

Recreational Trails Grant Application Process
Frequently Asked Questions
Updated April 2018

- **Can I afford to skip over the Application Information and Instruction Manual, and NOT attend trainings?** (*I'll just figure it out as I go along, I'm good at this kind of thing.*) **No.** Well, of course, you *can* do this, but your chances of putting together a successful application package decrease significantly. This is a complicated and competitive program; we recommend you use all the resources you have available to you to submit a successful package. If you have any questions, please visit <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm> and contact the Trails Program staff. **NEW:** If an applicant participates in one whole training teleconference (~2 hours), 3 points will be added to the cumulative score for their application during the ORTAB meeting. Three points can make the difference between being recommended for funding and not.
- **What is a public project?** All projects using federal grant funds must have significant public benefit, be accessible, open and available to the public, or targeted to a broad segment of the public. Federal grant funds should not be used for projects that have such limited capacity that only a few paying (or potentially paying) guests have access to the product of the project. The portions of a project using federal grant funds must be open for public use or viewing at all times and when visitors are likely.
- **NEW! How much money is available for one project?** Currently *for non-Division of Parks entities*, (non-profits, clubs, local gov't, etc.) \$75,000 is the maximum award for non-motorized and diversified projects and \$100,000 for motorized projects. **For DPOR the limit for all categories is \$100,000.** The minimum request requirement is \$5,000 for all projects. To qualify as "motorized", a project must be for development or improvement of a predominantly motorized trail (not just purchasing machinery to be used on a non-motorized trail).
- **Do I have to fill out an Environmental Review Checklist?** **Yes.** Every applicant must fill out an ERC unless they have a **project that fits into Stipulation 1 of the Programmatic Agreement (see question below)**. This shows the reviewer that the applicant has gone through the process of thinking about the environmental impacts of their proposed project and has contacted all the necessary agencies and acquired all necessary permits. Some answers on the ERC may be "not applicable" or "no" – this is OK.
- **What is the "Programmatic Agreement"?** Under "Grant Forms" <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm> on the Trails Program web page, refer to the [CFR 771.117](#), [2 CFR 200](#), and the [Programmatic Agreement](#). The Programmatic Agreement is a document developed between DNR and FHWA to establish procedures for the RTP projects pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 23 CFR 771. If your project qualifies under Stipulation 1 of the Programmatic Agreement **ONLY**, you will not need an ERC. If any part of your project qualifies under Stipulations 2 or 3 of the Programmatic Agreement, you must have a completed [ERC](#) to receive grant money.
- **Can I just give a "ballpark" estimate about my project's schedule? I'm not sure how it's going to work out.** **No.** The project's components must be broken down into Tasks or Milestones and numbers of weeks for each, all leading up to a hard-completion date. This date will be on the final federal approval and after that date nothing more may be charged to the project. See the Application Instructions for details and ask Trails Program staff if you have additional questions.
- **Do I need new letters of support if I got them last year? Yes. Have you identified any group or individual that is opposed to your proposed project? Why are they opposed and how will you manage this?** The circumstances or the stakeholders surrounding your project may have changed and those that supported last year may not support this year. You may have your supporters simply email an updated voice of support that can be attached to last year's letter. Please include any opposition and how you will manage it.
- **Can I just turn in last year's application if I change the dates?** **No.** Please use the new and updated application form from the website available on or after July 15 of the year in which you are applying for funds. We will try to update and improve the application annually.
- **Must I have all my permits and authorizations final and included with my application by the October 15 deadline?** **1.** All land use authorizations or letters of non-objection for land use must be included with the application. If your project doesn't have permission from the land owner, it cannot move forward.
2. All agency documents such as a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), or Fish Habitat Permit do not necessarily have to be finalized. These permits can cost money or take months to obtain and, **1.** If your project doesn't get approved for funding you may not need, and **2.** You must only have them in hand before you break ground for the project. You must have all surveys and approvals in place that might effect the trail alignment, such as the History and Archaeology survey.
- **If I include more match than required, does it reflect favorably on my application?** **No,** you will not receive a higher score for having more match than is required. Having more match could cause the federal share to decrease if the Federal Highway Administration determines there is less need based on more than the 10% match requirement.
- **Can my project be mainly for surveying, planning, research, and assessments?** **No.** Recreational Trails Grants are intended to help initiate shovel-ready projects with tangible, on-the-ground results; i.e. a bridge across a creek on a ski trail, a new hiking trail, a bike pump park, motor-cross track improvements, etc. Our rule of thumb is, any project that can be put in a binder on a shelf and forgotten or left until there is further interest or funding, typically does not fit this program.
- **Can my project be for routine maintenance?** **No.** This grant is intended for project initiation, trail or trail facility development, repair or improvement.
- **Will any costs that I incur before the grant agreement is signed be allowable reimbursements?** **No.** See Application Instructions for one exception.

