II. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Applicant Eligibility

Grant funds may be authorized for:

- Public agencies: Any city, county, special district, joint powers authority, state agency, or federal agency.

- Qualifying 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations: “Nonprofit Organization" means a private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, is in good standing with the state of California, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC.

- Eligible Tribal Entities: An Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register; (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe.

Notes:

- The SNC’s governing statute does not allow grants to mutual water companies.
- Tribes should consult with SNC regarding the legal entity applying for and managing grant funds.

Project Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a grant award from the SNC under this program, projects must meet all the following criteria:

- Be located within the Sierra-Cascade Region
- Be consistent with the Program Objectives described in these guidelines.
- Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as defined in the SNC Strategic Plan and the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP).
- Meet all requirements of Proposition 68
- Result in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit.

Consistent with provisions of Proposition 68 and objectives of the proposed project, the SNC may give favorable consideration to projects that:

- Employ a collaborative approach in project development or implementation.

- Result in a beneficial impact across a defined geographic region.
- Directly benefit severely disadvantaged or disadvantaged communities.
- Consider climate impacts and risks and identify specific adaptation strategies or actions to remedy climate-related vulnerability.
- Leverage private, federal, or local resources.

Examples of potential eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- The development of a recreation and tourism collaborative or partnership for a defined geographic region.
- The implementation of priority projects identified through a collaborative process.
- A collaborative process to identify and prioritize recreation and tourism needs across a defined geographic region.
- Innovative public-private partnerships to address recreation and tourism-related challenges, including infrastructure and transportation needs.
- Promotion of recreation and tourism attractions and opportunities across a defined geographic region.
- Development of resource interpretation or communication programs for underserved populations, identified as a priority need through a collaborative process.
- Design of sustainable recreation and tourism programs related to and by Native American tribes.

Please contact SNC Area Representatives to determine project eligibility, initiate project development, or to identify alternative funding opportunities and other assistance.

Ineligible Projects

Examples of ineligible projects include:

- Grants to service or repay loans
- Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, a law or regulation.

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis. If applicants have questions about the eligibility of their project, they should consult with their SNC Area Representatives.

Eligible Costs

Direct Project Costs

For project costs to be eligible for reimbursement, the costs must be within the scope of the project, supported by appropriate documentation, and completed by the required deadline as identified in the grant agreement. Costs related to project-specific performance measures, project reporting, and required signage are eligible costs; if being requested by the applicant, these costs must be included in the project budget.

Administrative Costs

Administrative costs are shared overhead expenses rather than direct costs. Administrative costs may not exceed 15 percent of the SNC-funded direct project costs. In the event of an audit, projects with budgets that include administrative costs must be able to document the appropriateness of these expenses. A typical method for documentation of administrative overhead expenses is a Cost Allocation Plan (CAP). A CAP is a formal accounting plan used to calculate and document the method for recovering overhead costs. The SNC strongly recommends that grantees consult with an accounting professional to develop an appropriate method for calculating overhead rate and prepare a CAP.

Ineligible Costs

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing or increasing a legal defense fund or endowment.
- Monetary donations to other organizations
- Food or refreshments
- Costs associated with fundraising
- Grant-writing expenses
- Any expenses incurred before a grant agreement is executed or after the project completion deadline, as identified in the grant agreement.

NOTE: If a proposal contains ineligible costs, SNC will consult with the applicant to confirm viability of project if those costs are removed from the budget in advance of consideration by the SNC Board.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Proposal Initiation

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access program is a directed grant program. Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis and projects are developed in conjunction with the SNC. There is no deadline-oriented Request for Proposals or competitive scoring review.

To initiate consideration of a project, a project organizer should review the Companion Document for the current grant cycle and contact the appropriate SNC Area Representative. The Area Representative will assist with determining if the project meets SNC criteria. If it is determined that SNC will consider partnering on the project, the Area Representative will share the SNC Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Proposal Form with the organizer and assist in developing the project and completing the Proposal Form.

Right of Access Requirements

For any projects that involve planning for or implementation of on-the-ground site improvement activities, proposals must include a letter from all property owners/managers indicating their awareness of and willingness to implement the project and granting access to the property to conduct pre-project due diligence or other necessary activities.

