



Georgia Recreational Trails Program 2025-2026 Manual

Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Recreational Trails Program
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Introduction

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) supports the development of a variety of trail types and trail-related facilities. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) is excited to help increase outdoor access on trails throughout Georgia by administering our state's RTP funds. RTP is a pass-through grant program from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

Prospective projects will undergo a web-based, multi-phase, competitive application process submitted to GADNR.

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a source of information and guidance for prospective applicants in securing RTP funding. It details important program fundamentals and goals, while also providing instructions on how to apply.

Note: This booklet does not contain all materials and forms needed to apply for RTP assistance. Applicants should visit the RTP Homepage at www.gadnr.org/rtp for program updates.

Funding

RTP grant funds represent a portion of the federal gasoline tax attributed to off-highway recreation. FHWA's apportionments to states are authorized by the U.S. Congress. RTP funds are intended to support recreational trail related projects for both motorized and nonmotorized use. Eligible projects include pedestrian (hiking, running, walking, and wheelchair access), biking, mountain biking, skating, water trail access, and equestrian riding.

Project proposals for motorized trails use a different application, but include trails for off-road motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), or other off-road motorized vehicles. Guidance for motorized grants can be found in the Georgia Off-highway Vehicle Trails Grant Program Manual.

The intent for RTP grant funding is to enhance trail opportunities by achieving results that would not otherwise be possible. RTP grants are for projects that are primarily recreational in nature, rather than serving a more utilitarian transportation function. RTP grants fund on-the-ground trail projects for public outdoor recreation.

Support

GADNR Grants Unit staff is available to help guide applicants through the process associated with successfully submitting a complete grant application. The best source of information in preparing an application is this manual used in conjunction with the resources found on the RTP homepage (www.gadnr.org/rtp). As another means of assistance, a Grants Specialist can explain the program in detail, determine eligibility, and provide assistance to make an application as competitive as possible.

Quick Facts

Grant Name	Recreational Trail Program
Funding Source	Federal Highway Trust Fund
Funding Allocation	Approximately \$2 million per two-year grant cycle.
Eligible Applicants	-Qualified Local Governments; -State agencies; -Federal agencies
Permissible Uses	- New trail construction - Trail restoration - Trail head facilities - Land acquisition for trail purposes
Maximum Grant Amount	\$200,000
Match Requirements	20% match, minimum required
Retainage	A minimum of 25% held until project closeout
Grant Term	Up to 2 years
Long-term Compliance	Trails funded using RTP money must remain open to the public for not less than 25 years after grant

Funding Cycle 2025-2026 Timeline

The application process consists of two phases. The Pre-application is an initial submission of project plans and funding needs. Second-level Applications are submitted after the project evaluation process and require more detailed information. The application deadline schedule for the 2025-2026 cycle is as follows:

Pre-application Deadline: Midnight, November 1, 2025
Second-level Application Deadline (if invited): TBA

The proposed 2025-2026 annual funding cycle is as follows:

- September 1, 2025: Pre-application period opens
- November 1, 2025: Pre-applications due
- November 2025 – January 2026: Pre-applications are reviewed and ranked
- February 2026: All Pre-applicants are notified of results, and selected Pre-applicants are invited to submit Second-level Applications
- May 2026: Second-level Applications due
- Fall 2026: Notification of Awards is released and Financial Workshops conducted for successful Applicants; trail work begins after the Project Agreement is signed.

Contact Information

To better serve Georgia residents in attaining their recreation and conservation goals, the GADNR Grants Unit staff is available by the following means during normal business hours:

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Section 1: Program Overview

RTP grant funds represent a portion of the federal gasoline tax attributed to off-highway recreation. FHWA's apportionments to states are authorized by the U.S. Congress. RTP funds are intended to support recreational trail related projects for both motorized and nonmotorized use. Eligible projects include pedestrian (hiking, running, walking, and wheelchair access), biking, mountain biking, skating, water trail access, and equestrian riding.

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Grant Advisory Committee

Legislation for RTP requires that each state create a state RTP Advisory Committee that represents both motorized and nonmotorized recreational trail users and meets at least once per fiscal year. The committee advises GADNR regarding program elements.

40-30-30 Requirement

RTP Legislation (23 U.S.C. 206) requires that States use:

- at least 30 percent of RTP funds for uses relating to motorized recreation;
- at least 30 percent for uses relating to nonmotorized recreation;
- at least 40 percent for diverse recreational trail use.

The motorized, nonmotorized and diverse percentages are minimum requirements that must be met and may be exceeded. A project for diverse motorized use (such as snowmobile and off- road motorcycle use) may satisfy a portion of the 40 percent diverse use requirement and a portion of the 30 percent motorized use requirement simultaneously.

To provide more flexibility in RTP project selection, FHWA established five categories to account for the 30-30-40 requirements:

1. Single use trails for nonmotorized users
2. Diverse use trails for nonmotorized users
3. Single use trails for motorized users
4. Diverse use trails for motorized users
5. Diverse use trails for a mix of motorized and nonmotorized users

Section 2: Policies

2.1 Grant Funding Basics

Funding Amount

Grant requests have no minimum and are limited to a maximum of \$200,000 for nonmotorized, single-use and nonmotorized diverse-use trail projects. Applicants are limited to one application per cycle.

Reimbursement Payments

RTP functions as a reimbursement grant program. Project Grantees must have the financial capacity to pay for project expenses prior to being reimbursed by grant funds. Once project expenses have been incurred and paid for by the Grantee, payment documentation can then be submitted to GADNR for reimbursement, up to the amount of the grant award.

Matching Requirements

RTP grant funds can pay up to 80% of a project's total cost. Grantees must provide at least 20% of the total project cost as match. The exact match requirement for individual projects will be determined by an approved budget and identified in the Project Agreement. (see section 2.4 for eligibility of match).

Retainage

GADNR will retain a minimum of 25% of the grant amount until the project is verified as complete and all required documentation is approved.

Public Access

Any trail that has received RTP funding must remain open to the public for at least 25 years after receiving final reimbursement.

2.2 Applicant Eligibility

The following summarizes entities and organizations that are eligible for funding through RTP. Entities that are not directly eligible are encouraged to consider partnering with eligible entities.

Eligible applicants must be in good standing on current and previous GADNR grants and must be one of the following types of agencies:

- Qualified Local Governments, as determined by the Department of Community Affairs
- State agencies
- Federal agencies

2.3 Types of Trails

Note: All prospective projects and acquisitions must be completely located within Georgia's borders. Applications for projects in a state other than Georgia, either in part or in whole, will not be considered for funding.

