

Sierra RICA

Recommendations for
Implementation and
Collaborative Action

Sustainable Recreation & Tourism



SIERRA
WORKS



August 31, 2026

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Sustainable Recreation & Tourism



Sierra Jobs First

Sierra Jobs First was a regional initiative working towards high-quality job growth, climate resilience, and economic prosperity in Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne counties. The region was one of 13 collaboratives across the state that were formed through California Jobs First (formerly the Community Economic Resilience Fund), a \$600 million fund to create high-quality, broadly accessible jobs for all Californians. Sierra Jobs First was facilitated by staff at Sierra Business Council, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves the region.

Industry Sector Coordinators: Sustainable Recreation & Tourism

Sierra Jobs First Industry Sector Coordinators were selected for their deep, specialized knowledge and active engagement in the industries prioritized by the Governing Council and Collaborative during the region's planning phase.

The **Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation (MLTPA)** and **Sierra Focus Media** were contracted to serve as Industry Sector Coordinators for the Sustainable Recreation & Tourism Sector of Sierra Jobs First.

Through the **Sierra Works Initiative**, MLTPA and Sierra Focus Media collaborated across the Sierra to support projects in the Sustainable Recreation & Tourism Sector, including providing technical assistance, identifying funding resources for implementation, and convening and facilitating the Working Group that produced the Sierra RICA, "Recommendations for Implementation and Collaborative Action for the Sustainable Recreation & Tourism Sector."

Project Funding

This project was funded by **Sierra Jobs First** to support the mission of creating a community-led, climate-neutral, inclusive future for the Sierra region. Working with the **Sierra Business Council**, the regional convener and fiscal administrator for California Jobs First in the Sierra region, Sierra Works provided industry-specific assistance to support job growth, inclusive workforce development, and economic resilience, while protecting our region's natural lands and vibrant communities.



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Photo: witi, inyo co.

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OVERVIEW

August 31, 2026

WORKING GROUP ARCHIVE / RICA SOURCE MATERIALS

Documents and source materials are available on the project website, including:

- **Meeting summaries from each of the seven Working Group sessions**
- **Full Working Group session recordings**
- **Whiteboards and live notes from Working Group discussions and breakout sessions**

You can find all of it at:

mltpa.org/our-work/sierra-jobs-first-1/sierra-jobs-first/activation-plan

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION & COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Sustainable Recreation & Tourism Working Group, Sierra Jobs First

These recommendations were developed by the Sierra Jobs First Sustainable Recreation & Tourism Working Group over eight months of facilitated presentations and dialogue between practitioners across the seven-county region. Sierra Jobs First-funded "Catalyst" projects, outdoor recreation and tourism leaders, staff from local governments, tribal-adjacent organizations, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), arts organizations, recreation operators, and community-based leaders all contributed. The four Goals and their supporting Action Steps reflect the recommendations that consistently rose to the top in those conversations as critical pathways for advancing the implementation of sustainable outdoor recreation, tourism, and arts and culture projects across the region.

Sierra Works assembled the draft recommendations and conducted an open public process from June 19 to July 6, 2026, to gather feedback on the draft Goals and Action Steps. Comments and insights from that process were incorporated into the final recommendations before their publication in August 2026.

The recommendations that follow are advisory in nature and do not constitute a mandate, directive, or binding obligation upon any state agency, local jurisdiction, sovereign nation, nonprofit entity, private organization, individual, or any other entity or party.

GOAL #1 FUND A REGIONAL INFORMATION-SHARING ENTITY THAT FACILITATES IMPLEMENTATION

Fund a reliable regional entity for the seven-county recreation and tourism network to share information of relevance and broker opportunities between federal agencies, local governments, counties, and community-based practitioners that will advance the interests of the Region's Sustainable Recreation and Tourism sector.

ACTION STEP 1

REGIONAL INFORMATION-SHARING AND PROJECT FACILITATION ENTITIES

The state of California, through its relevant agencies and their grant programs, will fund regional information-sharing entities to support collaboration, project development, and implementation.

ACTION STEP 2

ALIGN LOCAL JURISDICTIONS WITH DOI DIRECTIVES ABOUT RURAL GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

Local jurisdictions will incentivize opportunities for Gateway Communities to adopt policies and investments to serve as the interface between visitors and public lands, through their established programs, including Federal Directives such as the Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3434.

ACTION STEP 3

REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE HUBS FOR GATEWAY COMMUNITIES

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will fund collaborative hubs for cross-jurisdictional collaboration to implement regional programs at scale, consistent with its "Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access" and its "2025-2026 Action Plan".

