



Eastern Sierra Regional Campground Improvements and Jobs Creation

Inyo, Mono, Calaveras, Tuolumne

\$452,100

APPLICANT INFORMATION			
Applicant Name	Erin Murphy	County	Mono
Organization	MLTPA		
Phone Number	1-760-934-3154	Email	SJFAdmin@mltpa.org
Affiliated Organization Name and Description:			
MLTPA—the Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation (MLTPA Foundation)—is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization incorporated in 2007 as a public benefit corporation in the State of California. Its mission is to create sustainable trail and recreation systems that support prosperous economies and healthy communities in Mammoth Lakes, the Eastern Sierra, and beyond. MLTPA will serve as the lead applicant for the Eastern Sierra Regional Campground Improvements and Jobs Creation project. The United States Forest Service (USFS) is a federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The mission of the Forest Service is to balance the diverse uses of national forests and grasslands while maintaining their ecological integrity and ensuring their long-term sustainability for both economic and environmental purposes. Two USFS units—Inyo and Stanislaus National Forests—will review, comment on, and approve project deliverables, and they will be responsible for ensuring the necessary environmental compliance to make the proposed campground renovation projects shovel-ready. Inyo County, California, is a subdivision of the state, possessing certain governmental powers granted to it by the state constitution and legislature. Its mission is to serve its constituents by balancing the needs of its community with the preservation of its natural environment and the promotion of its economic well-being. Inyo County will review, comment on, and approve project deliverables and will be responsible for ensuring the environmental compliance necessary to ensure that the proposed campground renovation projects are shovel-ready. While not identified individually, local and regional tribes have important roles to play in this project, and funding has been provided in the project budget for their engagement. Appropriate federal and sovereign representatives will conduct formal nation-to-nation consultations on an as-needed basis. Advice and guidance for tribal engagement will be sought through the Eastern Sierra Jobs First Governing Council's "Tribal Round Table" and the Sierra Business Council's tribal liaison capacity.			
Applicant & Organization experience in the Region:			
For close to two decades, MLTPA has pioneered sustainable recreation efforts in rural eastern California, partnering with a full spectrum of local, state, federal, and tribal entities to produce tangible and measurable outcomes. Our multi-partner efforts include development and funding of the Mammoth Lakes Trail System (2006-Present); CALREC Vision and "California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience" for California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, the USFS Region 5 Partnership of the Year 2022 (2020-Present); convening, facilitation, and capacity support for the "Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership" (2018-Present); project management for all four tracks of the "Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative," including "Regional Recreation Stakeholder Engagement," "Climate Adaptation and Resilience Assessment," "Connection to the Eastern Sierra Visitor Audience," and "Project Development and			

Prioritization," funded by Proposition 68 and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (2019-2022); regional trail development through the "Towns to Trails Plan" (2023-Present); the "Buttermilk Infrastructure and Recreation Planning Initiative (BIRPI)" to address resource impacts and plan for sustainable recreation in the Buttermilk region (2022-2023); regional campground restoration efforts with the USFS Washington Office's "Innovative Finance for National Forests" program and the Inyo National Forest (2020-Present); convening, facilitation, and capacity support for "Recreate Responsibly California" in partnership with REI (2020-Present); and the "Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative," whose "Citizen Suggested Desired Conditions" informed a new management plan for the Inyo National Forest (2014-2016).