Environmental Documents

The SNC requires all proposals to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) at the time the Board authorizes a grant. The SNC relies heavily on previously completed environmental analyses to make required findings. Since the complexity of CEQA compliance will vary depending on the proposed project activities and the type of applicant, it is very important that applicants consult with SNC staff as early as possible to discuss which CEQA documents will be required. In cases where a project is not exempt from CEQA and the partners do not have standing to act as Lead Agency, the SNC will consider acting as Lead Agency.

NOTE: When projects have previously completed CEQA documentation and the baseline environmental conditions of the project area have significantly changed (due to fire, tree

mortality, etc.), applicants must provide confirmation from the Lead Agency responsible for preparing the original CEQA documents that the documents remain valid.

Long-term Management

Projects receiving support through this program must demonstrate a clear and enduring public benefit. This includes long-term viability of any programs developed through the project, as well as on-the-ground site improvement components of a project. All site improvement project sites shall be maintained, operated, and used in a manner consistent with the purposes of the project. Additionally, the grantee and/or property owner shall not use any portion of the project site for mitigation or as security for any debt. The long-term management plan for site improvement or program development projects must include a description of how project deliverables will be managed and maintained over time, by whom, and how funding will be provided for such work.

The SNC and Related Monitoring

On-the-ground site improvement projects shall be subject to monitoring for site conditions. The SNC and its officers, employees, agents, and representatives shall have access to monitor the project site for a minimum of twenty-five (25) years following completion of the project.

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) will lead landscape-scale quantification of greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestration for all projects funded under Proposition 68, where feasible. Grantees will not be required to make these calculations for each project, but instead submit base information (such as acres, land type, activities) for CNRA use. This requirement will only apply when feasible for a project.

Performance Measures and Reporting

Performance measures are used to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes. They provide a means of reliably measuring and reporting the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and how it contributes to the SNC achieving its programmatic goals. Detailed information and recommended performance measures can be found on SNC Performance Measures.

- The SNC requires all grantees consider four specific quantitative performance measures:

    1. Number and Type of Jobs Created

2. Number and Value of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities
3. Resources Leveraged for the Sierra-Cascade Region
4. Number of People Reached

- In addition, each grantee will be required to report on one to three additional project-specific performance measures that will help describe project outcomes in a measurable way. Examples of additional performance measures can be found on SNC Performance Measures.

- Applicants may also propose alternative performance measures, which will be subject to the approval of SNC staff if the grant is authorized. The proposed measures will be finalized in consultation with SNC staff prior to grant agreement approval.

- All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline. The final report must include data associated with the project-performance measures.

Tribal Consultation

On September 19, 2011, Governor Brown issued Executive Order B-10-11, which provides, among other things, it is the policy of the administration that every state agency and department subject to executive control implement effective government-to-government consultation with California Native American tribes. The SNC staff will work to implement all aspects of SNC's Tribal Consultation Policy when considering projects. The SNC strongly encourages Native American involvement in projects. The SNC can assist project proponents with identifying Native American tribes whose ancestral homelands may be in the project area and contact information for those tribes.

Consultation and Cooperation With Local Agencies

In compliance with the SNC's governing statute, local government agencies, such as counties, cities, and local water districts, are notified of eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area.

For all proposals under consideration, SNC staff will notify the county and/or city and public water agency affected (when appropriate) and offer the opportunity to submit comments. The SNC will make all reasonable efforts to address concerns raised by local governments. Individual SNC Boardmembers representing each geographic Subregion within the SNC boundary will also be notified of project proposals in their respective Subregions.

If there are privacy concerns related to information contained in a proposal, please notify SNC staff before submission.

California Conservation Corps and California Association of Local Conservation Corps

Per Proposition 68 requirements, all projects that involve an on-the-ground site improvement component shall consult with representatives of both the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and California Association of Local Conservation Corps (CALCC) to determine the feasibility of Corps participation. Projects that do not include a site improvement component do not need to notify the Corps. The Corps has developed a Grant Consultation webpage that fully describes the consultation process. The process takes 14 business days to complete after submission of the Corps Consultation Form. Please consult with your SNC Area Representative to learn more details regarding use of CCC or CALCC for implementation of the project.