ACTION STEP 4

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The California Office of the Small Business Advocate will contract, through its grant programs, technical assistance and guidance to community-based organizations on governance or administrative questions at no cost to the recipient organizations.

GOAL #1

ACTION STEP 5

PROJECT PRIORITIZATION AND QUICK WINS BUDGETING

The State of California, through its State Conservancies and various funding agencies, will recommend, through its grant guidelines, practitioner-developed project prioritization frameworks and quick wins budget frameworks.

ACTION STEP 6

TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT LIAISON

The State of California's Sierra Nevada Conservancy will fund, through its grant programs, a named Tribal Engagement liaison to advise and coordinate with sovereign nations on Sustainable Recreation and Tourism projects.

ACTION STEP 7

CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MANAGEMENT

The State of California's Sierra Nevada Conservancy, through its grant programs, will fund the expeditor/facilitation capacity necessary for cross-jurisdictional project development, implementation, and management, with a priority on local hiring.

ACTION STEP 8

SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TOURISM DATA LIBRARY

The State of California's Sierra Nevada Conservancy, or appropriate state agencies, including local jurisdictions and DMOs, will fund the establishment and maintenance of a regional Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Data Library, including visitation, business, workforce, and economic data to further project implementation across the region.

ACTION STEP 9

REGIONAL PLACEMAKING COORDINATION ACROSS SECTORS

The State of California's Sierra Nevada Conservancy or appropriate state agencies will fund, through their grants or existing programs, the coordination of place-based and community-led placemaking regional strategies across recreation, education, transportation, arts, and economic development sectors.

GOAL #2 ADDRESS BARRIERS THAT OBSTRUCT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Address systemic policy, regulatory, and political barriers that inhibit cross-jurisdictional collaboration and prevent the implementation of sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism projects.

ACTION STEP 1

LEVERAGE LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO FUND RECREATION & TOURISM

Local authorities will consider opportunities to fund projects in the recreation and tourism sector through funding resources available through local jurisdictions and their authorities, including sales tax, parcel tax, business improvement districts, and special districts including recreation districts.

ACTION STEP 2

DETERMINING LEAD AGENCIES FOR NEPA/CEQA DECISIONS

A regional information-sharing body will facilitate and produce, through fundraising or grant awards, a playbook to help identify lead agencies for NEPA/CEQA decision-making for cross-jurisdictional sustainable outdoor recreation projects.

ACTION STEP 3

INVESTMENTS OF PUBLIC FUNDS IN PARTNER AGENCY INFRASTRUCTURE

A local government entity may, using its available funding and applicable authorities and agreements, invest in qualifying federal or state infrastructure as an economic investment in outdoor recreation assets and programs that sustain rural economies.

ACTION STEP 4

ESTABLISH DATA STANDARDS AND BASELINES FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION DEPENDENT ECONOMIES

A regional information-sharing entity will facilitate the production of standards and definitions for outdoor recreation data collection, including net community benefit metrics, using grants or its available funding to inform capital allocations across jurisdictions throughout the region.

GOAL #2

ACTION STEP 5

MAINTENANCE FUNDING FOR RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

A regional information-sharing entity will advocate, through its established programs, to ensure that capital investments in local, state, federal, and private recreation infrastructure are sustained throughout their life cycles through appropriate maintenance.

ACTION STEP 6

DEVELOP AND ADOPT ARTS AND CULTURAL PLANS

The California Arts Council will provide targeted technical assistance to achieve county-specific Arts and Cultural Plan full coverage which will facilitate the unlocking of public and private funding for the arts and placemaking.

ACTION STEP 7

GRANT REIMBURSEMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR SMALL ORGANIZATIONS

The State of California will reform, through its grant programs, reimbursement requirements for small organizations such that administrative burdens do not effectively exclude them from participating in public grant programs.

ACTION STEP 8

FUND INTEGRATED RECREATION AND ARTS/CULTURE/PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

The State of California, through its Sierra Nevada Conservancy, will make funding available through its grant programs for projects that integrate trail and recreation infrastructure with cultural programming, public art, and community storytelling.

ACTION STEP 9

CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP WORKFORCE INFRASTRUCTURE

The State of California's Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the California Office of Historic Preservation will fund, through their grant programs and in partnership with tribal nations, projects that make indigenous history visible in the built environment of rural recreation communities, including indigenous place names, public art by tribal artists, and interpretive infrastructure co-designed with sovereign nations.

ACTION STEP 10

RECOGNIZE ARTS AND PLACEMAKING AS ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The State of California, through its Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Workforce Development Board and their funding agencies, will recognize, through their grant guidelines and programmatic framing, arts, culture, and placemaking as foundational pillars of regional economic development.

