

OUTDOOR RECREATION PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Outdoor recreation professionals play a critical role in creating, managing, and sustaining meaningful outdoor experiences for all. To support this work, a national Outdoor Recreation Professional Competency Framework has been developed through a multi-year, cross-sector collaboration.

Led by the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals (SORP) in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the Eppley Center for Parks and Public Lands, and informed by a cross-sector Advisory Group, this effort brings together perspectives from federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, academia, and private industry. The result is a research-based, consensus-driven framework that defines the foundational knowledge, skills, and abilities needed across the outdoor recreation field.



WHY IT MATTERS

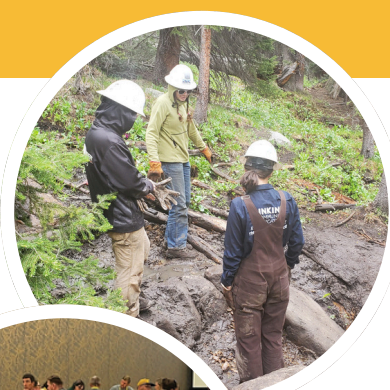
A shared competency framework helps:

- Create a common language across agencies and organizations
- Strengthen hiring, onboarding, and performance practices
- Align training and professional development
- Support career pathways and workforce growth
- Advance a more consistent and effective field of practice

CORE COMPETENCY DOMAINS

The framework is organized into six core topics:

1. Land Management
2. Recreation Access
3. Project Management
4. Recreation Management
5. Recreation Planning & Visitor Use Management
6. Program & Operations Management



HOW IT WAS DEVELOPED

This framework is grounded in a rigorous, research-based process:

- Input from 650+ outdoor recreation professionals
- Two rounds of expert review using a consensus-driven approach
- Strong representation of experienced professionals (majority with 15+ years in the field)
- A rigorous 90% agreement threshold to establish consensus

HOW TO USE THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The competencies are designed to be flexible and practical. They apply to anyone whose work supports access to and management of outdoor recreation experiences. They can be used to:

- Inform job descriptions and hiring
- Guide training, curriculum, and certification
- Support professional development planning
- Align teams and partners around shared expectations
- Strengthen organizational effectiveness

LEARN MORE

The Outdoor Recreation Professional Competency Framework is intended to support professionals and agencies/organizations across the field. Explore how they can be applied in your work and help build a stronger, more connected outdoor recreation workforce.

