



RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

Grant Manual

2020



Administered by:
South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks
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U.S. Department of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**



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Application

Download online at <https://gfp.sd.gov/partnerships/>
Postmarked on or before April 17, 2020.

Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a federal aid assistance program to help states provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized use. The program provides up to 80 percent reimbursement funds for all kinds of recreational trail uses including, but not limited to:

- pedestrian use
- bicycling
- in-line skating
- equestrian use
- cross-country skiing
- off-road motorcycling
- all-terrain vehicle riding
- four wheeling
- snowmobiling



The RTP encourages all kinds of trail enthusiasts to work together to provide a variety of recreational trail opportunities. In South Dakota, the Department of Game, Fish and Parks administers the RTP with guidance from the RTP Advisory Council.

1.1 Reimbursement Process

Payment takes place on a reimbursement basis: the project sponsor must incur costs for work completed, and then submit reimbursement request form and supporting documentation to the grants coordinator for payment. Reimbursement is not normally permitted for work that takes place prior to project approval. However, working capital advances may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. Prior planning and environmental assessment costs may be credited toward the non-federal share. This is limited to costs incurred less than 18 months prior to project approval.

1.2 RTP Advisory Council

South Dakota has a five-person RTP Advisory Council that represents both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail users. The council is appointed by the governor and meets a minimum of once each fiscal year. Current Advisory Council members include:

- Kitty Kinsman, Rapid City
- Dave Sweet, Sioux Falls
- DeEtte Goss, Belle Fourche
- Ken Buhler, Pierre
- Mel Fish, Yankton

The RTP Advisory Council makes recommendations on project funding. These recommendations are based upon a scoring system and staff recommendations from the Department of Game, Fish and Parks' Division of Parks and Recreation. The group generally meets during the month of June.

1.3 Apportionment to the States

The RTP exists because of fuel tax revenue generated by snowmobiles, off-highway motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, off-highway light trucks and other motorized trail uses. Each state receives a different apportionment of RTP funds, of which one-half is based on an estimate of non-highway recreational fuel use within each state. Individual grants generally range between \$40,000 and \$100,000. Individual grants may be awarded for larger amounts based on the merit of the proposed project.

1.4 30-30-40 Requirement

The RTP legislation requires states to use 30 percent of funds for motorized recreation, 30 percent for non-motorized recreation and 40 percent apportioned in a fiscal year for diverse recreational use. Diversified projects may include motorized and non-motorized uses or a combination of uses from either category. Diversified projects that include both motorized and non-motorized uses generally score higher than other projects.

1.5 Sponsor Eligibility

The RTP is intended to be a program through which states provide grants to trail project sponsors through an open competition process based on the merit of project proposals. The State of South Dakota will award grants to private, non-profit organizations, municipal agencies, state agencies, federal agencies and other governmental entities. Examples are:

Private, Non-Profit Organizations

- Youth conservations corps
- Youth or civic clubs
- Conservation organizations
- Land trusts
- Trail clubs or associations
- Police athletic leagues
- Utilities
- Private schools

It is the intention that non-profit RTP sponsors maintain non-profit status throughout the duration of a project. Since this is not always possible, a successor organization must agree, in writing, to complete all RTP project responsibilities required by the contract if the original organization's status changes. The responsibilities are identified in the RTP Project Agreement (contract). A qualified successor is any party that meets the eligibility criteria to apply for RTP funds and is capable of complying with all Project Agreement responsibilities. The Division of Parks and Recreation recommends, whenever possible, a public agency be sought as a successor.

Municipal Agencies

- Cities, counties and towns
- Townships
- Public schools
- Regional parks or forests
- Public utilities
- Public housing agencies

State Agencies

- State park agencies
- State game agencies
- State education institutes
- State housing agencies

Federal Agencies

- USDA - Forest Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- National Park Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Military installations

A federal agency may provide its own funds toward RTP projects as additional federal share up to 95 percent of the project cost. The 5 percent balance must come from non-federal sources.

