

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP), NON-MOTORIZED

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Non-Motorized funds are for pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian recreational trails that may also serve as non-motorized transportation corridors.

This document addresses frequently asked questions (FAQs) including common questions about the RTP Procedural Guide (Guide). These FAQs include Guide page references to allow for easier use.

Funding Amount Available: \$6,700,000

Maximum Grant Request: \$2,000,000

Minimum Grant Request: There is no minimum.

The 2007 [Recreational Trails Program Procedural Guide](#) will be used for the 2023 application cycle, including the additional guidance within this document.

Applicants are encouraged to contact their county's [Competitive Team Project Officer](#) (Application/Pre-Award Green Column) with any concerns or questions.

[Land Tenure \(Pages 11-12\)](#)

If the applicant does not own the project site or is not proposing an acquisition to become the landowner, a site control agreement with the landowner will be needed.

No Land Ownership or Site Control Agreement

Drafting, negotiating, and executing lease agreements can be time consuming and may not be ideal for this application cycle. Applicants should send a description of the current or potential agreement with the landowner for further review and assistance to their county's [Competitive Review Project Officer](#).

Existing Site Control Agreement

If there is a site control agreement in place, in order to ensure there is adequate site control for the project site, applicants should request a Land Tenure Checklist Form from their assigned county [Competitive Review Project Officer](#). The form is used as a guide to identify the components required for sufficient site control. Applicants should complete the form and submit it their assigned county [Competitive Review Project Officer](#). Applicants *must* cite page numbers and highlight the corresponding provisions in the site control agreement. Agreements can be reviewed prior to the application deadline application and applicants are encouraged to reach out early.

Grant Scope and Match (Pages 13-16)

Applicants should ensure that the Grant Scope elements and costs are consistent with the Application Page, Site Plan, Topographic Map, Trail Log, Cost Estimate, Proposal, etc.

- Limit the Grant Scope to a phase that will be completed with the grant request and the committed, secured match. Avoid a scope that requires future fundraising.
- The grant request can fund up to 88% of the total project cost.
- Match must fund at least 12% of the total project cost and must be committed and secured by the application deadline.
 - Extra points are not given for a higher match percentage.

Eligible Non-Motorized Project Components (Pages 13-14)

Proposals for Acquisition

If the applicant is seeking grant funds for acquisition only then they should respond to the Development and Construction criteria ***based on the trail development and use that will occur following the acquisition.***

- A Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA) also known as Yellow Book appraisal/standards will be required before the project is recommended to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
- A purchase agreement may be requested from applicants.

Proposals for Development

Trails must be separated from a road and not within a road right of way. For example, a trail adjacent to a sidewalk should be on the side farthest from the road unless there is no other option. A bike lane on a road is not eligible. Sidewalks along roads are generally not considered trails. Any portion of a trail that extends into the road right of way is not eligible. Questions about this topic may be sent to submit it the assigned county [Competitive Review Project Officer](#). Applicants should include a picture and/or road map depicting the issue along with a brief description of the situation.

Eligible development project examples include:

- Construction of new trails or expanding/linking trails.
 - No higher priority is given to either paved, decomposed granite, or natural trails.
- Renovation of existing trails
 - Hard surface trails: fixing an underlying problem such as drainage and redoing an alignment.
 - Resurfacing a trail because the life expectancy of the surface has passed.
 - Changing the type of a surface (paved to non-paved or vice versa).

Ineligible Projects (Page 14)

Examples of ineligible projects include:

- Routine maintenance. Examples include (but are not limited to):
 - Slough and berm
 - Brushing
 - Slurry seal
 - Crack repair
- Improvements to roads and/or bridges generally accessible by low clearance passenger vehicles (regular passenger cars).
- Development of **only** trailhead facilities:
 - Parking lot/staging area
 - Restroom
 - Signage kiosk
 - Entry gate
- Landscaping, habitat restoration, and irrigation are not eligible except when:
 - Landscaping is needed to prevent erosion on to the trail, trail degradation and if it is directly adjacent to the trail.
 - Habitat restoration is needed where a trail is being realigned and the old trail alignment is decommissioned and restored back to a natural state.

