

State Cohort RICA

Recommendations for
Implementation and
Collaborative Action

Sustainable Recreation & Tourism



August 31, 2026

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California Jobs First

In 2021, Governor Newsom launched the \$600 million Regional Investment Initiative (formerly known as the Community Economic Resilience Fund, or CERF) to support California's 13 regions to create quality jobs and bolster their resilience to climate change and global challenges impacting the state's diverse regional economies. As part of this program, each of the 13 regions built a California Jobs First Collaborative tasked with developing a clear vision for their region's economic future.

California Jobs First supports high-road economic development plans to create equitable access to quality jobs. These plans will support high-road economic development and environmentally sustainable businesses that pay living wages and offer opportunities for career growth. California Jobs First aims to ensure that the state's economy works for all California residents, particularly those who have been historically marginalized.

State Recreation and Tourism Cohort

Two California Jobs First Industry Sector Coordinators from opposite ends of the state, both working in the outdoor recreation, tourism, and arts and culture sectors, came together to produce the State Recreation and Tourism Cohort and the State Cohort RICA. **Redwood Region RISE** (RRRISE) is a coalition of 150+ organizations across Tribal Lands, and Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, and Mendocino Counties advancing a sustainable and inclusive economy through a community-led 10-year Economic Roadmap. As part of California Jobs First, RRRISE is aligning regional action with statewide goals to create quality jobs, support environmental stewardship, and uplift communities through four key sectors.

Sierra Jobs First is a regional initiative working towards high-quality job growth, climate resilience, and economic prosperity in Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono and Tuolumne counties, facilitated by staff at the Sierra Business Council. The **Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Foundation** (MLTPA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization incorporated in 2007 as a public benefit corporation in the state of California, engaged with issues of sustainable outdoor recreation in California's Eastern Sierra. MLTPA was awarded a contract to serve as an Industry Sector Coordinator in support of the "Sustainable Recreation and Tourism" industry sector for Sierra Jobs First, in partnership with our colleagues at **Sierra Focus Media** from the west side of the Sierra.

Project Funding

The project was funded by Sierra Jobs First and Redwood Region RISE through California Jobs First.



Photo: J. Wentworth

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OVERVIEW

August 31, 2026

STATE RECREATION AND TOURISM COHORT / RICA SOURCE MATERIALS

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

- **Complete documentation, meeting materials, and outputs from the “Symposium of Practice” event that took place on April 23, 2026**
- **Agendas, presentations and recordings from 14 regional Cohort meetings that took place over 2025 and 2026**
- **A “State Cohort Library” including Regional Strategies from all 13 Jobs First Regions along with regional strategies from Visit California**

You can find all of it at:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION & COLLABORATIVE ACTION

State Recreation and Tourism Cohort and the “Recreation and Tourism Symposium of Practice”

These recommendations are drawn from participant feedback, focused feedback from Visit California, and collaborative work outputs from the “Recreation and Tourism Symposium of Practice (Symposium of Practice),” convened by MLTPA and Redwood Region RISE with support from Sierra Jobs First and California Jobs First.

The full-day Symposium of Practice facilitated session was held at the California Natural Resources Agency building on April 23rd, 2026, with 50+ participants and staff who traveled from across the state to share their stories and insights. The session focused on lessons from the Catalyst phase of California Jobs First and on barriers to project implementation. Recommendations documented in the State Cohort RICA reflect the inputs and feedback that consistently identified the critical pathways for advancing the implementation of sustainable outdoor recreation, tourism, and arts and culture projects across the state. These final recommendations are presented under the following topics: “Assets,” “Policy & Regulations,” “Funding,” “Data,” “Climate,” “Workforce,” “Collaboratives,” and “Branding & Marketing.” The feedback process, which took place between July 13 and July 29, 2026, provided opportunities to rate the draft recommendations on a scale from “Strongly Support” to “Strongly Do Not Support” and to leave specific written comments on any of the recommendations.

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.

mltpa.org/our-work/sierra-jobs-first-1/sierra-jobs-first/recreation-and-tourism-cohort

ASSETS

Natural assets — public lands, parks, trails, or other features — and community assets — community facilities, airports, train stations, unique areas, and/or cultural events

1. RECREATION INTEGRATION WITH STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The state of California and its agencies will collaborate with regional practitioners on state-funded infrastructure planning to integrate opportunities for sustainable outdoor recreation, tourism, and cultural infrastructure.