Other Government Entities

- Tribal governments
- Multi-state public agencies
- Public transit operators

1.6 Public Benefit

Federal aid projects must have a public benefit. Where private investments or joint use activities are part of a project proposal, the federal funds are limited to the portions of the project that primarily benefit the public interest. Because South Dakota's share of the RTP fund is relatively small, preference is given to projects that provide the greatest public benefit. Here are a few things to consider:

- Projects using RTP funds must be accessible, open and available to the general public, or targeted to a broad segment of the general public.
- The facility cannot be restricted only to particular residents or only to members of specific organizations or clubs.
- RTP funds cannot be used for projects that have such limited capacity that only a few paying (or potentially paying) guests have access. The portions of a project using RTP funds must be open for general public use at times when visitors are likely.
- Where private investment or joint use activities are part of a project proposal, or where access is restricted only to a few paying (or potentially paying) guests, the RTP funds are limited to the portions of the project that primarily benefit the public interest.
- Nothing in the RTP legislation prohibits project sponsors from charging fees for use. Before the project is approved, however, the sponsor and the state should reach a clear agreement on which areas or activities will have a fee, and how income generated will be used.
- The fee must be "reasonable" which should be determined between the state, the RTP Advisory Council and the project sponsor. The fee should not be set so high as to restrict general public access.
- It may be appropriate for club members to receive a discount, since a portion of their membership may be counted toward use of the area, but the price differential should not be set so high as to restrict general public access.
- A maintenance plan should include reserves for long-term maintenance and periodic repair. Part or all of the fees generated should be a component of the maintenance plan.
- **NOTE:** Charging a fee to use a recreation facility may eliminate landowner liability protection offered under state recreational use statutes.

1.7 Project Eligibility

The RTP will fund a variety of trail projects from the following seven categories:

Maintenance and Restoration

This category broadly authorizes any kind of trail maintenance, restoration, rehabilitation, or relocation, including trail bridges and signs.



Trailside and Trailhead Facilities

This category broadly authorizes the development or rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities. “Rehabilitation” means extensive repair needed to bring a facility up to standards suitable for public use, not routine maintenance. Trailside and trailhead facilities should have a direct relationship with a recreational trail. For example, a highway rest area or visitor center is not an appropriate use of RTP funds.

Trail Construction Equipment

This category broadly authorizes the purchase and lease of trail construction, maintenance, or assessment equipment including lawn mowers and trail grooming machines. The equipment must be used primarily to construct, maintain, or assess recreational trails. This provision does not authorize equipment for purposes unrelated to trails. For example, a lawn mower purchased under the RTP must be used primarily for trail and trailside maintenance, not to maintain open lawn areas or sport fields.

Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations 635.410 requires that steel or iron materials (including protective coatings) that will be permanently incorporated in a Federal-aid project must be domestically manufactured (commonly referred to as “Buy America”). All steel and iron must be produced within the United States from initial melting, mixing, bending and coating. This requirement applies to equipment that is purchased through the Recreational Trails Program. To be eligible for Federal Recreational Trails Program funding manufacturers of equipment must be able to certify that all iron and steel used in the equipment was domestically manufactured from the point of initial melting, mixing, bending and coating. In addition to equipment meeting the domestic steel and iron requirements it also must be assembled in the United States. Therefore, only equipment that can meet this certification requirement are eligible for Recreational Trail Program funding. The vendors producing trail equipment that meets these requirements must provide written certification that the piece of equipment being proposed for RTP grant assistance meets these Buy America requirements.

New Recreational Trail Construction

This category broadly authorizes any kind of new trail construction, including trail bridges and signs, except for limits on new trails located on federal lands. For projects on federal lands, the most important requirement is that the federal agency land manager must approve the project in accordance with other applicable federal laws and regulations.

Land or Easement Acquisition

This category authorizes purchases of trail easements across private property and property acquisition for trail corridors or trail systems, including areas intended for future trail development. Acquisition may include purchase and relocation of old road or railroad bridges. Easements or property acquired should correspond to the land necessary for a useful trail corridor or trail system. RTP funds should not be used to acquire easements or land for parks or conservation areas that will not have recreational trails.