Types of Nonmotorized Trails for RTP:

1. Diverse use trails for nonmotorized users: A project primarily intended to benefit more than one mode of nonmotorized recreational use, such as pedestrians, bikers, and skaters; or equestrian use in summer and fall and pedestrian uses in winter and spring. A project may be classified in this category if the project also indirectly benefits some other

nonmotorized uses (it is not necessary to exclude other nonmotorized uses), but the primary intent must be for the stated nonmotorized uses.

2. Single use trails for nonmotorized users: A project primarily intended to benefit only one mode of nonmotorized recreational use, such as a mountain bike trail. A project may be classified in this category if the project also indirectly benefits some other nonmotorized uses (it is not necessary to exclude other nonmotorized uses), but the primary intent must be for the benefit of a single nonmotorized use. Water trail projects, by federal directive, are automatically single use nonmotorized projects.

RTP funds can also support motorized trails. Motorized trail projects have a separate manual and uses a different application from nonmotorized trails. For more specific information, please visit www.gadnr.org/rtp.

2.4 Items Eligible for Reimbursement

Below are typical items which may be submitted for reimbursement. To qualify for reimbursement, an expenditure must be directly related to the project and have occurred after the signed Project Agreement date, but before the Trail Completion Date. Final Reimbursement Requests must be made within 30 days of the Trail Completion Date.

- Direct materials including drainage, crossings, parking, signage, and access barriers.
- Contractual services such as:
 - Design and engineering services and/or environmental reviews directly related to the trail design (**consulting services are not eligible**); limited to no more than 15% of the grant value
 - Contractors and subcontractors directly providing trail construction within the project scope
- Equipment rentals
- Expenses directly related to the acquisition of Real Property

If unsure whether an expenditure is eligible for reimbursement, contact the Grants Specialist for verification prior to submission.

2.5 Items Eligible as Match

Applicants are required to provide matching funds equal to at least 20% of the total project cost, although Applicants are encouraged to provide more. If federal funds are used as match, at least 5% of the total project cost must come from a non-federal source (23 U.S.C. 206). All sources of match must be identified in the grant application. To qualify for match, an item must be directly related to the project and have occurred no earlier than the signed Project Agreement date, but before the Trail Completion Date. The only exceptions to this are that (1) design and engineering costs and/or (2) the value of land acquisition can each count as match, so long as they occurred within 18 months prior to the Project Agreement being executed and are properly documented.

The following are common sources of matching funds:

- Applicant funds, often referred to as “cash match.”
- Materials of financial value to be used directly on the RTP trail project which are donated by individuals or other organizations. Examples might be donating trash receptacles or lumber for a trail bridge. In this case, a donation letter and the invoice(s) for the donated materials

are required to document the financial value of the gift. Donations can only count toward match and cannot be reimbursed.

- Design and Engineering expenses directly related to the project scope but incurred prior to the Project Agreement effective date are not reimbursable, although may be counted **as match only** by the Applicant, so long as they occurred within 18 months prior to the Project Agreement being signed. Design and Engineering Expenses older than 18 months are not eligible. Project Planning and Environmental Compliance Services can, under certain conditions, be included in the design and engineering costs. This service must apply specifically to guidance or support of the project that will be accomplished with approved RTP funds. Construction/project/grant administration and management are not allowable. The donation of any professional or accredited design and engineering services will be valued at the fair market value, documentation of gift and value required.
- Land donated to the Applicant/Grantee for a public trail valued at the appraised value of the donation. The donation of land can be eligible as match, so long as it occurred within 18 months prior to the Project Agreement being signed. The donation must be completed prior to grant closeout to count. Strict adherence to Yellow Book standards is required. The Uniform Appraisal Standards of Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA), commonly referred to as the "Yellow Book," must be used to prepare appraisals for acquisitions, or donations if used for a federal match. Budgeted costs of appraisals to these standards are eligible project costs. GADNR does not provide this service. Additional guidance can be found at https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/real_estate/uniform_act/property_valuation/. Acquisition of any kind must be from a willing landowner as RTP legislation prohibits condemnation of any kind of interest in property.
- Volunteer labor will be credited at \$18.12/hour, based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) May 2023 median wage estimate for 37-3019 Grounds Maintenance Workers. The value of \$18.12/hour for volunteer labor will be used throughout the term of this grant regardless of fluctuations in the labor market. Volunteer hours can only count toward match and cannot be reimbursed.
- When a skilled professional donates her/his professional services and/or equipment use on an RTP project, s/he must submit a donation letter to the grantee accompanied by an invoice outlining the normal costs for those professional services. The labor rate should not exceed prevailing wage charges listed in the BLS Occupational Employment Statistics guide (https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm) and the equipment use should not exceed the prevailing rates outlined in FEMA's Schedule of Equipment Rates (<https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public/schedule-equipment-rates>). The rates for labor should **not** include payroll additives or overhead costs. If this method is used, the donation letter and invoice must be included. The value of donated professional services can only count toward match and cannot be reimbursed.

2.6 Conditional Project Elements

Certain activities related to trail projects may be allowable in certain situations, but not allowable in other situations. Below is a list of common project elements which are allowable under specific conditions, but not allowable in others. Since this list is not exhaustive, please contact a Grants Specialist if you have specific questions.

- **Condemned Land:** RTP legislation prohibits using RTP funds for condemnation of any kind of interest in property. An RTP project may be located on land condemned prior to trail planning and RTP application that was condemned with funds from other sources. However, it is not permissible to use the value of condemned land toward the match

requirement.

- Design and Engineering (D&E) costs: Costs incurred developing the construction documents, bid package, environmental or cultural evaluation, or permits may be counted as part of the overall project cost. Projects intended solely for covering Design and Engineering costs, including environmental evaluation and documentation are not permissible. However, reasonable environmental evaluation and documentation costs, including costs associated with environmental permits and approvals, may be included as part of an approved project's Design and Engineering costs. Design and Engineering costs listed within an RTP budget may not exceed 15% of the total grant value.
- Within a Road Right-of-Way: Convict (inmate) labor is not permitted on projects within a road right-of-way, unless performed by persons who are on parole, supervised release, or probation, consistent with (23 U.S.C. 114(b)).
- Railroads: RTP projects may be located within or along railroad rights-of-way if trail users will not traverse on or between railroad tracks and if adequate safety measures are implemented in coordination with the railroad owner/operator.
- Pre-Agreement Expenses: Limited pre-agreement project planning and environmental review costs may be eligible for match, so long as they occurred within 18 months prior to the Project Agreement being executed and are properly documented. These items must be pre-approved by GADNR. Time spent preparing the project application is not eligible.

