

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Application and Required Attachment Instructions for the FY2025-2026 Recreational Trails Program Application Cycle

FACTS ABOUT RTP

WHAT IS THE RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM?

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) a competitive grant program that provides federal funding for the development and maintenance of recreational trails, trailheads, and trailside facilities. RTP is a reimbursement grant program.

HOW IS RTP ADMINISTERED?

The program is administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Program is governed according to Florida Administrative Rule (F.A.R.), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), and the FHWA RTP Guidance. Program funds are contingent upon an annual appropriation to each state by FHWA.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Applicants must submit a completed RTP grant application during an announced submission period. Applicants may submit only one application during the submission period and the application may contain no more than one project site.

WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT?

The maximum grant request is dependent upon the trail use and category.

- **Motorized Projects:** \$2,000,000

WHAT IS THE RTP MATCHING RATIO?

There are three permissible matching ratios. RTP assistance is provided on a 50:50, 60:40, or 80:20 (program:grantee) matching basis, with the exception of federal agency project sponsors. Federal agencies may match grant funds with federal funds up to 95% of total project cost. The remaining 5% must be covered by non-Federal funding sources. The limitation is intended to ensure commitment to the project from State, local, or private co-sponsors.

WHAT CAN I USE TO MATCH A RTP GRANT?

A grantee may utilize cash, or in-kind service costs as allowable by governing regulations and the Guidance. Value of real property or inmate labor are ineligible match sources.

WHAT MAY RTP FUNDS BE USED FOR?

For the FY2025-2026 RTP Application Cycle funds may be used for the maintenance or renovation of existing trails, development or renovation of trailside or trailhead facilities or trail linkages, purchase of trail construction or maintenance equipment, and the construction of new trails on local, state and federal lands.

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MUST AN APPLICANT OWN THE PROJECT SITE?

The applicant must own the project site, or lease it from a public agency, with the ability to dedicate as an outdoor recreation site for the use and benefit of the general public pursuant to Rule 62S-2.076(1), F.A.C. Adequate site control must be in place prior to the close of the application cycle.

TIPS FOR DEMONSTRATING SITE CONTROL:

Applicants must clearly demonstrate that they have adequate control of project sites and are able to construct, operate, and maintain the area for the term required by RTP and the grant agreement. For RTP projects on land owned by the applicant, that term is 99 years; for sites owned by someone other than the applicant, that term is at least 25 years past the project completion date.

Proper site control, as required in Chapter 62S-2, F.A.C., may be documented in several ways, including, but not limited to the following instruments:

- Warranty Deed (fee title land ownership),
- A lease,
- Use agreement,
- Easement,
- Title commitment or title policy

Property Appraiser report cards, surveys, and maps are not sufficient evidence of site control.

Submittal of any of these bulleted instruments does not guarantee that the applicant has properly demonstrated site control for the proposed project site. RTP staff and legal counsel will thoroughly review submitted site control documents for sufficiency, noting any deficiencies.

Site control documents must include an adequate legal description of the parcel(s) comprising the project site, such that RTP staff can compare with the boundary map submitted as a component of the application and evaluate whether the applicant is able to adequately control the project site. For site control less than fee simple, the instrument must not be revocable at will; must extend for twenty-five (25) years after project completion date; and must contain a clause that enables the grantee to dedicate the land for a twenty-five (25) year period, pursuant to Rule 62S-2.076(1), F.A.C.

HOW ARE RTP GRANTS AWARDED?

Each application is reviewed to determine eligibility. DEP evaluates each eligible application according to Florida Administrative Rule (F.A.R.), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), and the FHWA RTP Guidance. Based on the scores, DEP prepares and submits a recommended priority list to the RTP Technical Advisory Committee for review and recommendation to the Secretary of the DEP for approval. State approved projects are then submitted to the FHWA for final review and award.

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GENERAL APPLICATION INFORMATION

Applicants must submit proposals for RTP grants on application form OGT-10. Applications are evaluated on the basis of the information provided by the applicants, except where such data is superseded by official DEP information. Failure by an applicant to present all required application information and documentation may result in the application being declared ineligible for funding consideration. Failure by an applicant to provide accurate information and documentation relating to the evaluation criteria for the proposed project set forth in the RTP Rule may result in a loss of points for the applicant's competitive score.