The program prohibits condemnation of any kind of interest in property under the principles of eminent domain. Acquisition of any kind of interest in property must be from a willing landowner or seller.

Trail Accessibility Assessment

This category authorizes specific projects to assess trails to determine the level of accessibility for people who have disabilities, to develop programs to provide trail access information, and to assess trails for current or future maintenance needs.

Educational Projects

This category authorizes development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection. Typical education projects may include: trail safety education programs; trail-related environmental education programs; training on trail accessibility and sustainability; trail-related educational materials; trail patrols (non-law enforcement); training that promotes safety or environmental protection related to recreational trails.

Some materials are only partially educational. For example, a trail system map generally is not an educational project. However, if one side of a map is dedicated to trail safety and environmental protection education, educational funds may be used to fund one half of the map's cost.

Projects Not Eligible for Funding

- Sidewalks
- Condemned Land
- Campgrounds
- Feasibility Studies
- Insurance
- Law Enforcement
- Legal Fees
- Picnic Facilities
- Playground Equipment
- Promotional Items
- Roads
- Skateboard Parks

1.8 Match Requirement

RTP grant funds will not exceed 80 percent of a project's total cost. Sponsors must provide at least 20 percent of a project's cost. The "match" may include:

- Cash.
- The value of volunteer labor, equipment and materials. Donated labor, equipment, and materials should be based on fair market value. This means that services should be valued at a rate that would ordinarily be paid for similar work. The IRS publishes many of the rates.
- Federal, state and local grants (If other grants are used as match, the other grant must be approved before it can be allowed as match).

Federal Matching Share: In some cases, RTP grant funds may be matched with funds from other federal programs. They may be credited as the non-federal share if expended on an eligible project in accordance with the requirements of that particular federal program. In cases where federal funds are pledged as the RTP project match the combined total of RTP grant funds requested and other federal matching share may not exceed 95 percent of the total project costs. **A minimum of 5 percent of the project cost must come from state, local or private cosponsors.**

1.9 Control and Tenure

Applicants must establish adequate control over any land (public or private) to be improved/developed with RTP grant funds. This must include documentation of:

- Fee title
- Lease
- Easement
- Use agreement

The application must identify all outstanding rights or interests held by others on land upon which the project is proposed.

1.10 Environmental Requirements

Federal RTP guidance requires documentation of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other federal environmental laws, regulations and executive orders as part of an authorized project. **Your application will not be reviewed if your environmental documentation is not complete and included in your application.** Compliance with NEPA is required regardless of project sponsorship.

Each project that is selected for funding is required by the FHWA and GF&P to hire an archeologist to complete a Level III Archeological Survey of the project site. A copy of the completed report will need to be submitted to this office. We will forward this report to FHWA for their approval. You should plan to include \$2,000 in your project proposal to cover your expense of hiring an archeologist and having the report completed. No earth disturbing activities may be conducted until the Game, Fish and Parks Department informs you that these clearances have been secured. In some cases it may take several months to secure the needed clearances. A Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Form is provided as part of the application packet and must be completed by all project applicants.

Application Process

2.1 What to Send:

1. A letter of intent. All potential applicants must submit a letter of intent providing a detailed description of their proposed project. Be sure to include all of the pertinent facts including surface material, length, etc.
2. Completed [application form](#), narrative responses and required attachments.
 - Format: Submit materials on 8.5x11-inch paper or 11x17-inch paper for maps and plans. Text must be no smaller than 11 point computer font.
 - Copies: Submit **six color copies** of your completed application to the address below.
 - Submit all materials together at the same time.
 - Staple in the upper left corner.
 - Do not put applications and materials in notebooks or binders.

Applicants will be scored on completeness of the application packet. A letter of intent is required for a complete application. Substantially incomplete applications will not be forwarded to the RTP Advisory Council for review.

A signed and dated application is required.