2. LIABILITY PROTECTION FOR PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

The state of California, in coordination with the National Agricultural Law Center and UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, will extend protections for private landowners who provide public recreation access beyond the recreational use immunity already provided in California Civil Code §846 to address liability exposure that discourages private landowners' participation in regional recreation networks.

3. EXISTING ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The state of California, through its funding agencies and their grant guidelines, will strengthen opportunities to restore and maintain historic rural recreation, cultural, and tourism infrastructure.

4. PLACE-BASED EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP

The state of California, through its funding agencies and their grant guidelines, and in collaboration with local Destination Marketing Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and Main Street Programs, will fund place-based education and stewardship tools to promote responsible use and connect visitors to cultural, indigenous, and ecological contexts through California's outdoor recreation and tourism.

5. HEALTH AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

The state of California, California Health and Human Services, and rural healthcare providers will integrate outdoor recreation and arts and culture activities into rural community health strategies to position outdoor recreation and cultural engagement as a health intervention opportunity for residents of rural recreation communities.

POLICY & REGULATIONS

Policies or regulations that have opened doors or created roadblocks. Does the policy landscape match conditions on the ground? Could a governance structure bridge the gap?

1. TRIBAL LIAISONS

The state of California, through its funding agencies and their grant guidelines that require tribal engagement, will provide funding and technical assistance to tribal liaisons, tribal nations, and the organizations being served to support state funded outdoor recreation and tourism projects.

2. STATE PARKS PARTNERSHIPS WITH FEDERAL AGENCIES

California State Parks will prioritize establishing Good Neighbor Authority agreements with federal partners to ensure continuity of resource management and support for recreational activities.

3. OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

The state of California, through legislative or other means, will establish an office of outdoor recreation, or its equivalent, to provide statewide support and coordination for California's outdoor recreation sector.

4. INVESTMENTS ON FEDERALLY MANAGED PUBLIC LANDS

The state of California, through its issuance of state bonds, will ensure unambiguous language on the use of state funds to invest in outdoor recreation infrastructure and programs on federally managed public lands.

5. OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TOURISM ALIGNMENT

The state of California and its state agencies will work with tourism, recreation, and cultural practitioners to develop practical working geographies for regional outdoor recreation and tourism to align with and integrate California's outdoor recreation, cultural, and tourism sectors.

6. CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP WORKFORCE

The California Workforce Development Board, the California Arts Council, and local government entities will, through formal regulatory guidance and in alignment with SB 628 and the California Creative Workforce Act of 2021, explicitly designate cultural heritage stewardship roles as eligible workforce development investments to integrate arts and cultural workforce development into the broader regional workforce pipeline.

FUNDING

How well do current funding opportunities align with actual needs and timelines, including reimbursement structures, maintenance, and the ability to braid multiple sources together?

1/2

1. RCRC SUPPORT

The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) will provide technical and financial assistance to align identified recreation and tourism opportunities with counties' needs, including projects that cross county lines in California, while identifying common interests with federal partners in the outdoor recreation and tourism sector.

2. LOCAL JURISDICTIONS FUNDING AUTHORITIES

Local jurisdictions will consider opportunities to fund projects in the sustainable outdoor recreation, tourism, and arts and culture sectors using funding authorities available to them, including sales and parcel taxes, tourism business improvement districts (TBIDs), and special districts such as recreation districts.

3. RECONSTITUTE RECREATION RACS

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) will engage with federal partners to reconstitute Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (Recreation RACs) to review and establish fee proposals.

4. PRIORITIZE ONGOING NEEDS

The state of California, through its funding agencies, will encourage grant guidelines to ensure that ongoing operation and maintenance needs of recreation and tourism assets are eligible and supported by state grant funding, alongside continued investment in new or innovative needs.

5. STRENGTHEN THE JOBS FIRST SECTOR

The state of California, through its funding agencies, will encourage grant guidelines to support outdoor recreation, tourism, and creative economy projects that will clarify and enhance the "Strengthen" sector of the state's Economic Blueprint, as published by California Jobs First.