Timeline (Pages 16 – 17)

2023 RTP Non-Motorized Cycle

The application deadline is **June 15, 2023, at 5:00 pm**. Applications are accepted only through the [online application system](#). Paper applications will not be accepted.

- Summer 2023: Application Review
- Fall 2023: Announcement of projects that will be recommended to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Winter 2023 – Summer 2025: Recommended projects complete all federal requirements.
 - The project will only be recommended to FHWA when all federal requirements have been met.
 - It is unknown how long Caltrans will take for the Preliminary Environmental Study (PES)/National Environmental Policy Act review.
 - Generally, the entire post selection requirements process takes six to twelve months.
 - Recommended project will be required to submit a project timeline including major milestones which is used to create the Grant Performance Period.

- Grant Performance Period is unique to each project. Dates are dependent on the applicant's project timeline and FHWA's review and approval. The Grant Performance Period starts when FHWA has approved the project and obligated funding.

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

Application Checklist (Pages 19 - 22)

- Organize the application following Checklist Items #1-17 on pages 19 – 22 in the Guide.
- If a Checklist Item is not yet complete, such as the Authorizing Resolution (Checklist Item #11 on page 21), applicants must provide the date and a timeline for item completion.
- If a Checklist Item is not applicable, the applicant must provide a brief explanation as to why it does not pertain to the project/applicant.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT (PAGE 19) ARE NOT REQUESTED.

Letters of support are not requested or required. Applicants are advised to spend time preparing the application instead of obtaining letters of support. If an applicant's organizational process requires them to obtain letters of support, all letters must be addressed to the applicant.

Application Checklist Item #1 (Page 19): Application Form

Please see page 23 in the Guide for the RTP Non-Motorized Application Form

- If the applicant owns the land to be developed, Deed(s) Recordation numbers must be entered in the applicable area. Applicants must also provide a copy of the deed(s)/other ownership document(s).
- Grant Scope - Applicants should only include the work to be completed with the Grant Request Amount and Match. For example: "Construct an approximately 1.9-mile trail and a day-use trailhead area at Lake Scenic Overlook in Howard County." Do not include any project merits or additional details.

Application Checklist Item #2 and 3 (Page 20) Site Plan and Topographic Map

An applicant may combine the site plan and topographic map into one document, as long as all elements in both Checklist Item instructions are present.

Application Checklist Item #4: Trail Log/Reconnaissance Notes (Page 20)

For Paved/Engineered Trails

A Trail Log is not required for "Paved/Engineered Trails". Applicants should provide either:

A) A copy of the summary sheet from the preliminary plans that depicts the proposed project to be completed with the grant request amount plus required match.

OR

B) Reconnaissance Notes with a similar level of information to the Trail Log described below.

For Unpaved Trails

Trails Logs are based on the contour of the land, barriers, and control points (streams, vistas, sensitive habitat, or any unstable immovable natural feature(s) that constrains the desired alignment, etc.). In addition, the Trail Log provides a more accurate basis when constructing the cost estimate for the project. Tips for creating a Trail Log:

- Applicants should walk the project site several times to determine the final trail alignment.
- Establish a beginning and end point.
- Include all data within the beginning and end points, as well as the control points.
- Examples of Trail Log headings to use:
 - Feet
 - Action
 - Feature
 - Size/Quantity (L x H x W)
 - Unit of Measurement
 - Comments
 - Pictures
 - Total
- Provide enough detail. For example, stream/drainage crossings, areas needing realignment, retaining walls, bridge points, causeways, etc.
- Include the length of trail sections where there will be no work.