2.7 Items Ineligible for Reimbursement or Match

Items that are not directly associated and essential for the completion and execution of a project are generally ineligible for reimbursement or match. Since the number of potentially ineligible items is space-prohibitive to list in this manual it may be helpful to contact a Grants Specialist for verification prior to incurring such costs. Examples of ineligible costs may include:

- Routine Trail Maintenance: Includes work that should be conducted on a frequent basis to keep a trail in its originally constructed serviceable standard. Routine maintenance work is usually limited to minor repair or improvements that do not significantly change the trail location, width, surface, or trail structure.
- Deferred Maintenance: Includes repair of trail damage/degradation that could have been prevented through proper routine trail maintenance.
- Feasibility Studies or Planning Only Projects
- Lighting: Lighting along the trail and/or at trailhead facilities is not eligible.
- Landscaping: Landscaping along the trail and/or around trailhead facilities is not an eligible expense. This includes, but is not limited to, grassing, beautification plantings, and plant restoration. Mitigation planting as part of a permit condition is not considered landscaping.
- Force Account: Neither the cost of Grantee labor nor the value of use of Grantee owned equipment may be reimbursed or considered match.
- Law Enforcement Related Expenses
- Roads: Funds may not be used to build or improve roads for passenger vehicle use.
- Overhead: The regular operating expenses such as rent, building upkeep, utilities, insurance and fixed costs associated with a business, agency or group.
- Indirect Costs: Only direct costs that can be identified specifically with a final cost objective directly related to the trail project are eligible.
- Interpretive Signage: Signs that are interpretive in function are not eligible. Separate RTP education grant applications may be available for interpretive signs.
- Budget Contingencies: Contingencies included as budget line items are not permitted.
- Legal Fees

- Food or Beverage: No food or beverage purchases are allowable with RTP, even food and/or beverage provided to volunteers.
- Tools and Equipment: Hand tools, power tools, and large machinery are not eligible.
- Administrative Costs: Administrative, grant management, construction management, and project management costs are not eligible for reimbursement or for match.
- Sidewalks or Paths Along Roads
- Maintenance of Equipment
- Tracks: walking/running tracks, whether around a sports field(s), within a park, building, or some other facility, are not eligible for RTP funding.

2.8 Buy America

Buy America requirements apply to steel and iron permanently incorporated in a project funded by RTP when the total value of the materials or equipment exceeds \$2,500. The provision requires these materials be melted and manufactured domestically and that documentation is obtained to verify Buy America compliance. These provisions apply to all materials and equipment permanently incorporated into the project, regardless of whether the items are acquired and paid for with grant funds, matching funds, or donated to the Grantee as part of the RTP match. It is important to remain up-to-date on any changes that may occur with the Buy America provisions. More guidance can be found at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/cqit/buyam.cfm>.

2.9 Air Quality and Water Quality

Both state and federal legislation related to air quality and water quality may apply to trail projects. It is the responsibility of the Grantee to obtain relevant permits and keep their project in compliance. A Grants Specialist can help find relevant contacts at the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) if you have specific questions.

2.10 Extensions and Changes of Scope

Extension Requests

Grantees may request timeline extensions must be formally requested by grantees should the project's completion date be anticipated to surpass the designated Trail Completion Date. It is generally mandated that such extensions be restricted to a maximum duration of ninety additional days. Extensions shall be considered at the discretion of GADNR and FHWA. All formal requests will be reviewed by GADNR and FHWA. Extension requests shall be made no fewer than 90 days prior to the established Trail Completion Date. If the extension request is granted, the Grantee must sign an Amended Project Agreement.

Change of Scope

Grantees are permitted to submit formal requests for modifications to the original project scope. All such requests will undergo review by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Scope modifications extending beyond the initial environmental review area are prohibited, necessitating withdrawal from the current grant. In such instances, Grantees retain the option to submit a new application during subsequent grant cycles. It is advisable to consult with a grant specialist to discuss the proposed modifications. Based on the nature of the requested scope change, a review may be authorized by DNR and FHWA. FHWA retains the authority to determine the requisite documentation and whether an additional environmental review is warranted. Consequently, approval of scope amendment requests may be subject to delays and extend the project completion timeline.

Any delays pertaining to scope changes must be reported prior to the Trail Completion Date. Should a Change of Scope request be approved, the Grantee is required to execute an Amended Project Agreement and receive official authorization to proceed before commencing work on the project.

GADNR will endeavor to coordinate with FHWA to provide timely feedback and review. However, FHWA scheduling constraints may preclude immediate review. Grantees are therefore strongly encouraged to carefully consider such requests to mitigate potential project delays.

Note: It is critical that Grantees understand that expenses, donations, or in-kind materials or services may be ineligible for consideration before an approved extension or Change of Scope request is mutually signed and tendered by GADNR. Incurring these costs prior to an approved extension will be done at the Grantee's own risk.

2.11 Types of Projects

- Construction of new recreational trails
 - This category includes construction of entirely new trails, expansion of trails and new linkages between existing trails.
 - This category may include construction of new trail bridges.
- Restoration of existing trails
 - This may be interpreted broadly to include any kind of restoration, rehabilitation, or relocation, not to include routine maintenance or deferred maintenance.
 - This category may include rehabilitation or replacement of trail bridges or providing appropriate way-finding signage along a trail.
- Lease of equipment directly used for construction or rehabilitation of trail
 - On the ground equipment for completing trail work.
 - Vehicles used for transportation, such as trucks, ATVs, side-by-sides and snowmobiles are not eligible. Equipment cannot be used for activities other than trail work, such as patrol or law enforcement.
- Development & rehabilitation of trailhead facilities for recreation trails
 - This can include parking/staging areas for trails including items like restrooms and trail information kiosks (interpretive signage not allowed) specifically for trail users.
 - RTP funds cannot be used for facilities intended for general park usage. Trailhead facilities like parking areas and restrooms should be intended serve only trail users.
- Acquisition of easements and property for recreational trails or corridors
 - RTP legislation prohibits condemnation of any kind of interest in property. Therefore, acquisition of any kind of interest in property must be from a willing landowner.
- Water Trails
 - The definition of recreational trail in the RTP legislation includes nonmotorized "aquatic or water activities." Examples of water trail projects include access points for canoes/kayaks or trailhead facilities near such access points.

