CPRS Award Category Summary
October 2026

advancing california's park & recreation profession

To assist you in meeting the submission requirements for the CPRS Awards Program, this summary outlines what is required for each program / category.

CPRS Awards of Excellence

Celebrating Excellence in Parks & Recreation

The Awards of Excellence honor the outstanding projects, programs, and strategies that elevate the impact of parks and recreation across California. From bold innovations and inspiring community initiatives to cutting-edge facility design, inclusive marketing, and visionary park planning—these awards celebrate the people and ideas shaping the future of our field. Whether large or small in scale, each entry reflects the creativity, dedication, and community spirit at the heart of CPRS.

Every submission is reviewed by a panel of peers, and only the most impactful, innovative, and inspiring work earns recognition. Prepare your nomination well, telling us a meaningful story of how your project, program, service or leader truly impacts your community and our industry.

2026 Award Categories At a Glance

Award	What it Honors	Eligible Entries	Judged On	Fee
Innovation Award	New, bold, or out-of-the-box ideas in programs, services, outreach, or operations	One-time or ongoing initiatives launched in the past year	Storytelling, Vision, Innovation, Engagement, Impact	$85 CPRS Member $180 CPRS non-member
Community Impact	Long-term programs that demonstrate measurable, equitable, and sustained outcomes	Programs/services active 3+ years	Storytelling, Vision, Innovation, Collaboration, Impact	$85 CPRS Member $180 CPRS non-member
Park Planning	Outdoor spaces that reflect strong community design, identity, and functionality	New builds or major renovations completed this year	Goals, Planning, Design, Collaboration, Impact	$85 CPRS Member $180 CPRS non-member
Facility Design	Completed indoor or mixed-use facilities that serve recreation or cultural needs	New builds or major renovations completed this year	Goals, Planning, Design, Collaboration, Impact	$85 CPRS Member $180 CPRS non-member
Marketing & Communications	Campaigns, media, or materials that tell the story of parks & recreation	Digital, print, video, or integrated campaigns:	Storytelling, Need, Strategy, Collaboration, Impact	$85 CPRS Member $180 CPRS non-member

Innovation Award of Excellence

This award celebrates outstanding innovation in parks and recreation programs, services, or strategies that represent ***new, emerging, or out-of-the-box approaches*** to community engagement, impact, or operations. Innovation may be demonstrated through pilot projects, bold pivots, reimagined service delivery, creative uses of technology, or unique community partnerships.

The core goal of this category is to recognize fresh ideas and forward-thinking solutions that advance community well-being through parks and recreation. Entries may reflect "one-off" activations or long-term efforts and do not need to demonstrate sustainability or replication — though those qualities are encouraged where applicable.

Project must have been launched or implemented between **November 1, 2025 – October 31, 2026**. Ongoing or one-time efforts are both eligible.

CPRS may award up to 1 (one) award per sub-category/per class.

Class Categories:

- Class 1: up to 50,000 population
- Class 2: 50,001 – 125,000 population
- Class 3: 125,001 – 250,000 population
- Class 4: 250,001 plus population

Choose your sub-category

Sub-category	What it honors
New program or event	A fresh idea brought to life — this could be a one-time pilot or a scalable initiative that fills a previously unmet need in your community.
Innovative service delivery model	A reimagined way of offering programs, services, or support that improves access, reach, or experience.
Technological applications or process improvements	Smart uses of tech or streamlined systems that save time, expand reach, or boost effectiveness.
Novel approach to community outreach or engagement	New and effective ways to connect with residents—especially those traditionally underrepresented or harder to reach.
Equity focused or inclusive design strategies	Innovations that prioritize access, representation, and belonging—especially for underserved or marginalized communities.
Creative use of space, partnerships or funding	Out-of-the-box ideas that maximize space, budget, or partnerships to expand impact.

Award Criteria / Point Value:

1. **Telling the Story**
   Share how this initiative, program or service aligns with your agency's mission and CPRS's statewide initiatives such as the California Action Plan and Parks Make Life Better! goals. Choose one or more of the following guiding outcomes to help tell your story**:**
   - Promote physical, emotional, and mental health and wellness
   - Support economic vitality of our community
   - Create memorable experiences
   - Foster social cohesiveness
   - Support human development and endless learning

- Strengthen community identity
- Facilitate community problem and issue resolution
- Sustain and steward our natural, historical, and/or cultural resources
- Support a safe, vibrant, attractive, and progressive community

400 word maximum; 20 points

2. **Understanding the Community and Setting the Vision**
   Outline the community need or significant challenge this initiative, program, or service intended to answer/solve. Describe the desired outcomes you were looking to achieve.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What gap were you trying to fill or what spark inspired this idea?
   - Did your desired outcomes consider and address equity, accessibility, and diversity in your community? How?
   - How did you ensure your desired outcomes reflected input from those directly impacted?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

3. **Innovative Approach(es)**
   Share what makes this project or idea innovative. How does it 'break the mold'?