IV. GRANT PROCESS

Project Development

Following SNC Board approval of the Guidelines, SNC will announce the opening of the grant program and begin accepting proposals on a continuous basis. Any additional requirements or restrictions, including those specific to additional funding sources or new state budget requirements, will be specified in the Companion Document for the current grant cycle. The SNC will undertake a thorough outreach effort to announce the program to diverse populations.

As a directed grant program, SNC may be involved in the development of potential projects. The initial step to bring a project forward to SNC is to contact the appropriate SNC Area Representative to determine whether a potential project is eligible for consideration and for assistance in project development.

As part of the project development process, organizers are encouraged to engage other stakeholders and Native American tribes. The SNC will notify county, water, and tribal representatives, as described in Section III.

Project Proposals

After determination that a project meets the requirements of the program and SNC agrees to engage in project development, SNC will provide the project organizer with the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Proposal Form. In addition to addressing the Program Requirements described in Section III, all proposals are required to specify the following:

- A description of how the project will directly result in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit.
- A clear connection to the goals of the SNC Strategic Plan and Proposition 68, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program. An anticipated timeline of activities and responsible parties through completion of the project.
- Detailed budget for project expenses, including resources leveraged from other sources and a narrative description of expenses.
- If and how the project may benefit disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged communities. For a map of community designations, please visit the Parks for California website.
- Plans for long-term management of project outcomes

V. EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Evaluation Process

The SNC will work closely with project proponents in the development of the project and project proposal. As such, project evaluation will not come after submission of a proposal but instead will occur upon initial discussion and throughout the project development process. The following evaluation aspects will be considerations in project development:

1. The project will be reviewed by a technical expert for technical merit.
2. The project will be reviewed by an environmental compliance expert.
3. Proposals will be shared with appropriate county/city planning, water agency (if applicable), and tribal representatives, as well as SNC's Boardmember county liaisons. If there are any privacy concerns related to information in an application, please discuss them with SNC staff before submission.
4. An SNC evaluation team will independently review and meet to discuss the proposals based on the evaluation criteria described in the following section.
5. The evaluation team will prepare a recommendation for SNC's executive officer.
6. After the evaluation process is complete, including all due diligence and analysis by SNC, funding recommendation(s) will be placed on a future Board meeting agenda at the discretion of SNC's executive officer.

NOTE: The SNC will consider the geographic distribution of projects, project locations related to disadvantaged communities, and project types, and may prioritize awards based on these considerations.

Evaluation Criteria

Project proposals will not move forward with recommendation to SNC's executive officer until the following criteria have been addressed to the satisfaction of SNC and the project proponent:

1. **Alignment with funding and program goals and related state priorities**
   The degree to which a project aligns with:
   - Current funding cycle priorities
   - The SNC Strategic Plan
   - Proposition 68 or other funding source
   - State planning priorities previously addressed in these guidelines. Other local, Regional, state, or federal plans.

2. **Public / Natural Resource Benefits**
   The degree to which the project provides multiple tangibles: enduring, public benefits with a high likelihood the benefits will be realized. Is the need for the specific project clearly identified and explained? Are the natural resources and economic benefits explained and reasonable? Will the project benefit disadvantaged communities?
3. **Project Readiness**
   The degree to which the project is ready to proceed promptly, if funded. Is project planning and coordination complete? Is access secured, environmental compliance, permitting, or other necessary preparations complete, as appropriate? Is all funding identified or secured?
4. **Project Design**
   Clarity on the project purpose, goals, deliverables, and schedule. Is the project approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives and deliverables of the project?
5. **Project Budget**
   The degree to which the budget is adequate and reasonable to implement the project. Are costs clearly identified, supported, and meet reasonable levels of fees for service?
6. **Long-Term Management**
   Is a plan, funding, and the responsible entity in place for carrying out long-term management? How will public benefits be sustained?
7. **Likelihood of Success**
   Does the project organizer have the necessary experience and sufficient capacity to implement the project as described?
8. **Community Support and Collaboration**
   The degree to which the project has public and institutional support at the local, Regional, or larger scale - and the local community or other stakeholders are engaged in project planning or delivery. Was the project developed as part of collaboration? Is there clear and demonstrable community outreach and support for the project and any community economic benefits? Is there tribal support for or tribal participation in the project?
9. **Landscape-Level Context**
   The degree to which the proposed project is part of a larger plan, coordinated effort, or is proximate to public lands or recreational amenities. Does the project support a broader, cumulative effort to restore/protect strategic goals?