GOAL #3 BUILD A YEAR-ROUND, EQUITABLE, CAREER-FOCUSED RECREATION WORKFORCE

With tribal participation built into program design, build a year-round, career-focused outdoor recreation and tourism workforce with pathways to careers in land management, NGOs, DMOs, and local government.

ACTION STEP 1

YEAR-ROUND AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Regional partners and local government entities will facilitate and produce, through their established programs, a year-round outdoor recreation ambassador program that includes tribal participation in its design, to convert seasonal positions into formal career pathways.

ACTION STEP 2

A RECREATION WORKFORCE IS A HEALTH SYSTEM COMMUNITY BENEFIT

The California Department of Health Care Access and Information and the California Workforce Development Board will, through their established programs, take regulatory action to designate outdoor recreation workforce development as eligible expenditures under established hospital community benefit obligations to align health spending with rural workforce development needs.

ACTION STEP 3

REGIONAL CYCLING AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION WORKFORCE CLUSTER

The California Workforce Development Board will establish, through its programs, a place-based workforce model to coordinate workforce investment across recreation, hospitality, health, and event programming sectors.

ACTION STEP 4

CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP WORKFORCE INFRASTRUCTURE

The California Workforce Development Board, the California Arts Council, and local government entities will, through their established programs, explicitly designate cultural heritage stewardship roles, including arts administration, creative reuse coordination, cultural programming, and community storytelling, as eligible workforce development investments through formal regulatory guidance to integrate arts and cultural workforce development with the broader regional recreation workforce pipeline.

GOAL #4 REGIONAL RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Implement the recommendations from Sierra Jobs First's "Sustainable Recreation and Tourism" projects and from "A Changing Climate | Vulnerability in California's Eastern Sierra," from the region's "Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative" (SRTI).

ACTION STEP 1

DEPLOY "A CHANGING CLIMATE" AS A SCALABLE CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLAN ACROSS THE SEVEN-COUNTY REGION

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will incentivize, through its grant programs, projects that incorporate the analysis and recommendations from "A Changing Climate | Vulnerability in California's Eastern Sierra" into their grant proposals to ensure climate adaptation and enhance regional resilience as a scalable seven-county initiative.

ACTION STEP 2

DEVELOP THE "SRTI CLIMATE: REGIONAL ASSET INVENTORY AND GAP ASSESSMENT"

The State of California, through its funding resources, including the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and its grant programs, will fund the development of the "SRTI Climate: Regional Asset Inventory and Gap Assessment" as recommended by "A Changing Climate | Vulnerability in California's Eastern Sierra" as a scalable seven-county initiative to prioritize projects, reduce duplication, and target the region's most vulnerable economic assets to climate change.

ACTION STEP 3

DEVELOP THE "SRTI CLIMATE: SUSTAINABLE RECREATION OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM"

The State of California through its funding resources, including the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and its grant programs, will fund the development of the "SRTI Climate: Sustainable Recreation Outreach and Education Program" as recommended by "A Changing Climate | Vulnerability in California's Eastern Sierra" to ensure consistent communication efforts as a scalable seven-county initiative.

GOAL #4

ACTION STEP 4

SNOW PLAY DATA COLLECTION AND UTILIZATION

California State Parks will fund snow play data collection protocols through its grant programs to align winter recreation infrastructure, including state SNO-Parks, with current and projected snowline conditions for placement, seasonal road access, and visitor engagement.

ACTION STEP 5

CLIMATE-ADAPTIVE VISITOR MANAGEMENT FUND

The State of California will fund climate-adaptive visitor engagement programs that support on-the-ground ambassador deployments, digital information systems, and real-time visitor interactions in communities experiencing accelerated climate impacts.

ACTION STEP 6

REFORM GRANT REIMBURSEMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR SMALL ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING IN COMPRESSED SEASONS

The State of California, through its conservancies and their funding programs, will allow adjustments to grant reimbursement requirements to provide project-level flexibility for organizations operating in compressed or expanded seasons due to climate change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the lands we live and work on across Tuolumne, Amador, Alpine, Calaveras, Inyo, Mono, and Mariposa Counties are the ancestral homelands of many Indigenous peoples, including Miwok, Mono, Paiute, Shoshone, Washoe, Yokuts, and related Tribal Nations of the Sierra and Eastern Sierra.

These lands hold creation stories, sacred sites, and living cultural traditions that continue today, despite the impacts of colonization.