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - Did this represent a new approach for your agency or the field as a whole?
   - What various strategies, tools, technology, and resources were used?
   - Were non-traditional fiscal or community resources (grants, sponsorships, volunteers, etc.) employed?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

4. **Community Engagement**
   Describe how your innovation involved or benefited the community.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - Who was engaged in the design or delivery of this project?
   - How did you ensure inclusivity, accessibility, or equity in your approach?
   - Did this project reach new or underserved audiences?
   - What communications channels did you use to ensure all community members or stakeholders were included?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

5. **Measuring Success and Impact**
   What happened as a result of this innovation? Did it succeed, inspire change, or offer key lessons? How has it helped your agency, your community, or our field? Consider including both quantitative (actual numbers) and qualitative (participant quotes, testimonials) metrics to tell this part of the story.

Some thoughts to consider:

- What metrics did you use to know this was a successful innovation?
- How have you celebrated your success and shared the story to advocate for additional support, awareness, or resources for this and future projects?

400 word maximum; 20 points

6. **Award Application Summary**
   In 150 words or less, please give us a compelling description of your award nomination, highlighting several points from the questions above. Note that this 150-word description may be used in CPRS Award program marketing materials.

   Pro Tip: Write this summary as if it will be read aloud or shared on social media channels. In other words, be more narrative and less formal… tell us a story!

Additional Supplemental Information Requested

This information is not required, however, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

a) 5 to 8 photos; each photo labeled with entry and agency name
b) Maximum 4 examples of background material that support one or more of the criteria and help judges understand reach or engagement. Items may be (but are not limited to):
   Press release(s)
   Needs assessment(s)
   Community-facing materials such as flyers, social posts
c) One short video (2 min max) showcasing this initiative, program or event

Community Impact Award of Excellence

This award recognizes outstanding, **long-term** initiatives, programs or services that have created meaningful, measurable, and equitable impact in communities through park and recreation programs and services. Nominations should demonstrate a sustained commitment to improving lives, fostering inclusion, and strengthening community wellbeing over time.

To honor enduring impact and replicable success, nominated programs or services must have been in **continuous operation for a minimum of three (3) years** at the time of application.

CPRS may award up to 1 (one) award per sub-category/per class.

Class Categories:

- Class 1: up to 50,000 population
- Class 2: 50,001 – 125,000 population
- Class 3: 125,001 – 250,000 population
- Class 4: 250,001 plus population

Choose your sub-category

Sub-category	What it honors	Examples
Community Wellbeing	Programs, initiatives, or events that promote individual and community wellbeing.	Wellness fairs, senior fitness, mental health support, youth sports, park prescriptions, water Zumba, drowning prevention programs, etc.
Connected Communities	Efforts that build social cohesion, celebrate culture, or create a sense of belonging.	Cultural festivals, neighborhood events, youth mentorship, intergenerational programs, etc.
Equity & Inclusion	Programs that intentionally engage and support underserved or marginalized populations.	Adaptive programs, LGBTQ+ outreach, DEI initiatives, programs for unhoused individuals, etc.
Thriving Environments	Projects that protect, preserve, or enhance the natural or built environment.	Nature-based education, habitat restoration, park clean-ups, green infrastructure plans, etc.
Resilient Systems	Strategic planning, economic revitalization, or initiatives that strengthen agency capacity.	Master Plans, Strategic Plans, succession efforts, community revitalization plans, etc.