10. **Leveraging**
    The degree to which a project provides in-kind services and/or secured federal, state, private, or local cost share funding. Have non-monetary and/or funding resources of agencies and organizations other than SNC been identified and secured?

Grant Awards and Agreements

For each awarded grant, the SNC develops an individual grant agreement with detailed provisions and requirements specific to that project. Please be aware that if an entity is awarded a grant from the SNC, the provisions listed below will apply:

- Administrative costs are limited to no more than 15 percent of the actual direct project costs.
- Grant-eligible costs may be incurred by the grantee only after the grantee has entered into a fully executed agreement with the SNC.
- All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline.
- To the extent practicable, site improvement projects will be required to include onsite signage indicating the project was funded by the SNC and the applicable funding source. The required acknowledgement language is included in the grant agreement and logo graphics are available from SNC. Reasonable costs associated with creation and installation of the sign(s) are eligible expenses and should be included in the project budget.

The SNC will provide assistance to the grantee to ensure the grantee's clear understanding and interpretation of the terms and conditions of the grant.

For applicants interested in more information about the standard grant agreement clauses and administrative requirements once a grant is authorized, please contact SNC.

VI. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Act	Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act
CALCC	California Association of Local Conservation Corps
CAP	Cost Allocation Plan
CCC	California Conservation Corps
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CNRA	California Natural Resources Agency
Guidelines	Grant Guidelines
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Plan	Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Plan
PRC	Public Resources Code
SDAC	Severely Disadvantaged Community
SNC	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Strategy	California Climate Adaptation Strategy
WIP	Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program

VII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Unless otherwise stated, the terms used in these Guidelines shall have the following meanings:

Administrative Costs – Administrative costs include any expense, which is not directly related to project implementation. Similar to the traditional definition of "overhead," administrative costs include shared costs, such as rent, utilities, travel, per diem, office equipment, and services such as internet, phone, shared bookkeeping costs, etc.

Applicant – The entity applying for an SNC grant pursuant to these Guidelines.

Application – The individual grant application form and its required attachments pursuant to the SNC Grant program.

Board – The governing body of the SNC as established by PRC Section 33321.

CEQA – The California Environmental Quality Act as set forth in the PRC Section 21000 et seq. CEQA is a law establishing policies and procedures that require agencies to identify, disclose to decision makers and the public, and attempt to lessen significant impacts to environmental and historical resources that may occur as a result of a proposed project to be undertaken, funded, or approved by a local or state agency.

CEQA/NEPA Compliance – Activities an entity performs to meet the requirements of CEQA and/or NEPA.

Collaborative– Cooperation between stakeholders with different interests to solve a problem or make decisions that cut across jurisdictional or other boundaries; often used when information is widely dispersed, and no single individual, agency, or group has sufficient resources to address the issue alone.

Community Access – Engagement programs, technical assistance, or facilities that maximize safe and equitable physical admittance, especially for low-income communities, to natural or cultural resources, community education, or recreational amenities.

Disadvantaged Community – A community with a median household income less than 80 percent of the statewide average. View maps of Disadvantaged Community (DAC) areas.

Eligible Costs – Expenses incurred by the grantee during the performance period of an approved agreement, which may be reimbursed by the SNC.

Forests – For the purposes of these Guidelines, forests are defined as areas of the Sierra-Cascade Region that are characterized by predominantly conifer and mixed-conifer forests.

Grant – Funds made available to a grantee for eligible costs during an agreement term.