PROJECT INFORMATION	
Description of proposed project or program seeking funding:	
The Eastern Sierra Regional Campground Improvements and Jobs Creation project will fulfill the planning phase for the renovation of eight campgrounds in the Eastern Sierra Jobs First Region, including Inyo, Mono, Calaveras, and Tuolumne counties. The project aims to improve accessibility, increase public use, and mitigate climate-driven threats to infrastructure (e.g., fires, flooding, and storm events). MLTPA will partner with the Inyo and Stanislaus National Forests and Inyo County to contract engineering surveys and assemble a design team to prepare renovation plans. Identified campgrounds on the Inyo National Forest include the Clyde/Palisade Group (Inyo Co), Upper Sage Flat (Inyo Co), Sage Flat (Inyo Co), and Coldwater (Mono Co). The Stanislaus National Forest campgrounds include Utica CG (Calaveras Co) and Niagara OHV CG (Tuolumne Co). Inyo County campgrounds include Diaz Lake and Baker Creek Campgrounds. Deliverables will consist of completed shovel-ready construction packages for each of the eight campgrounds. MLTPA, the Inyo National Forest, and Quantified Ventures, with funding from the USFS Innovative Finance for National Forests grant program, piloted a directly analogous undertaking with the "Eastern Sierra Campground Improvements" project, funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. With this project experience in mind, project work can be completed by August 2026.	
Stage of Project or Program's readiness:	Last Mile
Per Sierra Jobs First Catalyst Fund criteria, the Eastern Sierra Regional Campground Improvements and Jobs Creation project qualifies as a "Ready to Go" project. The remaining steps to implement renovations for the eight identified campgrounds are to complete conceptual renderings, engineering surveys, and renovation plans necessary to successfully bid the projects for construction. These aging campgrounds have long-needed improvements to meet the needs of contemporary visitors; however, obtaining funding for project planning and preparation is difficult for recreation facilities in rural California counties. MLTPA and the US Forest Service have over four years of experience developing a workable program to renovate campgrounds, and this program will scale successfully to campground projects throughout the California Jobs First Sierra region. MLTPA and the US Forest Service have a proven track record of performing precisely this type of preparatory work, which will enable the eight identified campground projects to compete for implementation and construction funding.	
Description of Planned Beneficiaries:	
Campgrounds are a significant economic driver throughout the Eastern Sierra Jobs First Region. In general, beneficiaries of improved camping facilities include local residents, California state residents, local businesses serving campers (grocery and convenience stores, gas stations, equipment retailers, restaurants, etc.), and local governmental entities reliant on tax revenue. In addition, well-designed and attractive campgrounds reduce environmental impacts created by the facilities themselves, as well as incentivizing visitors to utilize developed campgrounds instead of camping in unmanaged locations, where the potential to start fires, leave trash, and improperly dispose of solid waste can negatively affect communities. This project will benefit Mono County, the Town of Mammoth Lakes, Inyo County, and the community of Big Pine, a disadvantaged	

community in California. On the west side of the Sierra, the project will also benefit disadvantaged rural areas in both Calaveras and Tuolumne counties, including adjacent residents in Tamarack, Dardanelle, and Bumblebee. Both campgrounds in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties are on transit corridors that connect visitors in more population-dense areas to the Eastern Sierra, generating additional visitor traffic that will benefit businesses in these rural counties.

Priority Sector(s): Sustainable Rec & Tourism,

Foundational Elements: Workforce Development and Education, Physical Infrastructure, Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Describe priority Sector and/or Core issue impacted by the project:

This project will benefit the “Sustainable Recreation and Tourism” sector and address the following core issues identified as foundational elements in the “Sierra Jobs First Collaborative 2024 Strategic Plan.”

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: With hundreds of campgrounds in the Eastern Sierra Region, this project is part of a 10-year USFS effort to renovate facilities with the greatest potential to benefit the visiting public and local communities that depend on tourism. As MLTPA and INF establish a pipeline of shovel-ready projects, there will be a continuous need for contractors and workers skilled in design, engineering, construction, project management, ecological restoration, and recreation operations.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: Recreation facilities such as campgrounds are a significant component of the regional infrastructure supporting economic activity and quality of life. Renovation of campgrounds to meet current and future needs is urgently needed, as all facilities in this proposal are over 50 years old and have never been renovated.

DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION: Campgrounds are managed by private concessionaires who consistently need skilled employees. Cerro Coso Community College is currently working with the USFS and others to expand its “Natural Resources and Sustainable Recreation Management” degree program, which will provide a local workforce to staff regional campgrounds.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Total Award: \$452,100

Budget: See attached

This project has match funding: TRUE

PROJECT ALIGNMENT

Description of proposed project alignment with CA Jobs First Goals related to impact

Explanation of how the proposed project will advance the regional strategy and any externalities or risks for implementation.

The Eastern Sierra Regional Campground Improvements and Jobs Creation project will address the following OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES/RISKS to create quality jobs as identified in Chapter 4 (“Sustainable Recreation & Tourism”) of the “Sierra Jobs First Collaborative 2024 Strategic Plan”.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- “Collaborative Support”: Enhance through opportunities for regional private/public partnerships.
- “Economic Impact”: Enhance through employment opportunities and the generation of additional tourism revenue.
- “Guided Projects”: Enhance through the incorporation of ecosystem stewardship principles into campground designs which will offer economic benefits.

