



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
441 G STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20314-1000

S: 31 July 2026

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEFS, OPERATIONS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS
AND DISTRICT COMMANDS

SUBJECT: FY27 Call for Proposals: Handshake Partnership and Community Led
Recreation Programs

1. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is committed to fostering and strengthening a culture of partnership across the organization. Recognizing that collaborative efforts are essential to the long-term sustainment of our recreation facilities, we must provide innovative management and cost savings measures that reduce operational liabilities, while maintaining public access to high quality recreation.
2. Established in 2004, the Handshake Partnership Program is a proven model for fiscal efficiency. To date, the program has provided seed funding to USACE facilities for 230 partnership projects, engaging more than 798 partners and generating over \$10.7 million in contributions through volunteer hours, professional services, materials, equipment, and financial support. This has demonstrated a significant return on investment by reducing direct government expenditure, proving that partnerships are critical to our financial health.
3. For FY27, the Handshake program is expanding to aggressively advance the goals of the "Sustaining Access to Recreation Facilities" program and the "Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork" initiative. The focus is on implementing durable, cost-effective management solutions that limit the growth of our program liabilities. This funding opportunity prioritizes proposals that delegate some management to others, leverages cost-sharing agreements and utilizes hiring flexibility to reduce long-term staffing and operational costs. We are seeking partners who can operate facilities and deliver services more efficiently, allowing USACE to focus its resources on its core missions.
4. USACE project offices are invited to submit applications for Handshake Partnership funding. Proposals must demonstrate clear cost-savings and support partnerships that include a challenge cost-sharing cooperative management partner, a conservation corps, or an Army Career Skills/DoW SkillBridge participant, alongside at least one other non-federal entity. Proposed projects should support activities that enhance recreation facilities and/or natural resources at USACE Civil Works projects.
5. Additionally, offices are invited to apply for "Community Led Recreation" funding to support the transition of recreation areas to external partners through outgrants or leases. This program is designed to reduce the government's financial footprint by transferring operational control and associated costs. Funding may also be used for one-time

improvements to make a site viable for a partner and to cover the administrative costs of the property transfer, thereby creating self-sustaining recreation areas at lower long-term costs for the taxpayer.

6. Applications must be received no later than July 31, 2026. Application instructions and the required forms are enclosed. Additional information about the Handshake Program is available on the NRM Gateway at:

<https://corpslakes.erdcdren.mil/employees/handshake/handshake.cfm>.

7. The point of contact for this effort is Heather Burke, National Partnership Program Manager, (678) 972-3824.

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1. Handshake Instructions
2. Handshake Application
3. Community Led Recreation Instructions
4. Community Led Recreation Application

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