Grant Agreement – An agreement between the SNC and the grantee specifying the payment of funds by the SNC for the performance of the project scope according to the terms of the agreement by the grantee.

Grantee – An entity that has an agreement with the SNC for grant funds.

In-kind Contributions – Non-monetary donations that are utilized on the project, including materials and services. These donations shall be eligible as "other sources of funds" when providing budgetary information for application purposes.

NEPA – The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. NEPA is a federal law requiring consideration of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project whenever a federal agency has discretionary jurisdiction over some aspect of that project.

Nonprofit Organization – A private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC as set forth in PRC Section 33300 et seq.

Other Sources of Funds – Cash or in-kind contributions necessary or used to complete the site improvement/restoration project beyond the grant funds provided by this program.

Performance Measure – A quantitative measure used by the SNC to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes.

Permitting – The process of obtaining any necessary regulatory approvals from appropriate governmental agencies to implement the project.

Pre-Project Due Diligence – The analysis necessary to prepare a future on-the-ground project for implementation.

Preservation – Protection, rehabilitation, stabilization, restoration, development, and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.

Project – The work to be accomplished with grant funds.

Proposition 68 – The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 which authorizes the issuance of bonds to finance a drought, water, parks, climate, coastal protection, and outdoor access for all program.

Public Agencies – Any city, county, special district, joint powers authority, state agency, or federal agency

Region or Sierra Cascade Region – The Sierra Nevada Region as defined in PRC Section 33302 (f).

Resilience – The ability of an ecosystem to regain structural and functional attributes that have suffered harm from stress or disturbance.

Restoration – Activities that initiate, accelerate, or return the components and processes of a damaged site to a previous historical state.

Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) – A community with a median household income less than 60% of the statewide average. View maps of Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) areas.

Site Improvements – Project activities involving the physical improvement or restoration of land.

SNC – Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Total Cost – The amount of the Other Sources of Funds combined with the SNC Grant request amount that is designated and necessary for the completion of a project

Tribal Entities – Includes any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register. (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe

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GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

June 2025

Companion Document
Directed Grant Program
FY 2025 – 2027 Funding Cycle

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Introduction

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is pleased to announce the next funding cycle for the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed Grant Program, effective July 1, 2025.

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Guidelines (Grant Guidelines) released in 2019 and updated in 2025 is the governing document for the program. This companion document describes the program priorities for this funding cycle. It is intended to provide specific details for this funding cycle but should be considered in conjunction with the grant guidelines.

The SNC anticipates the availability of $4.1 million for the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed Grant Program in this funding cycle, during Fiscal Years 2025-2027. However, the amount of funding available is subject to change.

Program Priorities for Fiscal Years 2025-2027

The SNC recognizes the fundamental connection between sustainable recreation, tourism, and equitable outdoor access across the Region, the health and resilience of Sierra-Cascade communities, and the ecological health of California's watersheds and forests. Working with partners to strategically implement activities supporting recreation, tourism, and equitable outdoor access will protect these benefits and the resources that are unique to the Sierra-Cascade Region. This program aims to support innovative efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities and increase access for all to public lands in the Sierra-Cascade Region.

The specific focus areas of the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program for Fiscal Years 2025-2027 are outlined below. Please note that these focus areas are more limited than the overall program described in the grant guidelines. Projects must fall within one of the focus areas to be considered for funding.

1. **Build Climate Resilience**
   Support the planning, development, and maintenance of recreation and outdoor infrastructure that anticipates or adapts to increased use and pressure from climate change and visitors escaping extreme weather. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water-quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.

2. **Improve/Increase Access for All**
   Improve and/or increase access to nature, including for communities that have not traditionally had equitable access through grants which result in either the implementation or identification, prioritization, and preparation for capital improvement projects. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water-quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.

1. **Landscape-scale Assessments**
   Support landscape-scale partnerships to develop an assessment of landscape conditions and risks to recreational infrastructure and other assets. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water-quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.

Consistent with the requirements of Proposition 68, all projects must either plan for or implement capital improvement projects that will benefit California citizens for no less than 30 years.