Award Criteria / Point Value:

1. **Telling the Story**
   Share how this initiative, program or service aligns with your agency's mission and CPRS's statewide initiatives such as the California Action Plan and Parks Make Life Better! goals. Choose one or more of the following guiding outcomes to help tell your story**:**
   - Promote physical, emotional, and mental health and wellness
   - Support economic vitality of our community
   - Create memorable experiences
   - Foster social cohesiveness
   - Support human development and endless learning
   - Strengthen community identity
   - Facilitate community problem and issue resolution
   - Sustain and steward our natural, historical, and/or cultural resources
   - Support a safe, vibrant, attractive, and progressive community

   400 word maximum; 20 points

2. **Understanding the Community and Defining Success**
   Describe the community need, challenge, or opportunity your initiative, program, or service addressed. Share how you engaged the community in identifying these needs, and how your outcomes were designed to serve them over time.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What data or feedback shaped your direction?
   - How did you ensure equitable and inclusive community input?
   - What long-term outcomes did you set out to achieve?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

3. **Sustainable and Scalable Approaches**
   Show how your approach created lasting impact, not just a short-term result. What makes this initiative, program, or service sustainable, replicable, or scalable?

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - Did you set out to make this a multi-year program or service? Tell us about your planning and implementation strategies!
   - What are your ongoing funding or staffing models?
   - Did you engage the community or any cross-sector partnerships to help extend reach or longevity?
   - What adjustments have you made over time based on community feedback?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

4. **Community Partnerships & Ownership**
   Highlight how relationships with community members, partners, stakeholders, and decision-makers, helped sustain and grow the initiative, program or service.

Some thoughts to consider:

- How did you engage policy makers, community members, and partners in obtaining needed resources?
- Did shared ownership or leadership emerge over time with this initiative, program, or service? How did you foster that?
- What communications channels did you utilize to ensure all community members or stakeholders were included?

400 word maximum; 20 points

5. **Measuring Long-Term Impact**
   What evidence shows this program is *making a difference now and for the long haul*? Consider including both quantitative (actual numbers) and qualitative (participant quotes, testimonials) metrics to tell this part of the story.

   Some thoughts to consider:

   - What metrics did you use to know this was a successful initiative, program, or service?
   - How do you know your initiative, program, or service has reached a diverse cross-section of your community and/or is inclusive of and accessible to all?
   - How have you celebrated your success and shared the story to advocate for additional support, awareness, or resources for this and future projects?
   - Have there been any systemic or policy shifts that reflect cultural or operational change due to this initiative, program, or service?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

6. **Award Application Summary**
   In 150 words or less, please give us a compelling description of your award nomination, highlighting several points from the questions above. Note that this 150-word description may be used in CPRS Award program marketing materials.

   Pro Tip: Write this summary as if it will be read aloud or shared on social media channels. In other words, be more narrative and less formal… tell us a story!

<u>Additional Supplemental Information Requested</u>

This information is not required, however, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

a) 5 to 8 photos; each photo labeled with entry and agency name
b) Maximum 4 examples of background material that support one or more of the criteria and help judges understand reach or engagement. Items may be (but are not limited to):
   Press release(s)
   Needs assessment(s)
   Community-facing materials such as flyers, social posts
c) One short video (2 min max) showcasing this initiative, program or event

Park Planning Award of Excellence

This award recognizes excellence in the planning and design of completed **outdoor** park and recreation spaces that prioritize community engagement, aesthetic quality, long-term functionality, and inclusive access. Projects may include new builds or significant renovations that demonstrate a commitment to user experience, environmental sustainability, operational practicality, and community identity.

To reflect the importance of longevity, usability, and post-construction community impact, eligible projects must be **completed and open for public use between November 1, 2025 – October 31, 2026**.

CPRS may award up to 1 (one) award per sub-category/per class.

Projects with an emphasis on indoor facilities or large-scale building construction should be submitted under the Facility Design category.

Planning/Design Firms, please note: If your nomination is chosen as an award recipient, you will be required to purchase a secondary award to present to the agency where the project was built.

Project Category:

- New Build
- Renovation Project

Class Categories:

- Class 1: $0 - $2 million total project cost
- Class 2: $2 - $10 million total project cost
- Class 3: $10 million and above total project cost

Choose your sub-category

Sub-category	What it honors	Examples
Neighborhood	Parks or open spaces less than 10 acres, typically serving an immediate neighborhood	Parks, playgrounds, sports fields, etc.
Community	Parks, open spaces, or complexes between 10-50 acres, typically serving community wide needs	Parks, open spaces, sports complexes, etc.
Regional	Parks, open spaces or complexes over 50 acres, typically serving multiple jurisdictions	Parks, open spaces, sports complexes, etc.
Specialty	Unique, single use parks, open spaces or trails that do not fit any other sub-category	Skate parks, dog parks, an arboretum, pollinator garden, community garden, etc.