2.12 Education Grants

RTP allocates limited funds for education that promotes trail safety and environmental protection. Education projects must have a direct relationship with an existing recreational trail. Projects can include education programs and/or production of trail-related educational materials (whether for information displays, print, video, audio, interactive computer displays, etc.). Education grants are applied for separately from other trail projects, and potential applicants should consult with a Grants

Specialist before applying.

2.13 Control

Adequate control must be established by a Grantee over any land (public or private) to be improved and/or developed with RTP grant funds. Control is generally understood to mean ownership, lease, easement, or use agreement. There should be not less than 25 years of control remaining at the time of project closeout. Control and tenure must be confirmed by a fee title, lease, recorded easement, or similar documentation.

An application submitted by an entity other than the property owner must include a signed Statement of Landowner Support in the Pre-application phase. *Note: A Statement of Landowner Support is a document of the Applicant's own creation and uploaded into the application.* The Applicant must identify all outstanding rights or interests held by others on land upon which the project is proposed. A signed letter explaining control and tenure and an Affidavit of Ownership (No template available. This document is to be procured by the Applicant) must be submitted for all projects.

Land managers maintain discretionary management responsibilities as needed to keep the project property open, accessible, and safe for public use for no less than 25 years following the Trail Completion Date.

2.14 Long-term Obligations for Grant Recipients

It is important for potential Grantees to understand long-term obligations that are associated with this program. The following are key requirements:

- Grant recipients must retain legal control and oversight of the property via ownership or lease.
- RTP funded projects must be open to public access for all for at least 25 years.
- Nonmotorized trails supported with RTP funds may NOT be converted to motorized trail use during this 25-year period.

Section 3: Application Process

3.1 Grant Application Process

RTP Pre-applications will be accepted in 2025 as a competitive application process, followed by an invitation only Second-level Application process.

The road to securing RTP funding begins with the completion of the online **Pre-application**. It is in this initial phase that the Applicant shares their basic data, contact information, project scope, answers administrative and qualitative criteria questions, and supplies required project documentation needed by GADNR to review and rank each project. Once GADNR staff reviews and ranks all completed Pre-applications, the Georgia Recreational Trails Advisory Committee and Georgia Board of Natural Resources will be briefed about the Pre-applications and rankings.

The GADNR selected projects will move forward to an invitation only **Second-level Application**. It is in this stage that the Applicants supply a more detailed level of information than what was submitted in the Pre-application. They also submit required environmental reviews, as well as various legal documents. GADNR staff will review all Second-level Applications to verify completion. Second-level Applicants who successfully complete all requirements, submit all necessary Second-level documents by the deadline, and receive final clearance from FHWA will receive funding.

GADNR will inform all Second-level Applicants of the completion and acceptance of their full application. After attending a mandatory Financial Workshop, Grantee will mutually sign a Project Agreement with GADNR and will receive a **Notice to Proceed** signifying the completion of the application process.

Note: Only upon the receipt of a Notice to Proceed may the Grantee move forward with their project. Beginning work prior to the Notice to Proceed will result in the loss of the grant.

3.2 Pre-application Process

The Pre-application is the initial stage of the funding application process. Since RTP is a competitive program, the Pre-application serves as the basis for selecting which projects advance towards approval. It is primarily comprised of weighted grading criteria, leading to an accumulated total score after review by GADNR.

Note: Pre-applications submitted after the deadline cannot be considered for funding.

Specific direction on how to satisfy these requirements are contained within the Pre-application itself. A direct link to the Pre-application can be found at www.gadnr.org/rtp.

All eligible Pre-applications must include:

- **Responses to each of the Pre-application evaluation criteria**
- **Pre-application Authorization Letter** – This official letter will demonstrate support and authority to submit a Pre-application, signed by the ranking authorizing representative of the entity (Commission Chair, Sole Commissioner, Mayor, etc.). It must be on official letterhead, be signed by the hand of the previously mentioned authority, and acknowledge:

- the specific name of the proposed trail project;
 - that this a reimbursement grant program;
 - the project will be completed within the proposed grant term;
 - that the Applicant is committed to their specific budgeted financial match amount (20% or greater of the overall project costs) as stated in the Pre-application.
- **Photos of the site with photo key** – Photos of areas proposed for RTP funding. An unofficial map of the project site must be included showing the relative location of each photograph taken, each location to be numbered corresponding to the photograph's number, and an arrow pointing in the direction of viewing from the photographer's perspective.
 - **Project Location Map** – A unofficial map depicting the relative location of the project site to local towns and cities. GADNR staff will utilize this map in order to visit the project site for inspections. Web-based maps will suffice in being the basis for this map. The following are minimal criteria for an acceptable Project Location Map:
 - Project and applicant names
 - Project site address AND exact GPS coordinates
 - Major highway designations & street names immediately surrounding/leading to site
 - North Arrow or Compass Rose
 - **Current copy of deed, lease, and/or easement as applicable**
 - **Plat/Parcel map and legal description** – A legal depiction of the property, able to be legally defended. Typically, these can be acquired through a county tax office.
 - **Signed statement from landowner expressing support** (if the Applicant and owner are not the same) – A legally defensible document that demonstrates the landowner's support for the project in its entirety.
 - **Acquisition** (if any form of acquisition is needed for this proposed project) - Applicant should describe how the acquisition process will coincide with construction or rehabilitation plans and address what steps have been taken to ensure that the acquisition does not prevent the project from being completed in a timely manner. Include such items as:
 - Completed appraisal
 - Preliminary Title Report
 - Level 1 or higher Environmental Assessment
 - Proof of willing seller or donor
 - **Detailed Site Plan/Conceptual Plan** – This document will be uploaded in Criterion #1. This is a visual representation of the proposed project. All elements receiving RTP funding should be conspicuously identifiable on the plan. If any included elements would not be part of a RTP grant, they should be labeled as such. Any prominent features, such as rivers, streams, roads, densely forested areas, etc., should also be represented. Be sure to include:
 - Site plans (before and after),
 - Project plans, and
 - Elevations.
 - **Generalized Cost Estimate** – This document will be uploaded in Criterion #2. This document shall include all categories of expenditures, detailed enough to reflect the types of materials and

expenses anticipated for reimbursement. Only items and values on this budget will be considered for reimbursement.

Note: This is a downloadable template found in the application portal. This specific form must be completed and uploaded into the application portal. Other budget forms can be included as additional details, but this form must be included.)

3.3 Pre-application Definitions

Applicant Address: The main point of contact's (defined below) address where the applicant can be contacted regarding application questions.

Applicant's Chief Elected Official or Agency Head: Lead official who has authorized and will approve this project on behalf of the applying entity. For local governments this is often a mayor, sole commissioner, or county commission chair; other local titles may apply. For agencies led by a non-elected professional, this may be a director or other position.