FUNDING

2/2

6. BLOCK GRANTS FOR MULTI-BENEFIT PROJECTS

Relevant state of California grant programs will replicate and model the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) Block Grant Model to specifically include and support flexible, multi-year planning horizons in the outdoor recreation and tourism sector as part of multi-benefit project development and funding.

7. CAL FIRE DESIGNATION OF ASSETS

CAL FIRE will designate outdoor recreation, cultural, and tourism assets through its grant guidelines as critical community infrastructure to inform fuels mitigation work and the awarding of state grants.

8. CEQA/NEPA DECISIONS

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) will coordinate with partners to identify recreation and tourism projects delayed by lapses in federal capacity and facilitate opportunities for these projects to achieve "shovel-ready" status through final joint environmental planning decisions.

9. END-TO-END PLANNING

The state of California, through its funding agencies and their grant guidelines, will establish opportunities to fund projects from concept through shovel-ready status to eliminate funding gaps at the scoping, design, environmental review, or pre-construction stages.

10. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR GRANTEEES

The state of California, through its funding agencies and their grant guidelines, will provide technical assistance to rural and small-organization grantees to ensure compliance and timely reporting while building capacity.

11. INTEGRATED PLACEMAKING

The state of California will make funding available through its grant programs to integrate trail and recreation infrastructure projects with cultural programming, public art, and community storytelling.

DATA

What data resources exist to support projects — things like visitation numbers, economic impact, or user behavior — and what is missing that should be measured? Who owns the data?

1. JOINT STATE-FEDERAL SOCIOECONOMIC DATA SHARING

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) will establish a socioeconomic data-sharing program for the outdoor recreation and tourism sectors between the state of California and federal partners, including the new U.S. Forest Service office in Placerville, to manage mutual data-sharing needs.

2. ALIGNMENT OF PRIORITIES

The state of California and federal partners will convene biennially to share “North Star” priorities for their shared recreation and tourism sector and to establish a shared focus for efficient collaborative efforts.

3. UCANR COOPERATIVE EXTENSION TECHNICAL SUPPORT

UC Agriculture and Natural Resources and its Cooperative Extension (UCCE) will support communities working in the outdoor recreation, tourism, and creative economy sectors by providing technical support and data to enhance outdoor recreation and tourism programming, infrastructure supporting economic development, and job creation.

4. ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS AND CALED

The California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED) will include examples of rural communities transitioning towards recreation, tourism, and cultural economy-based systems as a feature of their Rural Exchange events to provide information and resources to candidate communities.

CLIMATE

Is climate change a factor, through shifting seasons, temperature fluctuations, or visitor behaviors? Can the project be connected to climate resilience or mitigation funding?

1. MULTIPLE-BENEFIT CLIMATE PROJECTS

The state of California, through its funding agencies and their grant guidelines, including California Natural Resources Agency's 30x30 program, will establish opportunities to award funding for multiple-benefit projects addressing climate change that include sustainable outdoor recreation, tourism, and cultural infrastructure.

2. FIRE-HARDENED TRAILS AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and CAL FIRE will, through the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, draft and publish an administrative directive that advances fire-hardened trail prescriptions for wildfire mitigation in alignment with related Goals and Key Actions from "California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience" to harden vulnerable California communities.

3. WILDFIRE IGNITION RISK EDUCATION

CAL FIRE will, through its grant guidelines, incentivize funding for the implementation of Goals and Key Actions from "California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience" to support educational opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism users about the risks of wildfire ignition from outdoor recreation activities.

4. BLOCK GRANTS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) will integrate outdoor recreation and tourism as multi-benefit criteria into their block grant programs for water, forestry, and restoration projects to ensure that outdoor recreation is recognized as essential to the health of the environment, communities, and regions.

5. BIOMASS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and CAL FIRE will, through their grant guidelines, incentivize funding for Goals and Key Actions from "California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience" to include support for sustainable outdoor recreation infrastructure and programs when funding biomass removal, utilization, and energy projects.

6. OUTDOOR EDUCATION

The California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Natural Resources Agency will reinstate field trips and outdoor education programs, including the Green Schoolyards Initiative, through their funding opportunities and grant programs to create inspired stewards and advocates for California's future.