- “Natural Beauty”: Enhance through increased access to national parks, national forests, and public lands and their natural scenic beauty.
- “Sustainability Push”: Enhance initiatives focused on increasing access to outdoor activities and promoting economic development.
- “Varied Visitors”: Enhance visitation to national and state parks, forests, ski resorts, and historic small towns.

CHALLENGES/RISKS:

- "Climate Risks": Mitigate extreme weather events that limit visitation through climate-smart campground designs.
- "Infrastructure and Environmental Impacts": Mitigate unmanaged tourism and environmental degradation.
- "Land Management Capacity": Mitigate budget and capacity constraints of federal agencies and public land managers through innovative recreational infrastructure initiatives.
- "Land Tenure": Mitigate access to recreation destinations and activities on public lands through innovative recreational initiatives.
- "Limited Accessibility": Mitigate inaccessible trails and hiking opportunities by providing enhanced access through renovated campgrounds.
- "Stagnant Jobs": Provide opportunities for year-round employment for skilled labor in the identified tourism and recreation industry sector.

Description of proposed projects alignment with CA Jobs First Goals related to economic impact

Explain the economic impact potential for the Sierra Jobs First region (i.e. jobs created or retained, capital attraction, local investment, events, etc). This section may include detailed analysis and quantifiable data supporting the projected economic benefits and enhanced resilience in the region (see exhibits).

In May 2020, MLTPA was awarded a partnered grant application along with the Inyo National Forest and Quantified Ventures from the USFS Innovative Finance for National Forests Program (IFNF), funded by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the National Forest Foundation. This grant sought to address recreation needs on the Inyo National Forest through a business plan designed to improve compromised campground infrastructure, as the current local campgrounds do not meet the needs of the camping public. Addressing the campgrounds’ needs can maximize revenues from visitors, enhance revenues for local gateway communities, diversify business opportunities, and protect natural resources while adapting to and promoting resilience against climate change. The eight campgrounds designated for renovations through the Eastern Sierra Regional Campground Improvements and Jobs Creation project include 208 campsites that can accommodate up to 1,288 people per night. Utilizing methodologies identified through the business plan drafted by Quantified Ventures as funded by the IFNF grant, campers at these six sites spend an estimated \$9.3 million during their visits. Renovating these campgrounds to make them more appealing to the modern camper would result in an additional \$1.86 million (the equivalent of 23 additional jobs) in annual spending for each 10% increase in occupancy. Please see the attached “Inyo National Forest Campground Business Plan” for additional information regarding the opportunities for job creation and retention, capital attraction, and local investments through programs to renovate campgrounds within the Eastern Sierra Jobs First Region.

Description of proposed projects alignment with CA Jobs First related to climate goals

Identify the proposed project's impact on sustainability, specifically a carbon neutral, climate-resilient economy that addresses the needs of the region's communities and the innovation ecosystem.

MLTPA managed the “Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative (SRTI)” on behalf of the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership, funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Proposition 68. The SRTI included a climate adaptation and resilience assessment of 17,000 square miles of California’s public landscape with a specific focus on its sustainable recreation economy, including those of three counties in the Eastern Sierra region, two regions and two units of the U.S. Forest Service, the regional field office of the

Bureau of Land Management, six units of the National Park Service, and several regional tribes. The final document - "A Changing Climate | Vulnerability In California's Eastern Sierra" - includes this climate adaptation and resilience assessment, conducted following the recommended process in the California Adaptation Planning Guide (APG), the state's guidance for how local communities should conduct climate adaptation planning efforts, including vulnerability assessments. The state's APG and the Fourth Climate Change Assessment—including the Sierra Nevada Regional Report, the Summary Report from Tribal and Indigenous Communities within California, and the Climate Justice Summary Report—provided extensive information about climate-related exposures and vulnerabilities in addition to federal reports such as the National Climate Assessment. "A Changing Climate | Vulnerability In California's Eastern Sierra" identifies campgrounds as "Critically Vulnerable Buildings and Facilities" and concludes that "Campgrounds can be retrofitted to reduce hazards, treated for vegetation management, and repaired when damaged; however, this may be expensive for national forest and national parks and there may be limited staffing to complete these activities." Regional campgrounds in the following jurisdictions were analyzed, including those of the Bureau of Land Management, regional cities and counties, Death Valley National Park, Devils Postpile National Monument, El Dorado National Forest, Stanislaus National Forest, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Inyo National Forest, and Kings Canyon/Sequoia National Park.