Applicant Name: Legal name of the government entity requesting funding.

County: County or counties where the trail work will occur.

Federal Identification Number: The Federal ID is a requirement of RTP financial services division before any payments can be made to Applicant. The ID must belong to the Applicant and not a separate parent or umbrella organization.

SAM Number: The SAM's number is a requirement for federally funded contracts and grants. The SAMS number is a unique nine-digit identification number for each of your unique physical locations. If you do not have a SAM number for the proposed site, they are free and can be applied for at <https://sam.gov/>

Main Point of Contact: This is the individual who represents the Applicant/Grantee throughout the grant process from Application to trail completion and is tasked with managing all inbound and outbound communications between the Applicant and GADNR. In some cases, this may be someone other than the person completing the application. Duties may be delegated within the Applicant's organization, although the Main Point of Contact must remain constant, as practicable as possible.

Project Cost Information: Complete the Project Budget Worksheet by adding individual budget items.

Project Narrative: Provide a description of the proposed project. Responses are limited to 250 words. Will not be included in scoring procedures.

Project Title: Unique name placed on your project, which will remain the same throughout the life of the project. This name must stay consistent throughout the process and cannot be changed.

3.4 Pre-application Evaluation Criteria

Compliance

While no points will be awarded for the compliance issues, GADNR has identified a number of important compliance criteria which are required for a project to be considered. All projects must

meet or exceed the appropriate guidelines under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). GADNR evaluates Applicants with active and previously awarded grants through GADNR to verify they are in full compliance with federal and state programs. Successful completion of projects in a timely and efficient manner is an important goal of the RTP grant program. An Applicant's past performance in effectively managing federal or state government grants, and successfully completing grant funded projects, are important factors in evaluating performance and compliance. The proposed project must be wholly within the boundaries of the State of Georgia and the applicant must be a Qualified Local Government, state agency, or federal agency.

- a. Is the Applicant on schedule with any and all active GADNR administered grant projects?
- b. Is the Applicant following applicable guidelines for current GADNR grants AND/OR did the Applicant follow all applicable guidelines for past projects?
- c. Is the Applicant a Qualified Local Government (according to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs), an agency of the State of Georgia, or a federal agency?
- d. Is the proposed project entirely within the boundaries of the State of Georgia?
- e. Is the proposed project compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Guidelines?

Criterion #1 - Project Scope

GADNR promotes outdoor access throughout Georgia. Trails are a crucial way for Georgians to access and enjoy the outdoors. Include the scope of your trail, including all trail elements. Explain why you are building this trail. How will this proposed trail enhance outdoor access and outdoor recreation?

The uploading of the site plan is required. A site plan is a diagram or map showing the planned trail, along with all trail elements and any relevant landscape, topography, structures, or other features. May be professionally prepared or informally prepared at this stage.

Project can be awarded up to 30 points.

Criterion #2 - Project Planning

Projects which have undergone a more advanced level of planning are more likely to be successfully built within the required timeframe of 24 months or less. Describe your project planning to date. How will this work be completed? What permits will be needed and what permits have already been obtained?

The uploading of a project timeline and a project cost estimate is required.

Project can be awarded up to 20 points.

Criterion #3 – Statewide Trail Needs

Applicants are strongly encouraged to develop project applications that meet Georgia trail priorities. Project proposals addressing recreational trail development/management issues identified at the statewide level will be given priority points. The following criteria were developed by GADNR in consultation with the Georgia Trails Advisory Committee.

Water Trail Access Projects

Issue 1. Need for increased funding to provide public access along water trails. Describe how this project will create more public access to established water trails in Georgia?

Issue 2. Need for environmental responsibility at water trail access facilities. Describe how the design, construction, and long-term impact of the water trail access facilities will be environmentally responsible.

Issue 3. Need for more signage along water trails (directional/distance markers, safety, & level of difficulty). If this project will include additional signage, describe all new signage planned for this project, including at trailhead(s) and along the water trail.

Other Nonmotorized Trail Projects

Issue 1. Need for new trails connecting public places. If this project will build new trail connecting public places, places of interest, and/or towns, describe the specific public places that will be connected and what trail users are anticipated to do at those locations.

Issue 2. Need for trail rehabilitation/restoration. If this project will restore an existing trail, describe the trail's past, why it needs restoration, and the future plans for this trail.

Issue 3. Need for more trail signs (directional/distance markers, safety, & level of difficulty), on new trails or existing trails. If this project will include additional signage, describe all new signage planned for this project, including at trailhead(s) and along the trail.

Project can be awarded up to 30 points.

Criterion #4 – Accessibility

While compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a minimum for funding, trail design and the construction of trail head facilities can go beyond the minimum guidance and exemptions to provide meaningful outdoor access to all Georgians. If your trail is designed with enhanced accessibility, describe how it will exceed minimum expectations under the ADA.

Project can be awarded up to 10 points.

Criterion #5 – Long-term Maintenance and Management of the Trail

Maintaining trails in good and sustainable condition is a top priority for all trails across Georgia and is a necessity in order to keep trails that receive grant funding open for at least 25 years. There are a variety of ways to plan for the future in order to maintain trails.

Does your community have an approved Trail Maintenance Plan? If yes, include that document.

Do you have dedicated funding for trail maintenance? This may be demonstrated through a formally adopted a resolution for trail maintenance, permanent staff conducting trail maintenance, and/or civic organizations committed to perform trail work through a long-term documented formal partnership? If yes to any, include documentation.

To receive points in this criterion, you will be required to upload supporting documents.

Project can be awarded up to 30 points.

Criterion #6 – Local Support & Regional Needs

Is this specific trail or trail system identified as a need in a currently adopted regional or local planning document? This may include a comprehensive plan or recreation master plan, county or regional master plan, trail system plan, capital improvements plan or land use/management plan adopted by the appropriate authority.

If so, please upload the relevant sections of that document and provide the name of the plan, date it was adopted, and the authorizing body that adopted the plan.

If this trail or trail system is not part of an existing planning document, you will be provided with the option to upload documents that demonstrate other forms of public involvement in planning for this trail.

Project can be awarded up to 10 points.

Criterion #7 – Demonstration of Public Financial Support

Does this project have financial support from beyond your government in the form of cash commitments and/or in-kind pledges of materials, professional services, and/or volunteer hours? This may come from local businesses, civic organizations, private citizens, or other governments. These financial commitments must be reflected in the cost estimate uploaded for Criterion #2.

Letters of support containing financial commitment are required to be uploaded if points are to be earned.