- **Can I just estimate at how much it will cost to contract a service?** **No.** Please collect contractors' professional estimates or bids for each service. The RTP only requires one contractor bid for each service to be included with the budget as back up, however, state procurement law (for state of Alaska government projects) requires multiple bids for anything over \$1000. Please make sure you are following the correct rules for your institution. For more information please see the Application Instructions.
- **Once the grant agreement is signed, how long does it take for me to get the money?** The Recreational Trails Program is a reimbursable grant. You are expected to buy or pay upfront for services and materials that have been included in your approved budget, and then submit your receipts with a reimbursement form for payment. There are no advances.
- **How do you figure the match percentage?** (match ratio for all applicants is 90/10) \$50,000 requested in grant funds (federal share) will have a total project cost of \$55,556 ($\$50,000/90\% = \$55,556$). To determine the match requirement of 10%, $\$50,000 / 90\% = \$55,556 * 10\% = \$5,556$. Therefore, this project's total project cost = \$55,556, and the match requirement = \$5,556, with grant funds providing \$50,000 of the project.
- **How long do I have to complete my project?** Grant agreements may be good for up to two years, **however** you must turn in a reimbursement request that includes match within the first 8 months after FHWA approval, **AND** a minimum of twice a year, or risk federal de-obligation of your project. Please plan accordingly and see Application Instruction and Information Manual for more information.
- **If I am hiring a contractor to do the work how long should I plan on if I am not on their schedule yet?** If you are planning to use a trail contractor please plan a minimum of a year for your project. The few trail contractors that are available in Alaska fill their schedules fast. It is better to plan on more time than have to modify your grant.
- **Can I have more than one grant open at the same time?** You may have more than one grant open for different projects, and you may have one grant project contain more than one phase, but each phase must be completed before the next one can begin. If you have specific questions, please ask Trails Program staff.
- **Is it useful if I JUST put "RTP grant" in the email subject line when communicating about my project?** **No.** Please include the name of your project (**appropriately abbreviated**) in the subject line of every email about your project. (this being said, do not make document titles so long that they can't be saved) We have up to 100 RTP grants open at any one time and this helps us to keep track of each specific grant and backup documentation. If you label your email "RTP grant" it is not specific enough. Please see Application Information and Instruction Manual for more detail.
- **How are awarded projects selected?** Applications submitted on time are initially reviewed by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, then forwarded to an advisory board (ORTAB) for scoring and recommendation. Once the scores and recommendations are received, the State Parks Director's office selects the grants that will move forward toward approval. Finally, the tentatively-awarded project packages are sent to FHWA for final approval. It is highly recommended to review the score sheet used by reviewers so you know how your application will be graded.
- **May I build a trail project on private land?** The public must be assured legal access to trails and trail related facilities developed or maintained with RTP funds. If any portion of a trail project is on private or public land, the applicant must obtain documented permission accompanied by an easement or other legally binding agreement such as a permit, from the landowner, allowing public access for a minimum of 5 years (into the future). Consult with the landowner to find out what kind of authorization is necessary. The grant applicant must obtain these assurances prior to applying. If the project is for winter access, atop frozen ground or snow, without disturbance to the land or vegetation, public access need only be assured for the life of the grant. Applications missing landowner permission to access will be considered incomplete and ineligible.
- **What is the current value of adult volunteer labor?** For 2018 it is \$27.45 / hr.
- **Will my project have to comply with the Buy America provision?** Yes, if the project uses an item containing steel valued at \$2,500 or more. Think: large bridges, vehicles, large motorized tools, etc. Please see Application Instruction and Information Manual for more detail. **Currently the FHWA is NOT approving any Buy America waivers. For your machinery over \$2500 containing steel to qualify for funding, you MUST have written verification from the manufacturer that all steel in the product is forged, manufactured and assembled in the United States.**
- **I think my project idea might qualify under the Safety, Signing, and Education apportionment. How do I know?** Development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection related to the use of recreational trails, including supporting non-law enforcement trail safety and trail use monitoring patrol programs, and providing trail-related training (limited to 5 percent of a State's apportionment). These projects must offer training or materials either free to the general public, or at a very minimal cost. All reimbursable expenses must be allocated to educational materials. Also see definition of "public project", and other detail in the Application Instruction and Information Manual.

More information:

DNR, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/index.htm>

Alaska State Trails Program <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/index.htm>

Recreational Trails Program <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/trails.htm>

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