WORKFORCE

Are skills, contractors, and project managers available locally? Are there long-term workforce pipelines through community colleges, local hire programs, workforce development boards?

1. TRAIL STANDARDS AND WORKER CERTIFICATIONS

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), including State Parks, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), and the California Council of Land Trusts (CCLT), will establish planning, design, and maintenance standards for trail programs to create career pathways and certifications for trail professionals and entrepreneurs.

2. INDUSTRY SECTOR SKILLS CODES

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) and the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency will refine and consolidate industry sector skills codes for outdoor recreation, tourism, and the arts to generate reliable, sector-specific data and tracking information for these sectors.

3. SKILLS-BASED WILDFIRE, OUTDOOR RECREATION, AND TOURISM JOBS

The state of California, through its relevant agencies, will implement recommendations from "California's Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience" to prioritize projects that will create skills-based, prevailing-wage jobs in the wildfire mitigation, outdoor recreation, and tourism sectors.

4. CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION FOR THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY

The California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) will collaborate with the California Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to integrate business skills targeted towards professionals in the outdoor recreation economy into the SBDC's Career Technical Education program.

5. CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS CONTRACT EXEMPTIONS

The state of California, through its regulatory authority, will pursue AB 339 exemptions for contracting with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and other workforce training programs to ensure that state policy recognizes outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming as integral to fire mitigation, workforce development, and climate resilience.

COLLABORATIVES

Collaborative relationships across jurisdictions, land managers, or tribal partners - accelerating progress? Slowing things down? Would a regional coordination body or structure help?

1. REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES

Local jurisdictions, with support from local, state, federal, and philanthropic funding, will create and maintain regional outdoor recreation and tourism collaboratives to provide networking and collaboration opportunities, connect with other regional collaboratives statewide through a community of practice, connect rural and urban collaboratives to bridge regional divides, and conduct regional asset mapping.

2. REGIONAL COLLABORATIVES AND AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

Local, state, and federal agencies will engage with regional collaboratives to align agency priorities with regional capacity and needs, braid agency funding and create matches where possible, to provide technical assistance and ecosystem support for the outdoor recreation and tourism sector.

3. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

The state of California, through relevant state agencies and regional collaboratives, will establish a working group to document activities in the outdoor recreation, tourism, and cultural economy sectors that overlap with program areas of tourism marketing and state agencies to make recommendations for efficient program delivery.

BRANDING & MARKETING

Does the project have a clear identity? How effectively does it speak to the community, to funders, to decision-makers? Can it be a tool for advocacy, or building political will?

1. REGIONAL BRANDING AND MARKETING

Local jurisdictions, with support from local, state, federal, and private funding, will invest in recreation and tourism collaboratives to facilitate regional branding and marketing among regional Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), Chambers of Commerce, Main Street Programs, and between urban and rural regions.

2. ECONOMIC TRANSITION GO-BIZ

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) will engage state agency partners and compile industrial-sector transition case studies and analysis (e.g., from timber or cannabis) to support regions and communities undergoing similar transitions that may be considering investment in outdoor recreation and tourism economies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the lands where we live and work across California are the ancestral homelands of 109 federally recognized tribes and more than 55 self-identified tribes and tribal bands.

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

We offer this acknowledgment as an invitation to recognize all of California as a living, ongoing ancestral 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 State Recreation and Tourism Cohort who showed up month after month, shared what they were learning on the ground, challenged our thinking, and helped shape a document that reflects the work of building sustainable recreation and tourism economies throughout California. Special thanks also go to the 50+ Cohort members who traveled to Sacramento for the Symposium of Practice; your work and contributions are the foundation of this document. We also wish to thank those who took the time to review the draft RICA and submit substantive feedback during the comment period. Your critique made this a stronger document and your voices are woven throughout.