- Applications must contain the information as outlined in the application checklist.
- Any application submitted without exhibits being tabbed will be sent back to the Applicant as deficient and will be asked to provide corrections.
- **Applicants must submit 1 original completed application and all supporting documents** during the announced submission period of April 13, 2026, through May 28, 2026. All project proposals should be submitted through postal mail using the FY2025-2026 RTP Application. Submissions must be postmarked no later than May 28, 2026, and submitted to:

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF STATE LANDS/RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM
3800 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD, MAIL STATION 585
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000

Duplicate projects: Pursuant to subsection 62S-2.072(e), F.A.C., funds shall not be approved for completion of an incomplete RTP project. As such, an applicant may not submit an application for a project site, including phased projects, if the applicant has an active grant agreement on that project site funded under Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recreational Trails Program or Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program. An applicant shall not submit the same application, in whole or in part, under LWCF, RTP or FRDAP in concurrent or overlapping funding cycles.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- Applications are reviewed by DEP for eligibility and completeness in accordance with the program Rule and the FHWA RTP Guidance.
- Upon notification, applicants are allowed a 15-day deficiency period submittal for corrections. Applicants must respond to a Deficiency Report within the 15-day period, or an application may be deemed ineligible to compete for funding.
- Applications are scored and ranked in priority pursuant to RTP Rule.
- Draft project priority list is reviewed by the RTP TAC and recommended for approval.
- DEP submits the projects to State Clearinghouse for approval.
- Staff submitted the draft project priority list to the DEP Secretary or designee for approval.
- DEP submits project priority list to FHWA for review and approval.
- FHWA must approve projects prior to execution of State/Local agreements.
- Upon FHWA approval, State/Local agreements are developed in accordance with the application information.

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EVALUATION PROCESS

Grant applications are evaluated according to policies and procedures described in Chapter 62S-2, F.A.C. All applicants should familiarize themselves with these policies and procedures. This packet is designed to assist all applicants in presenting the necessary information needed for DEP to evaluate proposed grant applications. Applicants must submit proposals for RTP grants on application form OGT-10. Failure by an applicant to present all required application information and documentation may result in the application not receiving points or being declared ineligible for funding consideration. Following DEP staff review of the applications, DEP will notify applicants of any deficiencies. Missing or incomplete documentation will constitute a deficiency. Applicants must submit requested deficiency information within fifteen (15) working days from the date of the deficiency notification. After the deficiency period, DEP ranks all eligible applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth in the RTP Rule.

PART II – PROJECT INFORMATION, PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Applicants must submit a project description that includes the physical characteristics of the site, such as developed recreational facilities, land resources, vegetation, fish and wildlife, historical, archaeological resources, previous land usage and transportation access as well as a description of proposed project activities. The submission should include a list of proposed improvements in detail that provides the dimensions and materials to be used, as well as the quantity of any trailhead or trailside facilities to be developed. Developed sites must provide information on all historic grant funding used to construct the existing facilities or purchase the project site, which should match the clearly labeled conceptual site plan.

Maintenance projects should include a clearly defined list of activities to occur, as well as the dimensions and materials to be used. If the project's scope of work will include the purchase of equipment, such as backhoes or graders, describe the equipment, how its use will be beneficial to recreational trails, where it will be stored, who will maintain it, and the proposed projects for its use. Development elements such as outdoor fitness stations do not qualify as equipment for the purpose of this application.

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APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Before you finish your application package, make sure you have all necessary support documents prepared. To obtain points, applicants must answer the questions on OGT-10 *and* must provide appropriate back up documentation. Use this list to make sure that all applicable and required documentation is included. **To facilitate review and scoring, tab all supporting documents at the end of the application.**

Attach supporting documents as follows:

| APPLICATION ITEM – <i>As Applicable</i> | TAB AS EXHIBIT | REQUIREMENTS AND TIPS |
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| A. Organizations provide a Letter of Support from land managing agency. Agency must state that it accepts the post completion requirements as outlined in Chapter 62S-2 F.A.C. | A | Organizations must be registered as an active nonprofit corporation in the Department of State’s Sunbiz database. They must have an agreement with the owning government entity that permits development and/or maintenance of trails and trailside facilities, and satisfies the site control requirements pursuant to subsection 62S-2.076(1), F.A.C. The Letter of Support must acknowledge the arrangement between the agency and the organization and state that the agency accepts compliance requirements as outlined 62S-2.076, F.A.C. and FHWA RTP Guidance. |
| B. Show project location on DOT County Road Maps or USGS 7 ½ Minute Quadrangle Sheets. Include beginning and ending points. | B | FDOT County General Highway Maps or USGS 7 ½ Minute Quadrangle Sheets may be used to demonstrate the site location. Applicants should include the project site, as well as the trail in its entirety. |
| C. Boundary Map of the project area: The map must provide a description and sketch of the project area boundaries, display known easements and be legally sufficient to identify the project area. Plat maps may be accepted if the above criteria are identified. Aerial photographs are not accepted as boundary maps. | C | Applicants should submit a dated project boundary map which clearly delineates the project area. The project boundary map and/or attachments must identify the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The title of the project and project elements. 2. The date of map preparation. 3. The area(s) under lease and term remaining on the lease(s). 4. All known outstanding rights and interests in the area held by others. Known easements, deed/lease restrictions, reversionary interests, etc. are to be included. 5. The project area in sufficient detail so as to be legally sufficient to identify the lands to be afforded protection under the RTP. The following methods of identification are acceptable: |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deed references • Adjoining ownerships • Adjoining easements of record • Adjoining water bodies or other natural landmarks • Metes and bounds • Government survey <p>Where one or more of the above methods are not readily suited for boundary identification, measurements from permanent locators must be used. A formal survey is not generally required.</p> |
| <p>D. Site Control (e.g., deed, lease): Submit a copy of the site control document for the project site. If submerged lands are included in the development area, provide a legal document (i.e., permit, management agreement, etc.) which indicates permission to use and develop the submerged lands. Site control must be effective by the close of the submission period.</p> | <p>1. If an applicant owns the project site, documents that transferred title to the local government (city, county, etc.), Florida Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida (TIITF), or the United States of America should be provided.</p> <p>This document is usually some form of deed or, in some cases, a plat that dedicated the property to the city or county. The deed may be a warranty deed, a special warranty deed, or a quit-claim deed. Older deeds may not specify which type they are, and applicants will need to read the deed to see if it contains language guaranteeing that the person transferring the title has good title to the property. If this language is included, the deed is a warranty deed.</p> <p>D A quit-claim deed means that the person transferring the property didn't guarantee that they had good title to the property. In these cases, the Department requires that you submit a thirty-year title search, with copies of all title-related documents, AND an attorney's opinion that the title search establishes good title in the applicant and that none of the encumbrances on the property will interfere with the proposed uses for the property.</p> <p>If there are exceptions listed in the deed, or if the deed is titled a special warranty deed it means there are encumbrances on the property. These may be easements, covenants and restrictions, or other recorded documents that affect title to the property. This means that other people have enforceable property rights that could interfere with your proposed use of the property. If this is the case, applicants need an attorney's opinion that the exceptions listed in the deed won't interfere with the uses planned for the park. Applicants</p> |

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| | | <p>will also need to include copies of those recorded documents in your site control documentation.</p> <p>Deeds frequently attach the legal description as an exhibit. Make sure the legal description is included in your application. Deeds without a legal description are not sufficient.</p> <p>Make sure the legal description in the deed matches the legal description on the boundary map, survey, conceptual site plan, or other documentation.</p> <p>Make sure the site control documentation covers the entire site. If the proposed site covers more than one parcel, make sure all relevant deeds are included and provide a map showing which deed relates to which parcel.</p> <p>If the transfer was by plat and dedication, make sure the dedication on the plat is readable. If the print is too small, provide both the entire plat and an enlarged copy of just the dedication.</p> <p>2. If the project site is leased, applicants need to provide the lease agreement. The lease must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Extend for thirty years from the date of application; b. Must not be revocable at will by the grantee; c. Must not prohibit the proposed uses of the site; and d. Must grant the applicant the authority to dedicate the property for a minimum of twenty-five years after the project is complete. <p>Make sure the lease includes the legal description of the property and that the legal description matches the boundary map, site plan, survey, and other documentation. It's very helpful if the boundary map provided includes a legal description. If a boundary survey of the property is available, that is an ideal boundary map.</p> <p>Where a project uses a city or county right-of-way, the property may have been conveyed to the city or county by the state, may have been dedicated by plat, or may have been dedicated under Florida Statute. Applicants may need to consult legal counsel to determine the source of your title.</p> |
| <p>E. Conceptual Site Plan for development of the project area: Submit a conceptual site plan displaying the areas and facilities to be</p> | <p>E</p> | <p>Applicants must submit a conceptual site plan that depicts all existing facilities, elements included in the RTP application, and any future development plans. It should be legible</p> |