Project can be awarded up to 10 points.

Criterion #8 – Economic Development Opportunities

We know from national studies and surveys that trail-related trips provide economic benefits to local communities. What specific economic benefits can your community gain from this trail project?

Project can be awarded up to 10 points.

Criterion #9 – Leverage of Grant Funds

Congress requires that grantees pay for at least 20% of the total project cost. Additional points are awarded for applicants who commit to providing more than 20% project match. What match percentage is your agency committed to providing for this grant?

Project will be awarded 5 points for a match commitment from 21-29.99%.

Project will be awarded 10 points for a match commitment from 30-39.99%.

Project will be awarded 15 points for a match commitment from 40-49.99%.

Project will be awarded 20 points for a match commitment of 50% or higher.

Criterion #10 – Recent Recreational Trails Program Grants

Has your agency received a Recreational Trails (RTP) Grant from GADNR in the past ten years?

Project will be awarded 20 points if the Applicant has not received a RTP grant from GADNR in the past ten years.

Criterion #11 – Other Criteria

Trail surfaces that are finished with a pervious or semi-pervious surface reduce rainwater runoff and receive additional consideration. What surface material(s) will be used for this trail?

The use of qualified Youth Service and Conservation Corps, when possible, are a priority for projects funded with Federal Highway Trust Fund money. If you are using a Youth Service or Conservation Corps, uploading a copy of the contract is required.

Trails currently designated as part of America's National Trails System (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/index.htm>) will receive additional consideration.

Project can be awarded up to 10 points.

Attachments

Remember to include all relevant attachments to support responses above. A complete listed of related documents can be found in Section 3.2 of this manual.

Point Potential for Recreational Trails Program Project Applications

	Ranking Criteria	Max Points
1	Project Scope	30
2	Project Planning	20
3	Georgia's Statewide Trail Needs	30
4	Accessibility	10
5	Long-term Maintenance and Management of the Trail	30
6	Local Support & Regional Needs	10
7	Demonstration of Public Support	10
8	Economic Development Opportunities	10
9	Leverage of Grant Funds	20
10	Recent RTP Awards	20
11	Other Criteria	10
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS		200

3.5 Second-level Application Process

Applicants with selected Pre-applications will be invited to submit a Second-level Application. The Second-level Application serves as a mechanism in gathering more detailed project elements, detailed surveys and reviews, and items that only apply to applicants who qualify for funding.

The project depicted in the Second-level Application must match the way it was depicted in the Pre-application. Items submitted in the Pre-application may not be updated or amended, as they were a significant contributor to the competitive nature of invitations sent to Second-level Applicants. If any questions arise, please contact a Grants Specialist for assistance.

Second-level Applications shall contain the following additional items. Specific direction on how to satisfy these requirements are contained within the Second-level Application itself.

- **Resolution** – A resolution adopted by the governing entity of the Applicant authorizing the full application, committing all funds required to complete the proposed project, committing to a minimum of the specific matching funds proposed by Applicant in the Pre-application, and acceptance of agreement terms.
- **Approvals to cross a public highway or a public utility right-of-way** (if applicable)
- **Property Boundary Map** – This map shall depict the official boundary, as committed to by the Applicant, that shall be considered the Project Site. All RTP funded elements must reside within the Property Boundary Map. It should include the boundaries of the area of potential effect and projects of all funded elements. For acquisitions, it is the entire parcel(s) receiving RTP funding.
- **Detailed Site Plan/Conceptual Plan** – This may be an artist's or engineer's rendering and visual representation of the proposed project. All elements receiving RTP funding should be conspicuously identifiable on the plan. If any included elements would not be part of a RTP grant, they should be labeled as such. Any prominent features, such as rivers, streams, roads, densely forested areas, etc., should also be represented. Be sure to include:
 - Site plans (before and after),
 - Project plans, and
 - Elevations.
- **Detailed Project Budget**– This budget shall include all items depicted in the Cost Estimate submitted during the Pre-application stage, although a higher level of detail is required. It should show units of measure/piece count estimates, cost per unit, proper names of materials, etc. Only items and values depicted on this budget will be considered for reimbursement.
Note: This is a downloadable template found in the application portal. This specific form must be completed and uploaded into the application portal. Other budget forms can be included as additional details, but this form must be included.
- **Project Description and Plans** – This is a detailed narrative describing the entire scope of the project, including location, acreage, purpose, need, and all RTP funded project elements.
- **Project Implementation Schedule** – A schedule outlining the timeline and occurrence of each major project milestone, no greater than 24 months.

- **Environmental Review documents** – These documents and required environmental screenings are required for RTP funding. The environmental review ensures that the proper due diligence is invested in ensuring that the impact upon any site as a result of an RTP project is in accordance with RTP guidelines. A list of required environmental documents and reviews is referenced in Section 3.6 of this manual.
- **Categorical Exclusion (CE) Form**- this document provides a comprehensive summary of the trail project, intended to streamline all environmental reviews and ensure adherence to commitments during project completion. The Form necessitates signatures from the Project Sponsor, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), thereby establishing an official agreement to the terms outlined therein. Detailed instructions and the Form itself are accessible on the GADNR website.

3.6 Environmental Review Requirements

The environmental review process is a key component of this program. It requires that all Applicants consider the impact that their project may have upon Georgia's natural resources. Documentation of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other federal environmental laws, regulations, and Executive Orders must be provided as part of an authorized project under federal law. FHWA procedures in [23 CFR 771](#) applies to RTP.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 was created to ensure federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of their actions and decisions. NEPA Section 101(b) states "it is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means, consistent with other essential considerations of national policy" to avoid environmental degradation, preserve historic, cultural, and natural resources, and "promote the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without undesirable and unintentional consequences".

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act is required regardless of where your project is located (federal, state, county, city, or private land) because RTP is federally funded. FHWA will not approve funds for individual projects until NEPA requirements have been met. **The list below is subject to change based on changes in state and federal law and/or procedure.**

Consulting agency reviews to be completed by GADNR on behalf of the applicant:

- Wildlife Resources Division (WRD)
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- various Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs)
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)
- Floodplain Encroachment Review (EPD)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

If it is determined that the project will need further environmental review or study of any kind, it is at the expense of the applicant and will not be eligible for RTP funding. The review or survey expense may be eligible as match, so long as it occurred within 18 months prior to the Project Agreement being executed and prior to Trail Completion Date.

Environmental concerns apply even after a Project Agreement has been signed. If at any time during the project, potential archaeological materials, priority habitats, and/or species of concern are found during a ground disturbing activity, stop work immediately and contact GADNR's RTP office. If on federal lands, also contact the Federal Land Manager.