Award Criteria / Point Value:

1. **Project Goals and Alignment with State Priorities**
   Share how this project aligns with your agency's mission and CPRS's statewide initiatives such as the California Action Plan and Parks Make Life Better! goals. Choose one or more of the following guiding outcomes to help tell your story**:**
   - Promote physical, emotional, and mental health and wellness
   - Support economic vitality of our community
   - Create memorable experiences
   - Foster social cohesiveness
   - Support human development and endless learning
   - Strengthen community identity
   - Facilitate community problem and issue resolution
   - Sustain and steward our natural, historical, and/or cultural resources
   - Support a safe, vibrant, attractive, and progressive community

   400 word maximum; 20 points

2. **Community Need and Planning Intent**
   Outline the specific need or vision that guided this project. Describe the desired outcomes you were looking to achieve.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What was the impact if this community need or challenge was not addressed?
   - Who was being underserved or left out, and how did you plan to address that?
   - How did the planning phase incorporate inclusive outreach and engagement?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

3. **Innovative Design Elements**
   Detail how your approach was different, new, or innovative and how you used new or innovative design elements to reach your desired outcomes.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What features or design decisions support universal access, climate resilience, or community storytelling?
   - If rehabilitated, what creative approaches were used to revitalize the space?
   - Were non-traditional fiscal or community resources (grants, sponsorships, volunteers, etc.) employed?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

4. **Community Collaboration**
   Describe the role policy makers, staff, community members, partners and/or stakeholders played during design and implementation of this project.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - Who did you bring to the table during concept development?
   - How did you engage policy makers, community members, and partners in obtaining needed resources?

- How did you ensure diverse community partners and perspectives in your collaborations and problem solving?

400 word maximum; 20 points

5. **Measuring Success and Impact**
   Tell us how you know you reached your desired outcomes as outlined above. Share what evidence you have that demonstrates this project is meeting community needs. Consider using:
   - Qualitative data – stories, satisfaction
   - Quantitative data – attendance, programs offered
   - Operational data – cost recovery, maintenance benefits

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What metrics did you use to know this was a successful project?
   - How do you know your park has served a diverse cross-section of your community and/or is inclusive of and accessible to all?
   - How have you celebrated your success and shared the story to advocate for additional support, awareness, or resources for this and future projects?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

6. **Award Application Summary**
   In 150 words or less, please give us a compelling description of your award nomination, highlighting several points from the questions above. Note that this 150-word description may be used in CPRS Award program marketing materials.

   Pro Tip: Write this summary as if it will be read aloud or shared on social media channels. In other words, be more narrative and less formal… tell us a story!

<u>Additional Supplemental Information Requested/Required</u>

While not all of this information is required, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

a) Master plan or site plan, including plant palette (PDF) - **REQUIRED**
b) Notice of Completion or other documentation that states when the project was completed (PDF) - **REQUIRED**
c) Maximum 3 examples of background information that support one or more of the criteria (PDF)
d) One short video (2 min max) showing project usage, aerial drone footage, or before/after walkthrough.
e) 6 to 8 photos; before and after photos if a rehabilitation project; each photo labeled with entry and agency name.

Facility Design Award of Excellence

This award recognizes outstanding design of completed recreation, aquatic, or cultural facilities that serve the public and elevate the delivery of park and recreation services. Projects may include new builds or significant renovations that demonstrate a commitment to high-quality planning, community-informed design, operational excellence, aesthetic appeal, accessibility, and flexibility of use. Eligible facilities may include **indoor or mixed-use structures** that serve the community's recreation, learning, cultural, or wellness needs.

To reflect the importance of longevity, usability, and post-construction community impact, eligible projects must be **completed and open for public use between November 1, 2025 – October 31, 2026**.

CPRS may award up to 1 (one) award per sub-category/per class.

Projects with a focus on outdoor spaces or parks are better suited for the Park Planning category.

Planning/Design Firms, please note: If your nomination is chosen as an award recipient, you will be required to purchase a secondary award to present to the agency where the project was built.

Project Category:

- New Build
- Renovation Project

Class Categories:

- Class 1: $0 - $5 million total project cost
- Class 2: $5 - $15 million total project cost
- Class 3: $15 million and above total project cost

Choose your sub-category

Sub-category	Examples
Aquatic Facility	Indoor/Outdoor aquatic centers, pools, splash pads, etc.
Community Center / Mixed Use Facility	Senior Centers, gymnasiums, co-located libraries, wellness hubs, joint-use facilities, etc.
Cultural Facility	Arts Center, makerspaces, museums, etc.