Project Types

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program supports planning projects and implementation projects, as described below. Each project proposal must identify whether it is a planning or implementation project; the project types may not be combined.

All grant awards will be limited to no more than $500,000.

Planning Projects

Planning projects include project development and other pre-implementation activities that will result in specific, identified future on-the-ground project(s). Future actions resulting from planning activities should be described in the proposal. Lead agencies for CEQA/NEPA compliance with future actions should be identified, if applicable.

Examples of potential planning project activities include, but are not limited to:

- The development of a recreation and tourism collaborative or partnership that identifies and prioritizes site-improvement projects across a large geographic region.

- Baseline studies, cultural resources, biological, botanical, aquatic, soil, hydrologic, wildlife, timber, or other studies/surveys necessary for the implementation of a future on-the-ground recreation project.

Implementation Projects

Implementation projects are the execution of on-the-ground projects. Examples of potential implementation projects include, but are not limited to:

- The implementation of priority projects identified through a collaborative process.
- Trail building and/or improvements.
- Accessible trails or recreation access points.
- Site improvements that minimize impacts to natural resources, e.g. food storage lockers, campsite improvements, toilets, re-routing trails around sensitive areas, trailhead improvements that protect resources.

Ineligible Projects

Examples of ineligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Planning projects that do not identify specific future on-the ground projects.

- Funding to support ongoing programs that do not result in on-the-ground site improvement.
- Research, education, outreach, or event-related projects, although these types of activities may be included as a small part of the overall implementation of a project eligible for SNC grant funds.
- Grants to service or repay loans.
- Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, a law or regulation.
- Any projects that do not meet the program priorities described in this companion document.

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis. If applicants have questions about the eligibility of their project, they should consult with their SNC Area Representative.

Additional Considerations

Engagement with California Native American Tribes

The SNC strongly encourages engagement with Native American tribes in the development, planning, and implementation of projects and will prioritize projects in which tribal communities are involved. The SNC staff can assist project applicants with identifying Native American tribes whose ancestral homelands may be in the project area and provide contact information for those tribes. The SNC will notify the appropriate tribal contacts regarding all eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area.

Severely Disadvantaged Communities

Proposition 68 states that at least 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to Chapter 8 shall be allocated to projects serving severely disadvantaged communities (SDAC). (Pub. Resources Code, § 80008, subd. (a)(1)). The SNC may prioritize projects that serve SDAC. View maps of Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) areas.

California Conservation Corps and California Association of Local Conservation Corps

All projects that involve an on-the-ground site improvement component shall consult with representatives of both the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and California Association of Local Conservation Corps (CALCC) to determine the feasibility of Corps participation. Projects that do not include a site improvement component do not need to notify the Corps. The Corps has developed a Grant Consultation webpage that fully

describes the consultation process. The process takes 14 business days to complete after submission of the Corps Consultation Form.

Geographic Distribution of Funds

The SNC strives to achieve an equitable balance in the distribution of grant funds across the Sierra-Cascade Region, appropriate to program priorities and the variety of needs across the Region. The SNC may take the geographic distribution of funds into consideration when awarding projects.

Program Process

Project Development

As the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access program is a directed grant program, proposals are developed in conjunction with SNC. To initiate consideration of a project, an applicant should contact the appropriate SNC Area Representative or other SNC staff. The Area Representative will assist the applicant organizer to determine if the project meets SNC criteria. If it is determined that SNC will consider partnering on the project, the Area Representative will share the Concept Proposal Form with the applicant and assist in developing the project. Upon review of the Concept Proposal, applicants may be directed to develop a Final Proposal in conjunction with SNC staff.

Schedule

The program will be announced in July 2025. Proposals will be accepted on a continuous basis and considered on a quarterly cycle.

- **December 2025**: Review of Concept Proposals received by December 1, 2025, and direction given to develop Final Proposals.
- **March 2026**: Review of Final Proposals received by March 1, 2026 and decisions regarding continued due diligence activities and potential recommendations to the SNC Governing Board.
- **June 2026**: If due diligence is complete, Final Proposals recommended to the SNC Governing Board for grant award.

The cycle will be repeated every quarter until funds are no longer available.