A complete application packet includes:

- Letter of Intent.
- A completed RTP Project application form – **must be signed and dated.**
- Maps (vicinity map and site location map), on 8.5x11-inch paper or 11x17-inch paper.
- RTP Project Funding worksheet.
- Project narrative.
- Environmental documentation (NEPA decision notice, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Form, or other documentation necessary to establish compliance with environmental regulations).
- Documentation of Control and Tenure.
- Other information that will strengthen the application such as; maintenance agreements, resolutions of support, letters of support, etc.
- For equipment purchases, vendor needs to certify product meets “Buy America” standards. See section 1.7 for information.

Mail completed application packet to:

Randy Kittle, Grants Coordinator
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks
523 E. Capitol Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501-3182

Application deadline: Postmarked April 17, 2020.

2.2 Application Form Definitions and Instructions

Project Name: Name of project.

Organization/Sponsor Name: Agency or organization requesting RTP project funding.

Contact Person Name and Title: “Primary Contact Person” is the person responsible to carry out the RTP project. This person is authorized to make decisions regarding the project, including contracts and agreements.

Address of Contact Person: Address and telephone number where the responsible person can be contacted during normal working hours regarding application questions.

Project Location: Project location should include legal description, county, city or town and any other descriptive reference useful to accurately determine the project location. (Maps provided must be on 8.5x11-inch or 11x17-inch paper and printed in color.)

Recreational Trail Project Categories: Mark the RTP category that best fits your project situation.

Eligible Project Types: Mark the appropriate RTP project type. If the project does not clearly fit into one of the identified categories, it is probably not eligible.

Summary Project Description: Summarize the proposed project.

Budget Summary: Information on total project cost and amount of RTP funds requested.

Project Land Controlled by: Identify how the trail corridor or trail-related property is owned or controlled.

2.3 Project Funding Information

Complete the source of funding worksheet. Provide a narrative regarding donated labor, materials, equipment and land or property that is included in your match. Be sure to include information such as who is donating the time, materials or equipment, the number of hours and what kinds of material or equipment is being donated. Matching funds plus RTP funds should add up to the total project cost. Be sure to include \$1,000 in your total project cost for environmental and cultural clearances.



2.4 Attachments

- Vicinity Map: Submit a map identifying the location of the project within a region of the state. GIS maps are preferred.
 - Site location Map: Submit a map indicating the specific site location of the existing or proposed trail or trail facility. This map must clearly depict the project location in relation to roads, trails, rivers/streams and any other geographic features that will aid in identifying the project's precise location. GIS maps are preferred.
 - Project and Site Plans and Other Visuals: Submit project-related design documents if pertinent to the application.
 - Provide a typical cross section of the proposed trail.
 - Documented Proof of Control of Property: Submit copies of title, lease, easement, use agreement, maintenance agreement, etc.
 - Environmental Documentation: All project sponsors must complete and sign the attached Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Form and provide all other environmental documentation necessary to determine the project's compliance with state and federal requirements. This form is provided in the application packet.
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2.5 Project Narrative

The project narrative should describe all elements of the proposed project and the need for assistance. The narrative should be clear and concise. The RTP provides funding in an open and highly competitive process. The RTP Council's funding decisions rely almost entirely upon the information provided in the application. The project narrative should provide information on the subjects listed below.

Project Description: Describe the proposed work. If the project involves partnerships or other funding sources, clearly identify which portion of the work will be completed with the requested RTP funds. It is important to be specific when defining the scope of work to be completed with RTP funds and include information like surface material, trail length, trail width, etc.

Long-term Commitment: Describe how you will provide for long-term management and maintenance of the completed project. Attach copies of signed agreements if parties other than the applicant are responsible for any part of this management or maintenance obligation.

Selection Criteria: Explain how the project addresses the selection criteria shown on the following page. The first selection's criteria relates to the Division of Parks and Recreation's staff assessment of the completeness of the application packet and past grant history and does not require any narrative response. If you feel information provided in your response to any of the above subjects adequately covers the selection criteria, it is not necessary to repeat the information.

2.6 Selection Criteria

Projects will be scored and ranked based on the following criteria. Points are assigned to each criterion as shown below. The RTP Advisory Council will use the criteria listed below to score and rank projects for funding consideration.