Award Criteria / Point Value:

1. **Project Goals and Alignment with State Priorities**
   Share how this project aligns with your agency's mission and CPRS's statewide initiatives such as the California Action Plan and Parks Make Life Better! goals. Choose one or more of the following guiding outcomes to help tell your story**:**
   - Promote physical, emotional, and mental health and wellness
   - Support economic vitality of our community
   - Create memorable experiences
   - Foster social cohesiveness
   - Support human development and endless learning
   - Strengthen community identity
   - Facilitate community problem and issue resolution
   - Sustain and steward our natural, historical, and/or cultural resources
   - Support a safe, vibrant, attractive, and progressive community

   400 word maximum; 20 points

2. **Community Need and Planning Intent**
   Outline the specific need or vision that guided this project. Describe the desired outcomes you were looking to achieve.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What was the impact if this community need or challenge was not addressed?
   - Who was being underserved or left out, and how did you plan to address that?
   - How did the planning phase incorporate inclusive outreach and engagement?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

3. **Innovative Design Elements**
   Detail how your approach was different, new, or innovative and how you used new or innovative design elements to reach your desired outcomes.
   Describe specific design features that are new, notable, or inclusive:
   - Multi-generational spaces?
   - Trauma-informed design?
   - Flexible and modular rooms?
   - Energy-efficiency or green certifications?
   - Adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings?

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What features or design decisions support universal access, climate resilience, or community storytelling?
   - If rehabilitated, what creative approaches were used to revitalize the space?
   - Were non-traditional fiscal or community resources (grants, sponsorships, volunteers, etc.) employed?

   400 word maximum; 20 points

4. **Community Collaboration**
   Describe the role policy makers, staff, community members, partners and/or stakeholders played in reaching your desired outcomes.

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - Who did you bring to the table during concept development?
   - How did you engage policy makers, community members, and partners in obtaining needed resources?
   - How did you ensure diverse community partners and perspectives in your collaborations and problem solving?
   - What communications channels did you utilize to ensure all community members or stakeholders were included?

     400 word maximum; 20 points

5. **Measuring Success and Impact**
   Tell us how you know you reached your desired outcomes as outlined above. Share what evidence you have that demonstrates this project is meeting community needs. Consider using:
   - Qualitative data – stories, satisfaction
   - Quantitative data – attendance, programs offered
   - Operational data – cost recovery, maintenance benefits

   Some thoughts to consider:
   - What metrics did you use to know this was a successful project?
   - How do you know your facility has served a diverse cross-section of your community and/or is inclusive of and accessible to all?
   - How have you celebrated your success and shared the story to advocate for additional support, awareness, or resources for this and future projects?

     400 word maximum; 20 points

6. **Award Application Summary**
   In 150 words or less, please give us a compelling description of your award nomination, highlighting several points from the questions above. Note that this 150-word description may be used in CPRS Award program marketing materials.

   Pro Tip: Write this summary as if it will be read aloud or shared on social media channels. In other words, be more narrative and less formal… tell us a story!

Additional Supplemental Information Requested/Required

While not all of this information is required, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

a) Site plan (PDF) - **REQUIRED**
b) Building floor plan (PDF) - **REQUIRED**
c) Notice of Completion or other documentation that states when the project was completed (PDF) - **REQUIRED**
d) Maximum 3 examples of background information that support one or more of the criteria (PDF)
e) One short video (2 min max) showing project usage, aerial drone footage, or before/after walkthrough
f) 6 to 8 photos including at least 2 interior and 2 exterior photos; before and after photos if a rehabilitation project; each photo labeled with entry and agency name

Marketing & Communications Award of Excellence

This award celebrates creative and effective use of marketing and communications tools that enhance the visibility, reach, and impact of public parks, facilities, or programs. Recognized entries may promote services externally or support internal communications to staff, stakeholders, or current participants. ***This award emphasizes the process, strategy, and storytelling power behind communications efforts — not just a 'pretty' final product.***

Project must have been launched or implemented between **November 1, 2025 – October 31, 2026**. Ongoing or one-time efforts are both eligible.

CPRS may award up to 1 (one) award per sub-category/per class.