Sections 4: Grant Recipient Requirements

4.1 Grant Term

Grantees will have a stated Trail Completion Date in their Project Agreement. This date will be no more 24 months from the date when the Project Agreement is executed.

Note: Any variance or extensions must be requested via a Project Agreement Amendment or resubmission (see Section 2.10) and approval through the FHWA and GADNR.

Start Date: Once an executed Project Agreement is in place, Grantees will be issued a Notice to Proceed which authorizes work to begin.

Trail Completion Date: Projects must be completed by the Trail Completion Date as stated in the signed Project Agreement. No additional costs may be incurred after the Trail Completion Date.

Closeout Period: Grantee has up to 30 days after the grant's Trail Completion Date to submit a final Progress Report and completed Reimbursement for Request. Denote each as "Final."

4.2 Reporting Requirements

The following reports are required for projects:

- Quarterly Progress Reports
- Requests for Reimbursement
- Detailed Pre-closeout Summary no less than 180 days before the Trail Completion Date
- Final report once the project is completed

Quarterly Progress Reports

Once a Project Agreement has been signed, the Grantee shall report to GADNR on the progress of the project, on a quarterly basis as follows:

- Period beginning January 1, ending March 31: Report is due April 30.
- Period beginning April 1, ending June 30: Report is due July 31.
- Period beginning July 1, ending September 30: Report is due October 31.
- Period beginning October 1, ending December 31: Report is due January 31.

Grantees are required to submit quarterly reports to GADNR to ensure that GADNR is aware of the project's progress. The progress report summarizes the work accomplished to date, any issues that may be arising with the project, an estimated percentage of project completion, and an estimate of funds to be expended over the next quarter. Photos or other documents are required in communicating the status of your project. A Quarterly Project Report is required even if no work was completed during that quarter.

Reimbursement Requests

Payment of grant funds is on a reimbursement basis. Accurate and comprehensive documentation of project costs is critical. Applicants will be required to submit to GADNR a Reimbursement Request and detailed documentation (e.g. proof-of-purchase, proof-of-payment, etc.) prior to reimbursement.

Reimbursements are based on eligible direct costs incurred during the development of the project. Refer to Section 2 for further instruction. **Only those approved costs that are incurred after the**

Project Agreement date, and up to the Trail Completion Date can be reimbursed. Eligible costs are further explained in Section 2. Contact a Grants Specialist for more information about eligible and ineligible costs which may not be covered in this publication.

Grantees may request reimbursements at any time, although it is recommended that requests are submitted at least once a year. A lack of Reimbursement Request within a twelve-month timeframe may be deemed an inactive grant and funding from FHWA may be revoked. Quarterly Progress Reports must be up to date in order to submit a Reimbursement Request. GADNR will generally make payment within 30 days of receiving a correctly completed Reimbursement Request with all applicable supporting documentation. Reimbursement Requests are based on actual project expenditures that align with the Grantee's Project Agreement, including the approved project scope and budget.

Adequate supporting documentation for all expenses is required with each request, as applicable, including but not limited to:

- Proof of payment, including payment for match items
- Invoices
- Donation and in-kind documentation
- Documentation of procurement/bidding process
- Construction Contract
- Bid Tabulation
- Photos (as needed)

GADNR may request additional supporting documentation to process a reimbursement as needed.

Partial Billings:

A partial billing is considered to be a request made before the project is completed. Total partial billings may not exceed 75% of the total grant amount. The final 25% is held as retainage and should be requested by the Grantee in the final request.

Final Reimbursement Request:

A final billing is made when the project scope of work is completed, all required documentation has been submitted and approved, a successful Final Inspection has been conducted, and the project is open to the public. Grantees must submit a final Reimbursement Request.

Public Information:

All information and documentation submitted to GADNR is open to public review. GADNR requires that confidential or sensitive information, including home addresses, social security numbers, and bank account numbers be redacted from documents submitted to GADNR. This applies to bank account numbers included on copies of checks.

Proof of Payment:

Payments are made on a reimbursement basis. Grantees must use a verifiable payment method and submit proof of payment for all project expenses with each request. Proof of payment may include a ledger or transaction report generated on the Grantee's bank statement, or a cancelled check. GADNR will not reimburse for payments made in cash or without all requested documentation, as these methods do not provide a verifiable audit trail.

Documenting Goods and Services:

Grantees must retain and submit a copy of the original invoice(s) or receipt(s) for all goods and services purchased for the project. All goods and services must be directly related to the approved scope of work.

Documenting Donation of Items, Services, Materials, or Supplies:

Donations are third party contributions provided at no cost. Items, services, materials, and supplies are considered donated when they are provided by a third-party organization at no cost to the grantee. You must retain a copy of the invoice **and** a letter from the organization acknowledging the donation and its value.

The value of donated items or services must be included in the Detailed Project Budget. The value of donations cannot be reimbursed, cannot include items previously purchased with RTP funds, and cannot be reported on more than one grant. To be counted towards a project's match, donations must be supported by a detailed log or third-party donation statement.

Documenting Donated or Volunteer Labor:

Donated labor is time provided by a person without compensation. Labor donations are valued at an hourly rate of pay, excluding taxes, benefits and overtime. Refer to Section 2.5 for volunteer or donated labor rates. Volunteer or donated labor must be recorded on the **Georgia RTP Volunteer Labor Timesheet**; alternate documentation cannot be accepted. Volunteer hours applied toward RTP project match cannot be applied to any other grant or financial match program.

Documenting Vendor Discounts:

Normal vendor discounts and sales cannot be counted towards the match. However, discounts can be counted when provided to you from a vendor specifically for the RTP project. Discounts can be used as match if the following is provided:

- Invoice that clearly shows the retail price and discount provided **and**
- Letter from the vendor that states they have provided a discount as a donation for this specific RTP project and including the valuation of the discount.

Documenting Donated Real Property:

An appraisal from the time of acquisition may be used to document matching value, so long as the appraisal and acquisition occurred within 18 months prior to the Project Agreement being signed. Strict adherence to Yellow Book standards is required. The Uniform Appraisal Standards of Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA), commonly referred to as the "Yellow Book," must be used to prepare appraisals for acquisitions, or donations if used for a federal match. Budgeted costs of appraisals to these standards are eligible project costs. GADNR does not provide this service. Additional guidance can be found at https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/real_estate/uniform_act/property_valuation/. Acquisition of any kind must be from a willing landowner as RTP legislation prohibits condemnation of any kind of interest in property.