Recreational Trails Program Project Rating | State of South Dakota

Project Sponsor:

	Requested Funds	Total Project Cost	% RTP Funds Requested
User Groups:	Motorized	Non-Motorized	Diversified
Project Type:	Development	Maintenance	Equipment
Trail Width:	<8'	8' - 10'	>10'
Surface:	Concrete	Asphalt	Non-Paved

Project Submission ~ Maximum 5 Points Each

Proposal submitted on or before deadline	_____
6 copies of proposal submitted	_____
Proposal submitted in proper format	_____
Proposal includes minimum requirements	_____
Proposal adequately describes proposed work	_____
Section Total	_____

Project Viability ~ Maximum 5 Points Each

Sponsor has secured matching funds	_____
Sponsor has a sound maintenance plan	_____
Proposal will connect/enhance existing trails	_____
Proposal will connect/enhance existing park area	_____
Proposal has aesthetic value and utilizes natural settings	_____
Cost estimates are within logical parameters	_____
Sponsor has control of land and it is open to the public	_____
Section Total	_____

Project Components ~ Maximum 5 Points Each

Project will provide for motorized & non-motorized users	_____
Project will provide for more than 1 type of user	_____
Project site is free of environmental concerns	_____
Project site is free of cultural concerns	_____
Previous archeological surveys have been completed	_____
Section Total	_____

2.6 Selection Criteria Continued

Project Sponsor:

Miscellaneous Concerns ~ Maximum 5 Points Each

Proposal includes letters of support	_____
Maps clearly illustrate proposed project area	_____
Sponsor has positive previous experience with RTP	_____
Sponsor's overall readiness to begin the project	_____
Section Total	_____

Matching Shares ~ Maximum 5 Points

To what extent will the applicant match the RTP grant with its own resources?		
20 - 25 % of project total value	0 Points	_____
25.1 - 30% of project total value	1 Point	_____
30.1 - 35% of project total value	2 Points	_____
35.1 - 40% of project total value	3 Points	_____
40.1 - 45% of project total value	4 Points	_____
Over 45% of project total value	5 Points	_____
Section Total		_____

Additional Comments ~ Maximum 1 Point Each

Section Total _____

Final Score and Funding Recommendation

Total Points _____

2.7 Project Selection

Technical Review

Department staff members review applications for completeness, eligibility, sponsor's current grant status, match, property ownership, local/regional/federal approval, etc. Staff will score and forward eligible applications to the Recreational Trails Program Advisory Council for further consideration. Ineligible or incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant.

Committee Review

The Recreational Trails Program Advisory Council reviews applications and establishes funding priorities. The council ultimately awards all grants.

3.1 Tips for Project Sponsors

- Prepare a project development plan. Identify the issues and steps that are critical to the project development process. What are the trail needs? What can you do realistically?
- What are the planning requirements? Does your project meet the goals of a statewide or metropolitan transportation plan and/or a statewide or community trail plan?
- Develop a workable project that meets the program requirements and eligible categories.
- Secure public support for the project. How does the project benefit the community? Are there other potential project sponsors?
- Find other funding sources. Some state or local governments may provide some matching funds, but the project sponsor often has to provide most, or all of the match.
- Consider donations of materials and services, including volunteer labor.
- Consider training and skill needs for staff, volunteers, youth corps, contractors, or others.
- Develop a good project design, keeping safety and security in mind.
- Consider the natural environment in which the project is located.
- Consider community benefits.
- Consider user needs and desires, including use by people with disabilities.
- Consider potential problems:
 - Environmental impacts - these must be minimized and mitigated.
 - Possible opposition - some people may oppose a project for various reasons.
- Complete the grant application:
 - Make sure you fill it out completely.
 - Make sure you fill it out clearly - exactly what are you going to do?
 - Make sure you fill it out accurately - make sure the numbers add up.
 - Don't ask for funds for ineligible items - you risk the rest of your project.
 - Don't add information that is not necessary - it may confuse your application.
 - Sign and date the application.
 - Include all supporting documentation.
- If your project is approved, get to work!