Class Categories:

- Class 1: up to 50,000 population
- Class 2: 50,001 – 125,000 population
- Class 3: 125,001 – 250,000 population
- Class 4: 250,001 plus population

Choose your sub-category

Sub-category	Examples
Video Storytelling	PSAs, feature videos, reels
Web, Apps, & Podcasts	Website, platforms, podcasts, apps
Social Media Strategy	Organic or paid content, platform launches
Print & Collateral Design	Season guides, brochures, postcards
Integrated Campaign	Multi-platform storytelling for one message

Award Criteria / Point Value:

1. **Telling the Story**
   How does this communications effort reinforce CPRS initiatives and your agency's mission? How did it elevate the story of your parks, programs or people? Tell the Story of your success, using one or more of these goals:
   - Promote physical, emotional, and mental health and wellness
   - Support economic vitality of our community
   - Create memorable experiences
   - Foster social cohesiveness
   - Support human development and endless learning
   - Strengthen community identity
   - Facilitate community problem and issue resolution
   - Sustain and steward our natural, historical, and/or cultural resources
   - Support a safe, vibrant, attractive, and progressive community

   400 word maximum; 20 points

2. **Community Need or Challenge and Desired Outcomes**
   What communications gap or challenge was this effort designed to address? For example, lack of program awareness, confusing registration, poor online presence, equity gap in language or reach. What audiences were you targeting and what outcomes did you want to achieve?

Some thoughts to consider:
- What was the impact if this community need or challenge was not addressed?
- Did your desired outcomes consider and address equity, accessibility, and diversity in your community? How?

400 word maximum; 20 points

3. Innovative Strategy

What made your approach innovative – in format, channel, message or tone? Did you explore new platforms, language accessibility, humor, emotional connections, or unconventional formats?

Some thoughts to consider:
- What various strategies, tools, technology, and resources were used?
- What constraints (budget, team size, urgency) did you overcome with creative strategy?
- Did you collaborate with other agencies or create a public/private partnership to accomplish your goals?

400 word maximum; 20 points

4. Community Collaboration

Who contributed to shaping or sharing your message? Did you co-create content with youth, older adults, or community partners? What did stakeholder input look like (i.e. focus groups, surveys, beta testers)?

Some thoughts to consider:
- How did you ensure diverse community partners and perspectives in your collaborations and problem solving?
- What communications channels did you utilize to ensure all community members or stakeholders were included?

400 word maximum; 20 points

5. Measuring Success and Impact

Demonstrate the success of your campaign or communication strategy using measurable outcomes aligned with your original goals. Share how you evaluated the effectiveness of your message, and how the results reflected growth, behavior change, or enhanced understanding of parks and recreation services.

Some thoughts to consider:
- What metrics did you use to know this was a successful strategy? Consider sharing:
    - Web or email analytics
    - Social media reach/engagement
    - Print circulation
    - Survey results or user satisfaction
    - Audience testimonials
    - Internal comms reach/improvement
- How have you celebrated your success and shared the story to advocate for additional support, awareness, or resources for this and future projects?

400 word maximum; 20 points

6. **Award Application Summary**
   In 150 words or less, please give us a compelling description of your award nomination, highlighting several points from the questions above. Note that this 150-word description may be used in CPRS Award program marketing materials.

   Pro Tip: Write this summary as if it will be read aloud or shared on social media channels. In other words, be more narrative and less formal… tell us a story!

Additional Supplemental Information Requested/Required
While not all of this information is required, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

Video Storytelling: PSA's, feature videos, reels
a) Link (URL) to where the entry can be viewed on-line
b) 3 to 5 screen shots or images of the video in use (jpg image)

Web, Apps, & Podcasts: website, platforms, podcasts, apps
a) Link (URL) to where the entry can be viewed/heard on-line
b) 3 to 5 screen shots representative of applicable social media, blogs or websites (jpg image)

Social Media Strategy: organic or paid content, platform launches
a) Link (URL) to where the entry can be viewed on-line
b) 3 to 5 screen shots representative of applicable content (jpg image)

Print & Collateral Design: session guides, brochures, postcards, flyers
c) Link (URL) to where the entry can be viewed on-line
d) Sample of print material(s) (pdf)

Integrated Campaign: multi-platform storytelling for one message
Use of multiple avenues to tell ONE story, i.e. 2 of 4 sub-categories, (ads/print materials/promotional items, or social media) targeted to promote a specific agency event, program or facility. Individual items used in the campaign may not be entered as single items in other categories.
a) Itemized list of promotional items and a 2-3 sentence description of how item was used (PDF)
b) 1 digital photo or screen shot of each item (jpg image)
c) Sample of print materials (if used) (PDF)

CPRS Professional Awards

Honoring the People Who Power Parks & Recreation
The CPRS Professional Awards celebrate the individuals who embody the heart, soul, and future of our profession. From emerging leaders just beginning to leave their mark, to steadfast champions who uplift CPRS year after year, to visionary trailblazers whose legacies shape our field—these awards honor the people behind the programs. Whether they're leading from the front, mentoring others, or serving behind the scenes, these honorees represent the best of who we are.