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| <p>developed as proposed in the scope of the application. The site plan must correlate with the project area identified in the project boundary map and cost estimate. The site plan must CLEARLY DELINEATE between facilities/opportunities currently existing, facilities proposed for funding in this application and facilities planned for future development. Please color code your site plan to indicate facilities that are existing, proposed for funding and planned for future development (not in this project).</p> | | <p>and allow evaluators to easily determine what is part of the proposed project and what is not. <i>All historic grant funding used to construct the existing facilities or purchase the project site must be included in the site plan and clearly labeled.</i> An applicant may not submit an application for a project site, including phased projects, if the applicant has an active grant agreement on that project site funded under Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recreational Trails Program or Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program, nor submit the same application, in whole or in part, under LWCF, RTP or FRDAP in concurrent or overlapping funding cycles.</p> |
| <p>F. Photographs of the Project Area: Submit color, on-site photographs sufficient to depict the physical characteristics of the project area. Provide color photographs with your application. Aerial photographs are requested, but not required. Please mark an approximate boundary of the Project Site and note major roads and/or landmarks on the aerial photo (note – this is not the boundary map).</p> | <p>F</p> | <p>Photos of the project site must sufficiently depict the current physical state of the project location at the time of application. They should be labeled and provide descriptions such as nearby streets, landmarks and additional helpful information. Submitted project area photos should capture the characteristics of the site, including connections to existing trail systems.</p> |
| <p>G. Location Map and Directions: Submit a detailed street, road or highway map precisely locating the project site. Also, provide clear and concise written driving instructions from the nearest federal or state highway. NOTE: Please confirm that street names listed in the written directions are the same as those posted on street signs in the area.</p> | <p>G</p> | <p>Applicants must submit a location map and driving directions to the project site from the DEP Office located at 3800 Commonwealth Blvd, Tallahassee, FL 32399.</p> <p>For developed sites, applicants must submit the address of the project location along with the driving directions.</p> <p>For undeveloped sites, applicants must submit an approximate address of the project location, driving directions, and additional instructions that include landmarks to assist DEP staff with locating the correct project area.</p> |

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| <p>H. Capital Improvements Schedule or a copy of a resolution amending the existing schedule to include the proposed project. State or federal agencies provide copy of their land management or recreation or trail plan.</p> | <p>H</p> | <p>Local applicants must submit a copy of an adopted Capital Improvements Schedule (CIP) or local Comprehensive Plan that with a noted date of adoption. It must list the specific project as outlined in the application. If amending a CIP, applicants must submit a signed and dated resolution that was adopted prior to the close of the application cycle. Budgets will not be accepted as a CIP.</p> <p>Federal and state applicants must submit a signed and dated land management, recreation or trail plan from the agency that includes the project as outlined in the application.</p> |
| <p>I. SCORP objectives support documentation. Written response to Part IV, Item 3, Page 9 of this application. Include narrative explaining how the project implements one or more of the outdoor recreation goals and objectives as listed in the SCORP.</p> | <p>I</p> | <p>Goals and objects of the current Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) must be clearly outlined in the application, with a distinct correlation to the proposed project as outlined in the application.</p> |
| <p>J. State Greenways and Trails Plan support documentation. Written response to Part IV, Item 4, Page 9 of this application. Include narrative explaining how the project implements one or more of the goals and objectives as indicated in the 2024-2028 State Greenways and Trails System Plan.</p> | <p>J</p> | <p>Applicants must clearly explain how the proposed project implements the goals and objectives of the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan through the proposed project.</p> |
| <p>K. Service Corps: Copy of letter of commitment between applicant and recognized youth conservation or service corps, in which the corps agrees to supply stated amount of labor. Refer to 42 U.S.C. 12572 and 42 U.S.C. 12656 for definitions. Scout troops and similar groups do NOT qualify. AmeriCorps is a recognized service corps.</p> | <p>K</p> | <p>A letter of commitment between the applicant and an eligible service corps must be submitted that includes an agreement from the corps to supply the stated amount of labor, including a dollar value. Federal match limitations apply.</p> |