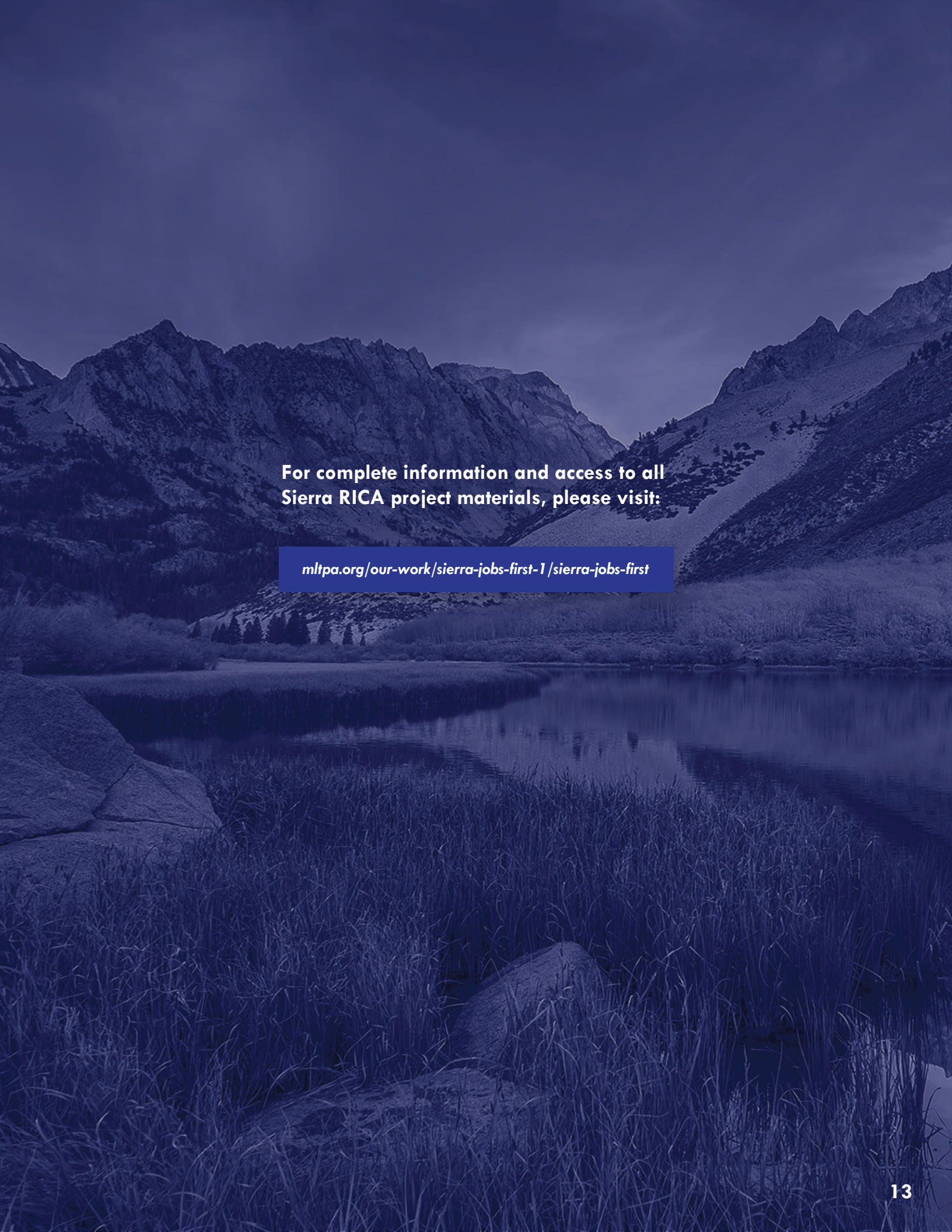
We offer this acknowledgment as an invitation to recognize these places as a living homeland, and to carry forward our shared responsibility to this land and its original stewards as we do this work together.

Gratitude

We are deeply grateful to the members of the Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Working Group, the project leads and their teams, the tribal partners, arts and cultural leaders, county and local staff, land managers, workforce partners, and community-based organizations who showed up month after month, shared what they were learning on the ground, pushed our thinking, and helped shape a document that reflects the work of building sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism economies in rural California. Special thanks are also due to those who took the time to review the draft RICA and submit substantive feedback through the public comment period. Your critique made this a stronger document, and your voices are woven throughout.

Disclaimer

This document reflects the collective input of practitioners convened through the Sierra Jobs First Recreation and Tourism Working Group and represents a good-faith articulation of the actions those practitioners believe would strengthen the sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism sector. The recommendations are offered for consideration and, where deemed appropriate by responsible parties, adoption and implementation by partners in furtherance of the shared interest in supporting rural economic resilience. Any action taken in reliance on these recommendations shall remain the sole responsibility of the acting party.



**For complete information and access to all
Sierra RICA project materials, please visit:**

mltpa.org/our-work/sierra-jobs-first-1/sierra-jobs-first