Every submission is reviewed by a panel of peers, and only the most impactful, innovative, and inspiring work earns recognition. Prepare your nomination well, telling us a meaningful story of how your project, program, service or leader truly impacts your community and our industry.

2026 Award Categories At a Glance

Award	Target Audience	Years of Service	Key Traits	The Why…	Fee
Emerging Leader	Early-career professionals who are active contributors and rising voices within CPRS	2-5 years fulltime professional; minimum 1 year active CPRS involvement	Energy, innovation, initiative, enthusiasm	Recognize and inspire the next generation of CPRS leaders	No Fee
CPRS Champion	Mid-career contributors with a long-standing, consistent impact on CPRS	10+ years fulltime professional and service to CPRS	Steady, long-term service and involvement, mentorship, reliability, cross-collaboration	Celebrate the 'glue people' who help CPRS thrive behind the scenes	No Fee
CPRS Hall of Fame	Distinguished, seasoned professionals	20+ years fulltime professional and service to CPRS	Visionary leadership, legacy, transformative change	CPRS' highest honor for lifetime achievement and service	No Fee

Emerging Leader

This award recognizes new professionals who are making a powerful impact — both within CPRS and across the park and recreation field. These rising stars have shown initiative, leadership, and passion through committee service, innovative projects, event participation, or creative contributions that uplift CPRS and advance the profession.

Awardees typically have between 2 and 5 years of professional experience, and at least 1 year of active involvement with CPRS – whether through service on committees or boards, presenting at events, or supporting CPRS programs.

CPRS may recognize multiple awardees annually.

Award Narrative

Nominee should demonstrate impact through one or more of the following:

- **Innovative Contribution**
  Led or contributed to a new CPRS initiative, program, or service that benefited members, increased engagement, or addressed a current challenge.
- **Leadership in Action**
  Played a visible and consistent role in CPRS leadership at the State, District, or Section level (committee chair, board role, event lead, etc.).
- **Thought Leadership**
  Presented at CPRS trainings/conferences or contributed to publications, podcasts, or knowledge-sharing efforts that helped move the profession forward.
- **Ambassadorship & Outreach**
  Actively supported CPRS through event promotion, recruitment of new members, partnerships, fundraising, or championing CPRS at the local level.
- **Creative or Operational Support**
  Offered behind-the-scenes talent, strategy, or logistical leadership that helped CPRS initiatives succeed (e.g., tech, graphics, volunteer organizing, facilitation).

Award Application Summary

In 150 words or less, tell us why this rising star deserves to be recognized.
Highlight a few key contributions, accomplishments, or examples that illustrate how the nominee has energized CPRS, elevated their peers, or inspired their community. Note that this 150-word description may be used in future CPRS Award program marketing materials.

Pro Tip: Write this summary as if it will be read aloud or shared on social media channels. In other words, be more narrative and less formal… tell us a story!

Additional Supplemental Information Requested/Required

While not all of this information is required, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

a) 1 to 2 photos of nominee; labeled with nominee name & nominator name - **REQUIRED**
b) Testimonial Quote from a colleague or supervisor
c) Short video message – 2 minutes or less – about this Emerging Leader

CPRS Champion

The CPRS Champion Award honors outstanding professionals whose long-term service has helped shape and sustain both the California Park & Recreation Society and the communities they serve. With at least ***10 years*** of impactful involvement at the State, District, or Section level, these individuals embody steady leadership, generous mentorship, and a deep commitment to collaboration and purpose. Often working behind the scenes, Champions are the connective thread of our professional network — leading committees, building programs, raising funds, solving challenges, and lifting others up. While they've moved beyond the "emerging leader" phase and may not (yet!) be Hall of Fame–bound, their legacy is unmistakable: a stronger CPRS, stronger communities, and a culture of service that continues to inspire.