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| <p>L. Department of State letter to verify that a project is for archaeological/ historic/cultural preservation purposes</p> | <p>L</p> | <p>Applicants must submit a letter from the Florida Department of State that verifies the proposed project supports archaeological, historical, or cultural preservation. The letter must demonstrate a connection between the project area, proposed development(s), and noted archaeological, historical, or cultural resources on site.</p> |
| <p>M. FNAI letter to verify resources protected by project.</p> | <p>M</p> | <p>Applicants must submit a letter from the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) that verifies the proposed project connects biologically significant resources.</p> |
| <p>N. Public Participation Documentation: 1. Copy of public meeting advertisement for SOLE PURPOSE of discussing the project.</p> | <p>N-1</p> | <p><i>Public participation must have occurred within past year, and prior to close of submission cycle.</i> Submitted documentation should demonstrate that the proposed project as outlined in the application was the sole purpose of the meeting, with posted announcements 72 hours prior to the meeting at a minimum. Applicants may submit the agenda and minutes if available. Posting information must be submitted, and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper clipping with name of source and publication date. • Fliers with date and location on posting, as well as public accessibility details. • Letter from television or radio station is indicating dates and times PSA was aired. • Publication date, website, and screenshot of postings advertised online (may include social media). |
| <p>N. Public Participation Documentation: 2. Agenda and/or minutes of REGULARLY SCHEDULED advisory board meeting.</p> | <p>N-2</p> | <p><i>Public participation must have occurred within past year, and prior to close of submission cycle. Applicants must provide an agenda and minutes</i> of a regularly scheduled board meeting where the project was discussed. If no parks and recreation advisory board exists, a planning and zoning, tourism, or similar board may be used. <i>City or County Commissions are not considered Advisory Boards.</i></p> |
| <p>N. Public Participation Documentation: 3. Documentation of PRESENTATION to community groups (agenda, letter of thanks, etc. OR . . . A copy of the SURVEY instrument and a summary of the results as they relate to the proposed project.</p> | <p>N-3</p> | <p><i>Public participation must have occurred within past year, and prior to close of submission cycle.</i> Applicants must provide documentation to support a <i>presentation was provided to community groups for the proposed project as outlined in the application.</i> Submissions may include posting information (such as fliers or online advertisements) that are <i>supported by an agenda, letter of thanks from a community interest group, or photos from the meeting.</i></p> |

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| | | <p>If unable to host a public presentation, applicants may submit a <i>survey instrument that was distributed to the public with results and an explanation of how the community input was incorporated</i> into the proposed project as outlined in the application.</p> |
| <p>O. Letter from U.S. Forest Service documenting project is located along or connects to a certified portion of the Florida National Scenic Trail. OR . . .</p> <p>Letter from National Park Service documenting project is located along or connects with a designated National Recreation Trail.</p> | <p>O</p> | <p>A letter from the U.S. Forest Service that supports the project must confirm connectivity to the proposed project site, as well as information on how the project will support this trail. <i>The trail and proposed project must include the same trail uses to ensure compatibility.</i> Letters of support should be issued within the past calendar-year. Letters that do not verify connection and compatibility will not be eligible for consideration.</p> <p>A letter from the National Park Service that supports the project must confirm connectivity to the proposed project site, as well as information on how the project will support this trail. <i>The trail and proposed project must include the same trail uses to ensure compatibility.</i> Letters of support should be issued within the past calendar-year. Letters that do not verify connection and compatibility will not be eligible for consideration.</p> |
| <p>P. Proof of Match demonstrating that funding has been allocated for the project and is currently available to be expended.</p> | <p>P</p> | <p>Applicants must provide a letter from the Chief Financial Office as <i>Proof of Match</i> that demonstrates match funding has been allocated for the project and is currently available to be expended. Letters should be issued within the past calendar-year.</p> |

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HELPFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

| PROGRAM/AGENCY | PHONE | WEBSITE |
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| Florida Department of Environmental Protection | 850-245-2118 | https://floridadep.gov/ |
| Recreational Trails Program (RTP) | 850-245-2681 | https://floridadep.gov/lands/land-and-recreation-grants/content/recreational-trails-program-grant-assistance |
| Florida Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT) | 850-245-2052 | https://floridadep.gov/ogt |
| Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) | 850-245-2078 | https://floridadep.gov/Parks/florida-scorp-outdoor-recreation-florida |
| Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) | 850-488-4676 | https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/ |
| U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service | 1-800-344-9453 | https://www.fws.gov/ |
| Northwest Florida Water Management District | 850-539-5999 | http://www.nfwwater.com/ |
| Suwannee River Water Management District | 386-362-1001 | http://www.mysuwanneeriver.com/ |
| St. Johns River Water Management District | 386-329-4500 | http://www.sjrwmd.com/ |
| Southwest Florida Water Management District | 352-796-7211 | http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/ |
| South Florida Water Management District | 561-686-8800 | https://www.sfwmd.gov/ |
| Florida Department of State | 850-245-6500 | https://dos.myflorida.com/ |
| Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) | 850-224-8207 | https://www.fnai.org/ |
| U.S. Forest Service (National Scenic Trail) | 850-523-8500 | https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails |
| U.S. Department of the Interior (National Recreation Trails) | 850-523-8586 | https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/national-recreation-trails.htm |