Application Checklist Item #5 (Page 20): Design Standards

The applicant can use a local city's design standards if there is an established set of trail design standards. Most applicants utilize the Federal Access Board Guidelines.

Application Checklist Item #8 (Page 20): Photos of the Project Site

Provide photographs that best represent the project. Photographs should be labeled with descriptions to orientate the reviewer. Keep in mind that the application photographs could be used as "Before" photographs for future documents.

Application Checklist Item #9 (Page 21): Land Ownership

See page 1 of this document for guidance if the project site is not owned by the applicant.

Application Checklist Item #10 (Page 21): CEQA

For CEQA instructions, see pages 33-44 in the Guide.

- If the CEQA analysis is not yet completed by the deadline, please provide the reason why it is not complete along with a timeline for CEQA completion.

Federal applicants and projects on federal land must comply with NEPA standards.

Application Checklist Item #11 (Page 21): Authorizing Resolution

For a sample resolution, please see page 35 in the Guide or the RTP webpage.

- Applicants may reformat the resolution. However, changes to the resolution language require the Department of Parks and Recreation's Legal Unit review and approval. *Items 1 – 6 must be present.*
- The position designated in the resolution (item 5) must sign all application documents.

Application Checklist Item #13 (Page 21): Project Proposal

For the Project Proposal Criteria, see pages 25 – 33 in the Guide.

- Make sure the criteria responses meets the formatting requirements shown on page 21.
- The Project Proposal includes all the Project Proposal Criteria found below.
- This section must be fully completed by the application deadline.

Application Checklist Item #16 (Page 22): Non-Profit Applicants

- Ensure the Non-Profit is listed as an eligible 501c3 with the [IRS](#).
- Ensure the Non-Profit is listed with the [California Office of the Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts](#).
- The last two bullet points for this item in the Guide, Fidelity Bond, and Payee Data Record, are not applicable at the time of application.

Application Checklist Item #17 (Page 22): Signed SHPO Memorandum of Understanding

- This is no longer applicable at the time of application. Only applicants chosen for recommendation will provide this during the post-selection award period.

Project Proposal Criteria (Page 25-33)

Scoring rubrics accompany all criteria. All applications start with 0 points and can gain up to 100 points.

Criteria #1 (Page 25): Deficiency

Applicants should describe the need for the project. Deficiencies include:

- An area with no trails.
- Incomplete trail segments.
- Trails that are rendered unusable because of severe erosion.
- Trails that have become degraded and are now burdens to natural and/or cultural resources.

NOTE: An area with no trails is considered the highest deficiency.

Criteria #2 (Page 26): Solutions to the Deficiency

Applicants should describe the benefits of the project. Benefits can include:

- A trail where no trail exists and/or where users have been making their own trail.
- A trail that will connect two points of interest in a park, open space, town, etc.
- Reconstructing or relocating a trail to make it accessible for all.
- Reducing negative environmental impacts.

NOTE: Non-motorized maintenance is ineligible.

Criteria #3 (Page 27): Connectivity

Applicants should describe how the project joins to or is part of a trail system. This should be about the trail created through this project, **not** future trail segments.

- Trail systems can be in various types of parks of different sizes as noted in the scoring rubric.
 - A regional trail system is used by residents from more than one city or town.
 - In some cases, a regional, state, or national trail system is bisected at several points by streets, yet it is designated as a contiguous trail system because it continues on the same alignment on the other side of the bisecting streets.
- Park can also mean Open Space, provided that the space is designated for recreational use.

NOTE: If the trail is not connecting to a regional, state, or national trail system **or** the project is not in a park, the application will score 0 in this criteria.

Criteria #4 (Page 27): Linkages

Applicants should describe how the trail merges people with where they live or gather to where they recreate. The trail project does not need to connect to a regional, state, or national trail system. Nor does it need to be within a park to score points if the trail project links a population center or gathering area to a recreation destination. For example, the project can propose to link a school to a recreation area through a neighborhood trail.