CPRS may recognize multiple awardees annually.

Award Narrative

Nominees must demonstrate outstanding CPRS service (10+ years) through one or more of the following:

- **Sustained Leadership & Involvement**
  Has played a consistent and meaningful leadership role at the State, District, or Section level through board service, committees, or special projects.
- **Program or Initiative Builder**
  Has developed, expanded, or improved CPRS programs, events, or services that provide clear benefit to members and/or support the mission of CPRS.
- **Mentorship & Knowledge Sharing**
  Has mentored others within CPRS, presented sessions at conferences, or contributed educational content to the CPRS community.
- **Organizational Resilience & Responsiveness**
  Has helped CPRS navigate challenges or transitions through innovation, strategic thinking, or trusted execution.
- **Cross-Organizational Impact**
  Has contributed to other allied organizations (e.g., SCPOA, BAPOA, WILS, etc.) in a way that complements or enhances CPRS's presence or goals. Has championed cross-collaboration within CPRS Districts, Sections, and/or Regions.

Award Application Summary

Highlight a few key contributions, accomplishments, or examples that illustrate how the nominee has energized CPRS, elevated their peers, or inspired their community. Note that this 150-word description may be used in future CPRS Award program marketing materials.

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Additional Supplemental Information Requested/Required

While not all of this information is required, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

a) 1 to 2 photos of nominee; labeled with nominee name & nominator name - **REQUIRED**
b) Testimonial Quote from a colleague or supervisor
c) Short video message – 2 minutes or less – about this CPRS Champion

CPRS Hall of Fame

The CPRS Hall of Fame honors extraordinary professionals who have dedicated their careers to the advancement of the park and recreation field and the California Park & Recreation Society. Inductees have not only left a lasting imprint on the communities they served, but have also demonstrated visionary leadership, a spirit of service, and unwavering commitment to the mission and values of CPRS.

This honor celebrates those whose careers reflect:

- Transformational leadership in the field of parks and recreation
- Enduring service and strategic contributions to CPRS
- Advocacy, mentorship, and influence that shaped the profession statewide
- A legacy of impact, innovation, and inspiration

The CPRS Hall of Fame is permanently displayed at CPRS Headquarters in Sacramento.

CPRS may recognize multiple awardees annually.

Award Narrative

Nominees must demonstrate a high level of achievement in at least four (4) of the following areas, with CPRS service being one of them:

- **Service to CPRS (Required)**
  - Demonstrated leadership and sustained service to CPRS at the state, district, section, or committee level.
  - Contributed to the growth, strategic direction, and relevance of CPRS through long-term involvement, mentorship, program development, or organizational stewardship.
- **Transformational Leadership in the Profession**
  - Led or contributed to significant advancements in parks and recreation policy, planning, access, or operations.
  - Acted as a catalyst for systemic change or organizational growth in local or regional agencies.
- **Community Impact**
  - Created measurable, lasting improvements in access to recreation, public health, equity, or environmental stewardship within their community(ies).
  - Championed initiatives that addressed major challenges, underserved populations, or complex community needs.
- **Mentorship & Workforce Development**
  - Played a key role in developing the next generation of park and recreation professionals through mentorship, education, or succession planning.
- **Partnership Building**
  - Established enduring collaborations, alliances, or coalitions that expanded the reach, resources, or impact of public parks and recreation.
- **Innovation & Vision**
  - Demonstrated forward-thinking approaches that positioned their agency or CPRS for long-term success.
  - Introduced breakthrough solutions to emerging challenges in the field.

CPRS Award Category Summary

Award Application Summary
Highlight a few key contributions, accomplishments, or examples that illustrate how the nominee has energized CPRS, elevated their peers, or inspired their community. Note that this 150-word description may be used in future CPRS Award program marketing materials.

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Additional Supplemental Information Requested/Required
While not all of this information is required, it will help complete the story you are telling about your nomination.

a) Up to four (4) letters of reference or achievement (1 page each) that speak to the nominee's legacy and address at least one of the eligibility criteria above.
   Letters should ideally reflect a range of perspectives, such as:
   a. Fellow CPRS leaders
   b. Professional peers or agency staff
   c. Community partners or stakeholders
   d. Mentees or emerging professionals
   e. Elected or appointed officials
b) 1 to 2 photos of nominee; labeled with nominee name & nominator name - **REQUIRED**
c) Short video message – 2 minutes or less – about this CPRS Hall of Famer