



Updated April 30, 2024

American Battlefield Protection Program

The American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP; 54 U.S.C. §§308101-308105) is a grant program administered by the National Park Service (NPS) aimed at promoting the preservation of sites where “historic battles were fought on American soil” (54 U.S.C. §308101 note). Initiated by the Secretary of the Interior in 1991, the program was authorized by Congress in 1996 in the American Battlefield Protection Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-333). At that time, the program’s authorization primarily addressed the preservation and protection of Civil War battlefields through conservation easements or land acquisition from willing sellers. Since then, Congress has reauthorized the program multiple times and expanded the program to protect other types of battlefield sites. Over the course of the program’s existence, Congress has expressed interest in its funding levels, eligibility requirements, acquisition limits, and other related issues.

ABPP Grant Programs

The ABPP historically has comprised two competitive grant programs: the Battlefield Planning Grant Program and the Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program. In 2019, Congress authorized two additional new grant programs (P.L. 116-94)—the Battlefield Interpretation Modernization Grant Program and the Battlefield Restoration Grant Program.

Battlefield Planning Grant Program

Under the Battlefield Planning Grant Program (54 U.S.C. §308102), NPS awards grants to groups, institutions, organizations, governments (local, state, and tribal), and federal entities sponsoring preservation projects at historic battlefields. The program supports projects that include site identification and documentation, planning and consensus building, and educational programs, among others. Any battlefield or associated site on American soil is eligible for funding under this grant program. Planning grants are not awarded for land acquisition or capital improvements. Applicants are encouraged but not required to provide matching funds or in-kind services.

Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program

Under the Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program (54 U.S.C. §308103), grants are awarded to state and local governments seeking fee simple acquisition of eligible battlefield land or the acquisition of permanent protective interests (easements) in battlefield land. Eligible sites for Battlefield Acquisition grants pertain to Revolutionary War, War of 1812, or Civil War battlefield lands. Specifically, eligibility is limited to battlefields listed in the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission’s 1993 *Report on the Nation’s Civil War Battlefields* and, as of 2014, those listed in the 2007 *The Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Historic*

Preservation Study (P.L. 113-291). Grants awarded through this program require at least a 50% nonfederal cost share.

Battlefield Interpretation Modernization and Battlefield Restoration Grant Programs

Following authorization by Congress in 2019, NPS now awards two new types of ABPP grants. The Battlefield Interpretation Modernization Grant Program (54 U.S.C. §308104) funds projects and programs that deploy technology to modernize battlefield interpretation and education. The Battlefield Restoration Grant Program (54 U.S.C. §308105) provides funding for projects that restore day-of-battle conditions. Eligible sites for both programs pertain to Revolutionary War, War of 1812, or Civil War battlefield lands. NPS generally provides two types of grants for each program: (1) *scoping grants* to fund the early stages of project development, such as research, consultation, and evaluation to determine appropriate treatment options, and (2) *implementation grants* for projects ready for completion. Both programs require at least a 50% nonfederal cost share for project proposals.

Authorization and Funding History

NPS first awarded grants for projects at historic battlefields in 1992, following the creation of the program in 1991 under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior. In 1996, Congress codified the program in the American Battlefield Protection Act of 1996 (Section 604 of P.L. 104-333), authorizing \$3 million annually for 10 years to assist in “planning, interpreting, and protecting” historic battlefield sites. Congress reauthorized the Battlefield Planning Grant Program in 2002 and authorized an additional \$10 million to be appropriated for each of FY2004 through FY2008 (P.L. 107-359) for a land acquisition grant program. In March 2009, Congress passed new legislation (P.L. 111-11) authorizing discretionary appropriations of \$3 million annually for the Battlefield Planning Grant Program in perpetuity and \$10 million annually for the Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program from FY2009 through FY2013. Congress subsequently has extended the authorization of funding for acquisition grants multiple times. The program is currently authorized to receive \$18 million annually through FY2028 (54 U.S.C. §308103(f)). In 2019, Congress established the Battlefield Interpretation Modernization and Battlefield Restoration grant programs and authorized up to \$1 million for each program for each of FY2020 through FY2028.

Planning grants are funded in annual appropriations acts within NPS’s National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) account. Appropriations for the program are split between two subaccounts within the NR&P account: direct grant-making funds are provided under the Cultural

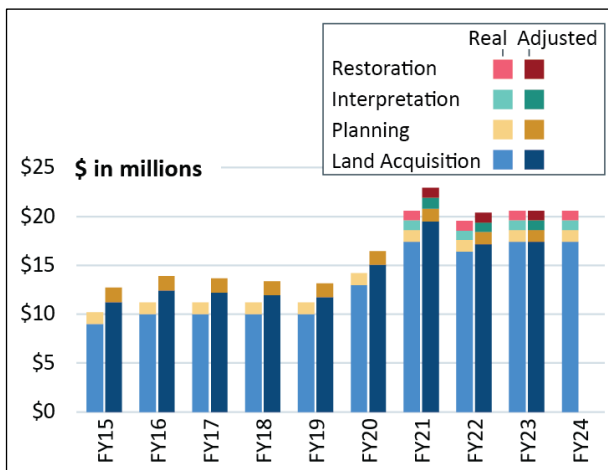
Programs activity, and grant administration funding is provided under a separate Grants Administration activity.