- Trails within a town or city that unify a population center (e.g., homes, schools, workplaces) to a natural, cultural, or historical recreation area.
 - A Major Link can be described as one that is recognized and used by at least an entire city or town.
 - A Minor Link can be described as one that is recognized and used by a neighborhood.
- Trails that are separated or partially adjacent to highways or roads.
 - Trails must be separated from a road and not within a road right of way. Anything that extends into the road right of way is not eligible.
 - A trail adjacent to a sidewalk should be on the side farthest from the road unless there is no other option.
 - Bike lanes on a road are not an eligible project.
 - If a trail is adjacent to a highway or road, applicants should provide a justification as to why the project is adjacent.
 - Some examples of reasons for adjacent trails include land ownership issues, avoiding private property, or sensitive habitat issues.
 - Separation could be distance or a physical barrier.
 - Trails that are separated from a highway are more of a priority in the RTP and will be more competitive.
 - Applicants are welcome to discuss projects that may be highway or road adjacent with their Competitive Team Project Officer prior to the application deadline.

NOTE: In all cases, this is about the linkage created through this project, *not* future trail segments.

Criteria #5 (Page 28): Numbers of Project Users

Applicants should describe the estimated average annual users. Include the methods used to calculate the usage as well as a numeric figure.

- OGALS acknowledges there are various methods to calculate the number of users. Determining the number of users can be based on an average day multiplied by 365.
- OGALS also understands that this may be difficult for new trails. Therefore,

OGALS does consider the reasonable probability that the trail will have high, medium, or low use compared to other statewide applications based on the location of the trail and its intended use.

Criteria #6 (Page 28): Project User Accessibility

Applicants should describe the plan for making the project accessible to persons with disabilities.

For non-paved trails:

- Follow and cite the Federal Access Board (FAB) guidelines. The intent is to enable non-paved trail developers/builders to make their trails fully accessible.
- Fully accessible means that the entire trail project is usable to all population groups including people with disabilities and no FAB departures are needed. (Highest amount of accessibility).
- The FAB guidelines allow departures. The FAB guidelines outline the conditions that permit departures and which/what type of departures are qualified. The permitted departures are:
 - Where compliance is not practicable because of terrain or prevailing construction practices.
 - Where compliance would conflict with mandates such as the Endangered Species Act and other laws.
 - Where it would fundamentally alter a site's function or purpose.
 - If a departure is needed, please cite the departure based on FAB guidelines and explain why it is needed.

For paved trails:

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design standards must be used for paved trails. A statement is acceptable.

NOTE: If the applicant does not provide any response at all or fails to attempt to follow the FAB or AASHTO guidelines the project may be determined ineligible.

Criteria #7 (Page 29): Access to the Project

Applicants should describe pre-project access to the project site and how access will be improved.

Projects that address each of the four bullets under this criteria will be given greater consideration.

NOTE: If there is no response or no access for the public, the project may be determined ineligible.

Criteria #8 (Page 29): Points of Interest

Applicants should discuss if there will be a draw for the public to the site. Applicants should consider if there are natural, cultural, historic, or scenic characteristics that

could provide viewing and/or interpretation.

Applications that will provide points of interest will be given greater consideration.

Criteria #9 (Page 30): Sustainable Design

Applicants should describe how the project will utilize sustainable design to minimize impacts to natural or cultural resources at the project site.

Applicants must address A through J in their application, failing to do so may result in a lower or no score. If a design technique is not applicable, the applicant should note it as such and include an explanation as to why that particular design technique could not be used.

The intent of this criteria is to encourage applicants to use sustainable design principles in designing, developing, constructing, and/or rehabbing their trails.

Criteria #10 (Page 31): Diversified Use

Applicants should describe how the project will be designated for multi-user types and how a user will know what type of use is designated for the trail. For example – the trail is designated for non-electric mountain bikes only.