Description of proposed projects alignment with CA Jobs First Goals related to equity and long-term sustainability

Explain how this project advances prosperity by creating living wage, benefitted jobs or career pathways for disinvested communities or a path to building wealth through entrepreneurship or related activities.

Improving campgrounds in the Eastern Sierra Region will address several California Jobs First equity and long-term sustainability goals, as framed by the introduction to Chapter 4 of the Sierra Jobs First Regional Plan: "The strategic opportunity for the Sierra region is to manage land over which it has jurisdiction, especially its natural systems, toward long-term environmental sustainability while leveraging the economic value of natural beauty and these natural systems for shared economic prosperity." California Jobs First equity goals include: "Environmental Equity: All people of the State have equal protection from the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, as well as equal access to natural resources and recreational opportunities in a clean, healthy environment," and "Targeting underserved areas with infrastructure investments improves access to essential services, bridges gaps, and fosters inclusive economic growth." The initial campground improvement projects will create jobs for construction workers, electricians, plumbers, and other skilled tradespeople. Offering apprenticeships and training programs can generate career pathways into these fields, and management roles provide opportunities for career advancement. Additionally, improved campgrounds attract more visitors, boosting the overall tourism economy. This creates opportunities for existing small businesses and fosters the development of new ventures, such as guided experiences in the Sierra Nevada and transportation services, all of which can benefit from increased visitor traffic. Ongoing maintenance, including landscaping, cleaning, and repairs, can create consistent year-round employment opportunities when combined with the seasonal employment options currently available in the region. Interpretive services and recreational outfitters, as well as guiding services that engage visitors and educate them on the region's ecology and history, can also be developed through local educational institutions such as Cerro Coso Community College, creating additional job opportunities.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Project team

Provide information on roles, responsibilities, and prior experience. For partnerships, provide evidence of commitment or MOU explain your long-term strategy for collaboration with local organizations and community stakeholders. Clearly define their scope of work, detailing their respective activities.

The Eastern Sierra Regional Campground Improvements and Jobs Creation project has been incubated and developed by MLTPA and the Inyo National Forest over a four-year period, starting with a partnered grant

application in 2020 for the Innovative Finance for National Forests Program, which included the Inyo National Forest and Quantified Ventures. This grant was awarded to MLTPA by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, along with the National Forest Foundation. The original grant aimed to serve as a replicable model to address similar recreation infrastructure and capital improvement needs on public lands. With additional grant funding awarded to MLTPA by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) in 2023, MLTPA and the Inyo National Forest refined their roles and responsibilities, focusing on five campgrounds in two campground clusters: one in Mono County and the other in Inyo County. MLTPA currently serves as the project lead, providing project management, GIS, and creative services, including the production of visual concept renderings for campground redesign and the coordination of state funds from SNC and federal funds secured by the Inyo National Forest through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) to complete the project.

Deliverables will include site surveys, schematic layouts, full redesign plans, and environmental decisions necessary to deliver “shovel-ready” project opportunities for five campgrounds. For this proposed Sierra Jobs First Catalyst project, MLTPA, the USFS, and Inyo County will work collaboratively using the successful project management program developed by MLTPA and Inyo National Forest for the current SNC-funded project.

MLTPA will serve as the project lead, providing project management, GIS, and creative services. Additionally, MLTPA will contract with local engineering firms to conduct site surveys for the identified campgrounds and with landscape architecture firms to produce the schematic layouts, full redesign plans, and the final construction design package ready for funding and execution. The USFS—including the Inyo and Stanislaus National Forests—and Inyo County will review and approve the site surveys for the identified campgrounds within their respective jurisdictions, as well as the work product of the landscape architects (including schematic layouts, full redesign plans, and final construction design package) to ensure that these deliverables are consistent with their needs and properly prepared for their respective public bidding processes. These public agencies will also be responsible for environmental compliance with NEPA and/or CEQA to ensure that these Sierra Jobs First campground renovation projects are truly shovel-ready.

Declaration of ability to meet expenditure deadline of September 2026

Based on several years of experience developing and working on analogous projects, as well as experience working productively with both the USFS and Inyo County, MLTPA declares that it will be able to meet the expenditure deadline of September 2026.

Evidence of partnership from a “Disinvested Community” – See attached
Letters of support from community members – See attached

This project has Tribal leadership or partnership: FALSE

This project has a Tribal letter of support: FALSE