Funding for the Acquisition, Interpretation, and Restoration grant programs comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF; 54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.). Appropriations from the LWCF were previously provided as discretionary funding. In August 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152) established mandatory spending for the LWCF. As a result, starting in FY2021, funding levels for the three programs are considered in the context of presidential and congressional allocations of the LWCF mandatory appropriation. For more information on this process, see CRS In Focus IF11636, *The Great American Outdoors Act (P.L. 116-152)*, by Carol Hardy Vincent, Laura B. Comay, and Bill Heniff Jr.

Funding Trends

Over the 10-year period from FY2015 to FY2024, overall funding for the ABPP generally increased in both actual terms (+102%) and inflation-adjusted or real terms (+62%). However, funding trends for individual grant programs varied. Actual appropriations for the Battlefield Planning Grant Program have remained unchanged at roughly \$1.2 million annually since FY2015, reflecting a 20% reduction in real dollars. By contrast, funding for the Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program has increased in both actual (+94%) and real (+55%) terms over this period. Actual funding for this program remained unchanged at \$10 million from FY2016 to FY2019 before increasing to \$13 million and \$17.4 million in FY2020 and FY2021, respectively. Funding has not exceeded \$17.4 million in actual dollars since FY2021. Congress first appropriated funding for the Battlefield Interpretation and Restoration grant programs in FY2021. Actual funding for FY2024 remains unchanged from FY2021 levels at \$1 million annually for each program. For an overview of ABPP funding trends, see **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. Appropriations for ABPP Grant Program: FY2015-FY2024



Source: CRS, with data from annual NPS budget justifications for FY2017-FY2025. Figures are from the volume two years after the fiscal year in question (e.g., for FY2015, figures are from FY2017).

FY2024 figures are enacted amounts and do not include inflation-adjusted totals.

Notes: Totals do not reflect appropriations for grant administration. Current dollars converted to real (inflation-adjusted) 2023 dollars using the GDP (Chained) Price Index column in Table 10.1 from the Office of Management and Budget, “Historical Tables.”

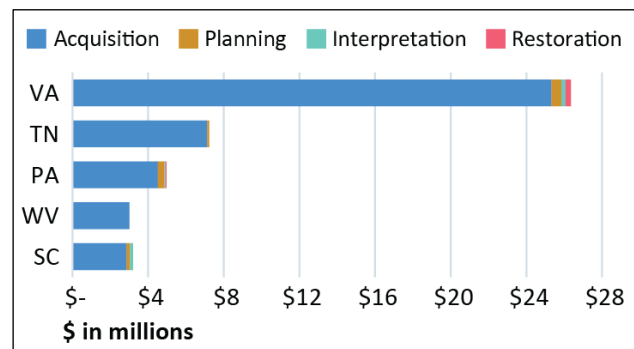
Grantmaking: FY2019-FY2023

Over the last five fiscal years (FY2019-FY2023), NPS has awarded more than \$58 million in ABPP grants, the majority (87%) through the Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program. (See **Figure 2** for an overview of the five states that received the most ABPP funding cumulatively for FY2019-FY2023.) Through the land acquisition program, NPS has awarded more than 100 grants in 15 states since FY2019, with the average grant award totaling roughly \$465,000. More than half of the total grant funding awarded during this period went to battlefield acquisitions in Virginia (\$25.3 million), followed by Tennessee with just over \$7.1 million awarded.

Individual project funding for planning grants historically has ranged from \$5,000 to more than \$200,000. For FY2019-FY2023, NPS awarded 65 grants to organizations in more than 30 states, with the average grant award totaling just over \$91,000. New York received the largest share of program funding since FY2019, with more than \$600,000 awarded for seven projects, followed by Florida.

In FY2021, NPS awarded the first round of 11 grants as part of the Battlefield Interpretation Modernization Grant, totaling more than \$900,000. To date, NPS has awarded 19 grants totaling more than \$1.5 million in funding through the program. NPS announced the first grant cycle for the Battlefield Restoration Grant Program in FY2022, with four grants totaling more than \$345,000 in funding.

Figure 2. FY2019-FY2023 ABPP Grants: Most-Awarded States



Source: CRS. Data provided by NPS Office of Legislative Affairs, April 2024.

Notes: Four grants awarded through the Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program in FY2020 and FY2021 to organizations or entities in Virginia subsequently received supplemental funding. Totals include supplemental amounts.

Mark K. DeSantis, Analyst in Natural Resources Policy

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.