

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP) NON-MOTORIZED APPLICATIONS
February 3, 2020 Application Deadline**

The non-motorized RTP funds recreation trail projects are for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians that may also serve as non-motorized transportation corridors.

This document provides frequently asked questions for applicants requesting RTP funding through the February 3, 2020 non-motorized application process.

This document provides answers common questions about the RTP Procedural Guide and is set up with page references to allow for easier use, including:

- Land Tenure when applicants do not own, or will not acquire, the project site.
- Grant Scope, Grant Amount and Match, Eligible Projects.
- Timeline for this 2020 Application Cycle.
- Preparing the Application (Application Checklist).

Amount Available: \$1,560,000 (Federal Fiscal Year 2020)

If there is a continuing resolution or new authorization for FFY 2020-2021, projects may be recommended for the future funding.

Recommended Maximum Grant Request: No greater than \$1,560,000 per application

Page number references in this document cite the “Procedural Guide for the federal Recreational Trails Program FINAL June 4, 2007” available at http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24324

Land Tenure (Page 11-12)

If the applicant does not own the project site, or is not proposing an acquisition to become the land owner, it will need to provide an agreement with the land owner that gives sufficient site control to the applicant.

Drafting, negotiating, and executing lease agreements can be time consuming and may not be ideal for this application cycle. Please send a description of the current or potential agreement with the land owner to State Trails Administrator Richard Rendon at Richard.Rendon@parks.ca.gov for further review and assistance.

In order to ensure the Applicant has adequate site control for the project site, a “Land Tenure Checklist” form will be provided to the Applicant. The form will be used as a guide to identify the components required for sufficient site control. (Applicant will cite page numbers and also be asked to highlight the corresponding provisions in the agreement). Lease agreements can be reviewed in advance of the application.

Grant Scope and Match (Pages 13-16)

For purposes of this application, limit the project (“Grant Scope”) to the phase that will be completed with the grant request including match (“committed funds”). Make sure the Grant Scope on the Application Page, Site Plan, Topographic Map, Trail Log, Cost Estimate, Proposal etc., is consistent with the same elements and cost.

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

Grant Amount: Up to \$1.56 million per application may be requested.

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

Proposals for Acquisition

The grant request amount plus match will fund acquisition-only. For portions of the application criteria that ask for development/construction project information, *respond based on the trail development/use that will occur following the acquisition.*

- A UASFLA (“yellow book”) appraisal will be required before the project is recommended to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
- A purchase agreement may be requested.

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 State Trail Administrator Richard Rendón at Richard.Rendon@parks.ca.gov. Include a picture or road map depicting the issue along with a brief description of the situation.

Eligible development project examples and notes:

- 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).

- **Note about activities ineligible for RTP funding:** “Routine Maintenance” is not eligible under the RTP Non-Motorized component. Ineligible examples of routine maintenance include: “slough and berm”, brushing, slurry seal, and crack repair.
- Pedestrian bridges over roads and waterways that link a non-motorized trail system.
- Development of Trailhead Facilities
 - Parking lot/staging area, restroom, signage kiosk, entry gate
- Development of Trailside Features
 - Benches, interpretive signage, drinking fountains
- Landscaping and Habitat Restoration only if:
 - 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.
 - **Ineligible note:** In all other cases, landscaping, habitat restoration, and irrigation are not eligible.

TIMELINE FOR THIS 2020 CYCLE (Page 16 – 17)

1. **February 3, 2020 application deadline** (application must be “postmarked” or hand delivered by this date). Addresses are available in the inside cover of the Procedural Guide.
2. Early Summer 2020: Department announces recommended projects.
 - a. Caltrans assists applicants with the following federal requirements:
 - NEPA
 - Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)
 - Section 106.
 - b. It is unknown how long Caltrans will take for NEPA review.
 - c. This entire “post application selection requirements” process usually takes 6 to 8 months.
 - d. OGALS will request a project timeline from the applicant including major milestones (will be used to determine the Grant Performance Period per Step 5 below).
3. January 2021: OGALS’ goal is for applications with completed federal requirements to be sent to FHWA by January 2021. Meeting this would require a 5-month “post application selection requirements” process, which usually takes 6 to 8 months.
4. February 2021: FHWA 30-day review of recommended projects.

5. Spring 2021: Grant contracts are issued. The grant performance period will be unique to each project based on the applicant's milestone timeline. **The "Grant Performance Period" is when grant and match costs are eligible to charge to the grant project:**
- Starts with the date when the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) obligates funds (approves the grant) to the project, and
 - Will be based on the project timeline provided by the applicant per Step 2(d) above.

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

APPLICATION CHECKLIST (PAGES 19 - 22)

- Organize the application following the checklist items #1-17 on pages 19 - 22.
- If an item is not yet complete (such as the "Resolution" item #11 on page 21), provide the date when it will be completed.
- If the checklist item is Not Applicable, provide a brief explanation as to why.
- The following provides further guidance for the items listed below in addition to what is described on pages 19 to 22.