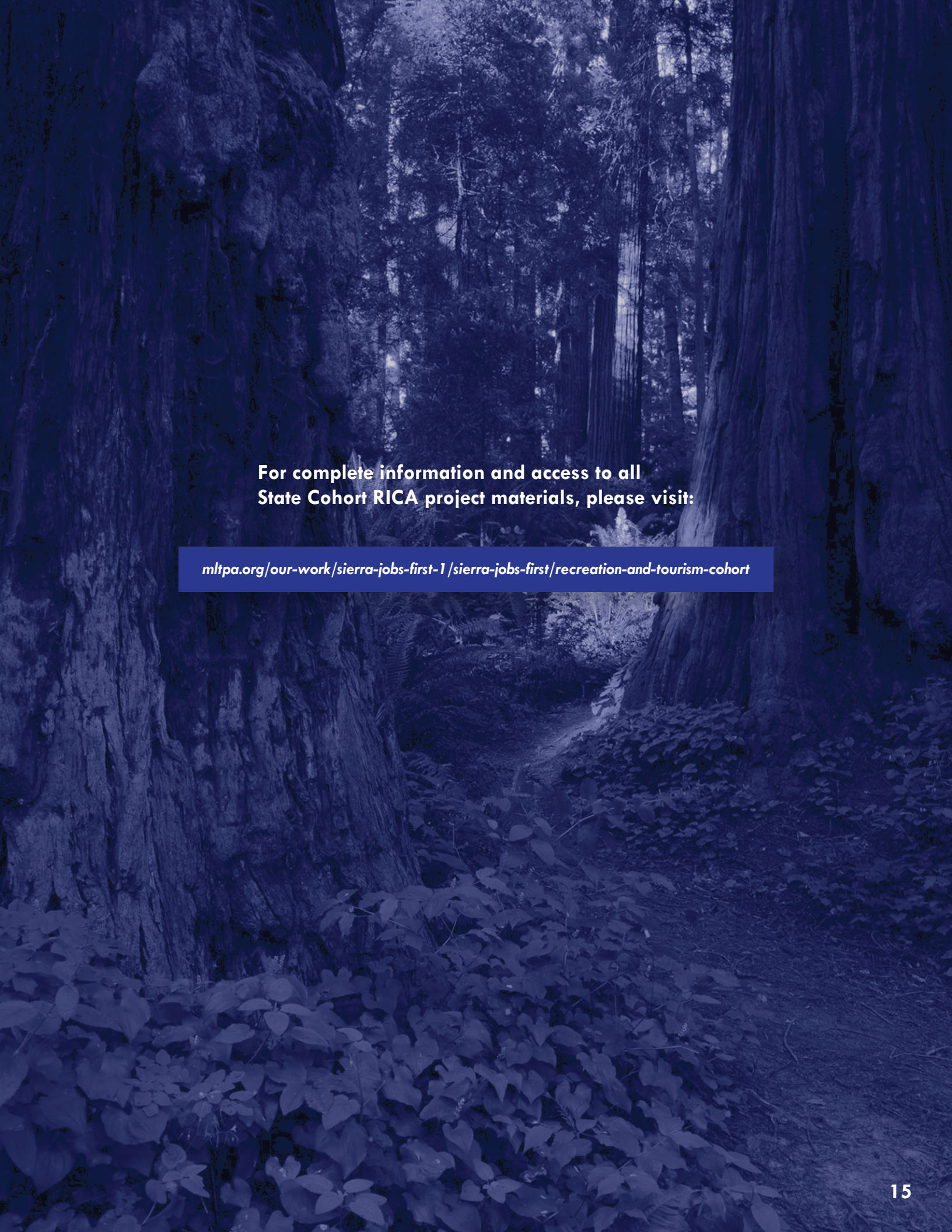
VISIT CALIFORNIA COMMENTS

Visit California provided comments on the initial draft of the State Cohort RICA. MLTPA and the Redwood Region RISE team worked with Visit California to incorporate their suggestions into the final draft of the State Cohort RICA. You can download and review Visit California's original comments on the draft State Cohort RICA recommendations here:

https://mltpa.org/images/downloads/606_03_VC_Comments_StCoho_RICA_FINAL.pdf

DISCLAIMER

This document reflects the collective input of practitioners convened through the statewide Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Cohort and offers a good-faith articulation of the actions those practitioners believe would strengthen the sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism sector on which California's rural economies substantially depend. 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
State Cohort RICA project materials, please visit:**

mltpa.org/our-work/sierra-jobs-first-1/sierra-jobs-first/recreation-and-tourism-cohort