- Greater consideration is given to multi-use trails. For example, the project will serve pedestrians, bikers, and equestrians.
 - Pedestrian includes users on roller blades, in wheelchairs, walking, skateboarders, etc.
 - In order to score full points for this criteria, the project must serve pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians.
- Designation should be done through signage.
 - For example, the trail head will have a sign letting users know that the trail is for equestrians and hikers only.

Criteria #11 (Page 31): Including Stakeholders in the Project

Applicants should describe how the applicant or partnering community-based organization(s) made efforts to engage residents on the project. Example: Invitation/notification and conducting trail log (trail design) walks with the community residents, partners, a local historian and environmental specialist.

Ways to determine the degree of effort include a focus on three areas:

- Methods: Did engagement foster a high degree of participation and human interaction? For example, sending out a paper survey has less human interaction than an in-person focus group or design meeting at the site.
- Notification: Reviewers will look for a variety of methods and how many people were notified, such as direct in-person notification, door hangers,

publishing an ad in a newspaper, social media, etc.

- **Volunteers:** Projects which utilize volunteers in some way will receive more consideration than projects that do not utilize them at all. The ways in which volunteers may help are of equal value. For example, a volunteer who helps design the trail route, a volunteer who helps haul soil during trail construction, and a volunteer that helps with translation are of equal value for this criteria.

Criteria #12: (Page 32) Consistency with Other Plans

Projects must be consistent with the Applicant's general plan or the equivalent planning document to be considered eligible. Projects that are consistent with more than one of the above plans will be given greater consideration. Plans can include a city, county, or regional master plan, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and/or the California Recreational Trails Plan.

If the trail project connects neighborhoods to homes, schools, and workplaces, applicants are welcome to cite [**California's 2021-2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan**](#).

RTP law requires this criteria. If the applicant does not respond, or the project is not consistent with any plan, this project will be determined to be ineligible.

Criteria #13: (Page 32) Management Capacity

Applicants should describe the capability of their agency and/or their partner's agency's to provide for all aspects of the trail management process, including project planning, design, layout, construction, maintenance, and operation.

Applicants should incorporate both bullets and their sub bullets into their answers for this criteria.

Applicants should explain their agency's readiness to complete the proposed project by providing the following information:

- Their capability to implement other completed trail projects.
- Their agency and their partner's agency's trails skills.
- Any trail training that their agency and/or their partner's agencies have completed.

Applicants should also provide information on how a trail management process is going to be utilized. The six sub bullet points under bullet two show elements of what an excellent trail management process should entail. Some of these elements include:

- Describing the appropriate upfront planning for the proposed project.
- Explaining the use of appropriate trail design for maximum sustainability.

- Sharing information about the maintenance and monitoring program that will allow the proposed project to remain open to trail users while maintaining the trail's intended design standards.

Criteria #14: (Page 33) Service Corps Involvement

Applicants should contact the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and the California Association of Local Conservation Corps (CALCC), or other service corps to discuss and agree upon how the Corps could be involved in the proposed project contingent upon grant award. OGALS supports all Corps involvement, whether it is designing the trail, constructing the trail, or maintaining the trail.

If the Corps will be used for the proposed project, provide a brief description of when discussions with the Corps occurred, and what the agreement covers with the Corps if the grant is awarded. It is also important to note that applicants who contact any of the Corps will gain points even if the Corps cannot participate.

It is important to contact the Corps as early as possible to get a conversation going with the Corps and a final response before the application deadline.

Other Notable Items

- **Examples of eligible costs:** [Pages 39-41](#)
- **CEQA Instructions and Form** [Pages 43-44](#)
 - It is encouraged to complete CEQA by May 2023.
- **Federal Requirements** [Pages 45 –51](#)
 - Applicable only for projects that will be recommended for funding to the Federal Highway Administration. OGALS and Caltrans work with applicants to complete all requirements. These do not need to be completed prior to the application deadline.