"Letters of Support" (Page 19) are not requested.

To clarify, letters of support are not requested, nor do they play any part in the application ranking process. Applicants are advised to spend time preparing the application instead of obtaining letters of support. **If you must obtain letters of support, please have the letters addressed to your agency (addressed to the Applicant).**

Application Checklist Item #1 (Page 20): Application Form

- For Application Form, see page 23.
- If you own the land to be developed, provide the deed(s) "Recordation numbers" in the box, as an attachment (state "see attached list), or provide a copy of the deed(s)/other ownership document(s)
- In the Grant Scope description, only include the work to be completed with grant funds and required Match. (Example: Construct a trail of approximately 1.9 mi. and a day-use trailhead area, at Lake Scenic Overlook in Howard County). Do not include Project merits.

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 the elements mentioned in both checklist item instructions are present on the document.

Application Checklist Item #4: Trail Log/Reconnaissance Notes.

For Paved/Engineered Trails

A Trail Log is not required for “Paved/Engineered Trails”. Instead, 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

The purpose of the “Trail Log” is to encourage applicants to walk the site several times to determine the final trail alignment -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 of cost estimating a trail project.

- Walk the trail alignment.
- Establish a beginning and end point.
- Include all data within the beginning and end points, as well as the control points.
- Trail Log Headings to Use: Feet; Action; Feature; Size/Quantity (L x H x W); Unit of Measurement; Comments; Picture; Total.
- Provide enough detail, for example stream/drainage crossing, areas needing realignment, retaining walls, bridge points, causeways, etc.
- Also 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.

Application Checklist Item #6 (Page 20): Cost Estimate

- For Cost Estimate Form, see page 37.
- Ensure the grant request amount and total project costs are the same as the application form.
- For the match columns, you only need to complete the “Subtotal” and “Total” rows, and do not need to enter a match amount in the cross-hatched shaded areas.
- Do not include a line item or percentage for “contingency”. Line item contingencies are not allowed under RTP. However, you can fold a contingency amount into one or more cost estimate items without having it shown as a line item.

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

Provide up to three pages of photos that best represent the project. Captions are helpful.

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

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 43-44
- If the CEQA analysis is not yet complete, provide a timeline for CEQA analysis completion.

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

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

- For the sample Resolution, see page 35.
- In the first paragraph, replace “Safe, Accountable...Legacy for Users” with “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST-ACT).”
- The applicant may reformat the Resolution. However, any changes to the resolution language require the Department’s approval and may require a Legal review. Items 1-6 must be present.
- The position designated in the Resolution (item 5) must sign all application forms in the packet.

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

- For the Project Proposal Criteria, see pages 25 – 33.
- Make sure the criteria response meets the formatting requirements on page 21.
- See below for Criteria guidance.

Application Checklist Item #16 (Page 22): Nonprofit Applicants

The last 2 bullet points (fidelity bond and payee data record) are not applicable at the time of application.

PROJECT PROPOSAL GUIDANCE - PAGES 25 THROUGH 33

Use the Criteria on pages 25 through 33 to help you select a project location and scope. All applications start with 0 points and can gain up to 100 points.

Criteria #1: Deficiency (Page 25)

This is where you describe the need for the project.

Clearly, an area with no trails has a trail deficiency. An incomplete trail segment is also considered a deficiency.

The third bullet point refers to “Major Design/Construction Deficiency.” Examples include:

- Trails that are rendered unusable because of severe erosion.
- Fall line alignments (Trails that are aligned straight up a hill instead of following curvilinear alignment.)
- Portions of a trail washed away because of insufficient substrate preparation.

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

This is where you describe the benefits of the project.

In summary, criteria #1 is where the applicant establishes the need for the proposed project, and criteria #2 is where the applicant establishes the benefit of the proposed project.

Projects that address a high priority unmet need, and will provide significant benefits, compared to other statewide applications, will be more competitive in criteria #1-2.

Criteria #3: Connectivity (Page 27)

(Recommended half page response)

This is about the trail connectivity created through this project, not future trail segments.

Summary of the scoring rubric:

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 criterion.

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.

Criteria #4: Linkages (Page 27)

(Recommended half page response)

”Linkages” focus on trails within a town or city that link a population center (such as homes, schools, workplaces) or gathering areas to a natural, cultural, or historical recreation area. The key is the trail must link where people live or gather to a recreation destination.

A “Major link(s)” can be described as one that is recognized and used by at least an entire city or town as a trail that links to a popular recreation destination.

A “Minor link(s)” can be described as one that is recognized and used by a neighborhood that links to a recreation destination.

Unlike criteria #3, the trail project does not need to connect to a regional, state, or national trail system, or be within a park to score points, as long as 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.