4.3 Procurement

For contracts valued at or above \$25,000, grantees are required to seek and document a competitive bid process. U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) policy applies; for USDOT's most up-to-date DBE guidance, please visit <https://www.transportation.gov/civil-rights/disadvantaged-business-enterprise/dbe-guidance>. If

you believe you have a rare exception to the bid requirement, for instance the use of Qualified Youth or Conservation Corps or sole source, you must contact GADNR prior to signing the contract.

Grantees must follow their own internal required vendor/contractor bid and procurement policies currently in place for contracts valued at less than \$25,000. If change orders could potentially cause a contract that was signed under \$25,000 to rise above that threshold, you must contact GADNR prior to signing the change orders.

4.4 RTP Rules and Regulations

Compliance with Law: Grantee shall comply with all federal, state and local laws, regulations, executive orders and ordinances applicable to the Agreement or to implementation of the Project, including without limitation 23 USC 206 and ORS 390.980 which makes funds available for the purposes of RTP. Key regulations include, but are not limited to:

- 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards 2 CFR 1201
- FHWA Recreational Trails Program Interim Guidance
- 23 U.S.C. 206 Recreational Trails Program
- 23 U.S.C. 104 (h), Recreational Trails Program Apportionments
- 23 U.S.C. 106, Project Approval and Oversight
- 23 CFR 1.36, Compliance with other Federal Laws and Regulations
- 23 CFR 771, Environmental Requirements
- 23 CFR 635.410 Buy America
- 49 CFR 29, Suspension and Debarment
- Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970
- 23 U.S.C. 114(b), Convict Labor
- 29 CFR 3, Anti-Kickback (Copeland Act)
- 23 U.S.C. 113, Prevailing Wage Rate (Davis Bacon Act)

Consistency with Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and State Wildlife Action Plan

Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) contains an inventory of existing outdoor recreation facilities, an analysis of outdoor recreation needs, and projects that may be implemented to address unmet recreation needs. Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is a statewide strategy to conserve populations of native wildlife species and the natural habitats they need before these animals, plants and places become rarer and more costly to conserve or restore. Georgia's SCORP and SWAP are extremely important documents which have great relevance to the Recreational Trails Program. These publications play a critical part in understanding the priorities, needs, and direction of our efforts in conservation.

Grantee Responsibility

The Grantee bears all responsibility for the administration and success of their project, including performance by third parties under sub agreements made by the Grantee for accomplishing project objectives.

Section 5: Grant Closeout

Grant closeout signifies the completion of the project. GADNR will ensure all agreed-upon work, as described in the Project Agreement, and administrative actions have been accomplished by the Trail Completion Date. Any discrepancies will be returned to the Grantee to be remedied.

Final payment will not occur until all required documents have been approved by GADNR to ensure all aspects of the grant contract have been met and a successful Final Inspection has verified all aspects of scope and expenditures are available on the trail.

Within 30 days after the Trail Completion Date, both administrative and financial closeout of the grant must occur. During this period, the following documents are due to GADNR before it can approve and process final payment.

5.1 Final Report and Reimbursement Request

The final Quarterly Progress Report and the final Reimbursement Request must be submitted to GADNR within 30 days of the project completion date. These documents serve as notice that the Grantee has completed the project in compliance with applicable regulations. The Final Report will be completed on the Quarterly Progress Report form and include:

- Marked as “Final Report”
- Indication that the project is complete, accessible, and open to the public in accordance with the approved Project Agreement/Amended Project Agreement
- Photos of the completed work
- A final **Reimbursement Request** that shows a full account of all expenditures and match
- For acquisitions only - An updated property deed with required protective language and recording stamp.

5.2 Final Inspection and Project Review

GADNR staff will inspect all completed projects. The Final Inspection must be conducted after all trail work is completed and the trail is open to the public. No costs can be incurred after the Final Inspection, whether for reimbursement or for match. Grantee should have someone present at the Final Inspection who is knowledgeable about the project. Sometimes the Final Inspection reveals items that need to be addressed. Corrective actions must be documented and an additional inspection by GADNR staff may be required. Final payments will not be made until final documentation is received and approved, and the project has been inspected and verified as complete.

Following the Final Inspection, GADNR will perform a Final Project Review, which may include but not be limited to:

- Audit of all paperwork submitted by the Grantee for accuracy and completion;
- Audit of all expenditures against the total project budget;
- Audit of all previous reimbursements and requests;
- Verification of a total match submitted by the Grantee; and/or
- Final site inspection conducted by GADNR Staff

Once GADNR determines that all requirements of the grant have been satisfied, retainage will be dispersed to the Grantee per the Project Agreement. If total expenditures are less than anticipated, and payment of the full retainage amount would create a shortfall of the Applicant’s match, GADNR

will adjust the payable retainage amount accordingly. In any instance where an overpayment of either reimbursement or retainage is realized, the Grantee is required to refund an amount equivalent to the overage to GADNR.

Once a project has been closed, remaining funds are deobligated and GADNR cannot make additional payments. Budget amendment requests submitted to GADNR in an effort to utilize surplus funds shall not be considered for approval. Only those items as submitted in the original budget are eligible for reimbursement, per the Project Agreement.

5.3 Publicity

Grantees must make every effort to acknowledge and publicize GADNR's participation and assistance with the project. Acknowledgement of participation shall be conspicuously placed at the project location for public viewing. Grantees may incorporate acknowledgements onto existing or new signage at the project location. The GADNR logo, which shall be included in this signage, is available at www.gadnr.org/rtp.

Additionally, if any property receiving RTP funding is, or will be, posted on a recipient's web page, it should also acknowledge and publicize the program's participation and assistance with the property.

5.4 Retention Requirements

Grantees are subject to a GADNR audit of their project file. Grantees must retain and keep accessible all books, documents, papers, and records that are directly related to the RTP project **for a minimum of five years** following the close of the RTP project. These documents include but are not limited to:

- Reimbursement Requests and Progress Reports
- Invoices and receipts
- Copies of payments
- Procurement documentation
- Donation logs and statements
- All books, records, documents, data, & other materials relevant to grant.

The records must support all project-related costs reported to GADNR and be made available upon request. If any litigation, claim or audit is started before the project documents are removed from the entity's records, Grantees must keep the records until all litigation, claims or audit findings involving the records have been resolved.

The information in this manual is subject to change without notice and should not be construed as the only source of information governing the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Potential changes to the policies and procedures herein may be necessary to properly administer the program. GADNR personnel will attempt to assist Applicants in satisfying changes in criteria and requirements as they occur.