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

By “noting the proximity of the project to highways or roads”, consider the following:

- *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.
- 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.
- If the trail is adjacent to a highway or road, explain why it is not feasible for the project to be located further from a highway or road due to land ownership issues, avoiding private property, or sensitive habitat issues or other factors. **If this is applicable, please include a justification/explanation.**
 - Trails that are separated from a highway are more of a priority in the RTP and would be more competitive.
 - “Separation” can be distance or physical barrier.
 - A “highway” has been designated as such by an entity such as Caltrans or FHWA. Federal highways include interstate highways. State highways include, for example, CA 99. “Arterials” are highways in rural or urban areas which provide access to other major transportation routes (like ports, airports, etc.) A “roadway” is not considered a “highway” if the roadway does not have a highway designation.

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

(Recommended brief, half page or less response)

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: Project User Accessibility (Page 28)

(Recommended brief, half page or less response):

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 useable 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 this project can be determined to be ineligible.

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

(Recommended brief, half page or less response)

- The intent of this criterion is to describe access to the trail/trailhead. That is, how do people get to the trail/trailhead from work or their home? It is not about FAB or AASHTO guidelines covered in Criteria #6 above.
- Projects will be given greater consideration if they address each of the four bullets under this criterion.
- If there is no response or absolutely no access (no way to get to the project) the project may be considered ineligible.

Criteria #8: Points of Interest (Page 29):

(Recommended brief, half page or less response)

- Note the criterion states “on the Project site or adjacent area”. This criterion is about what can be viewed and interpreted from the trail segment funded by the grant plus match only, and no other trail segments.

Criteria #9: Sustainable Design (Page 30):

(Recommended detailed response that lists and addressed A-J)

The scoring Rubric says “all of the above **applicable**” to get the most points. This does not mean you will score fewer points for non-applicable items. It is not a quantitative score.

- The intent of this criterion is to encourage applicants to use sustainable design principles in designing, developing, constructing, and/or rehabbing their trails.
- In responding to this criterion, applicants will need to provide a response to each of the principles listed (A – J). Some of the responses may say “Not Applicable/NA”; that is an acceptable response **if it also includes an explanation as to why that item is “NA.”**

Criteria #10: Diversified Use – (Page 31):

(Recommended brief, half page or less response)

- Greater consideration will be given to multiple use-types, including “Pedestrian,” bike, and equestrian.
- “Pedestrian” includes roller blades, wheel chair, walking, etc.
- The trail must be “designated” for multiple uses. For example, if the trail is designated for pedestrians only but bikers use it, it will not qualify as two use types. It must be “Designated” for bike and pedestrian use through signage or other methods.

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

(Recommended detailed response of at least one page)

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: 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: Look for a variety of methods and how many people were notified such as direct, in-person notification, door hangers, PTA meeting, publishing an ad in a newspaper.
- 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 and a volunteer who helps haul soil during trail construction are of equal value for this criterion.

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

(Recommended brief response of a few sentences that cites which plan the project is consistent with)

- If the trail project connects neighborhoods to homes, schools, and workplaces, you can cite the *California’s 2015 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*.

And/or, the applicant can cite the:

- *California Recreational Trails Plan (page 23 - 25):*
 - Goal: Provide trail users with easily accessible trails and accurate information on trail locations and conditions. (Page 23)
 - Goal: Provide the maximum opportunities for the public use of trails by encouraging the appropriate expansion of multi-use trails. (Page 25)
- If the above options do not work, the project must be consistent with the Applicant’s general plan or the equivalent planning document to be considered eligible.
- RTP law requires this criterion. If the applicant does not respond, or the project is not consistent with any plan, this project can be determined to be ineligible.

Criteria #13: Management Capacity – (Page 32)

(Recommended one page response or more using the following structure) The following structure is not required, and is only intended to help applicants develop a response based on how criteria #13 is structured)

- Use the six bullet points under “Elements of an excellent trail management process”:
- Address each of those six bullet points. Cite the experience (such as another completed project example), training, or other qualification of the staff or partner(s) that will be responsible for each of the six bullet points under “Elements of an excellent trail management process.”

Criteria #14: Service Corps Involvement – (Page 33)

(Recommended half page or less response)

These steps are recommended to plan for and then provide a response:

Pre application planning:

- Contact a service corps prior to the application due date.
- Discuss how and when the corps could assist with this project if the grant is awarded (contingent on the grant award. The RTP supports any and all involvement, whether it is designing the trail, constructing the trail or maintaining the trail, for example.
- Reach an agreement about how and when the corps could assist with this project if the grant is awarded (can be contingent on the grant award.)

Response to Criteria #14 in the application:

- Provide the above information describing when the discussions occurred and what the agreement covers.
- The applicant is instructed to provide a “description” of the involvement, not just a “Yes” answer. In order to receive points, the applicant must provide at least a brief description of what the service corps will do if the grant is awarded.

Pages 39-41: Examples of eligible costs

Pages 43-44: These forms are required before a recommended application is sent to FHWA. It is encouraged to complete CEQA by May 2020.

Pages 45 – 49: Cross-out pages. These documents will be completed by Caltrans after its review of NEPA and Section 106.

Pages 50 – 51: Applicable only for projects that are recommended for funding. OGALS and Caltrans work with applicant to complete all requirements.