

2026 Grant Program Guidance

Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

**DEADLINE TO APPLY IS
MARCH 1, 2026**



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Please call the DNR, Bureau of Community and Financial Assistance (1-888-936-7463) for more information.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Contact your Regional Project Manager.....	2
DNR Regional Project Managers & Counties Served.....	2
DNR Statewide Grant Program Manager.....	3
Grant Program Description.....	3
Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP).....	3
Eligible Projects.....	3
In-eligible Projects.....	4
Eligible Applicants.....	5
Application Submittal Process, Application Materials, Deadline, and Grant Award Timing	6
Governing Board Resolution Requirements.....	7
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans.....	7
Applicant Share (Matching Share).....	7
Acquisition Projects.....	8
Development Projects.....	8
Americans with Disability Act (ADA)	9
Labor Requirements and Davis-Bacon Wage Rates	9
Important Project Location Consideration.....	9
Long-term Obligations for Grant Recipients.....	10
Reimbursement.....	11
Ranking Criteria.....	12-17

Introduction

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to providing the public with high-quality, accessible outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state.

This booklet contains **information about the Recreational Grant Program (RTP)**, application details, and criteria the DNR uses to rank applications and select projects. The Federal RTP Grant Programs have unique eligibility criteria and funding priorities. For example, a broader range of outdoor recreation projects are eligible for RTP grants relative to the nature-based outdoor recreation emphasis within the state Stewardship program. The DNR implements the RTP grant program in partnership with Federal Highway Administration, and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). Annual appropriations for the RTP programs depend on the federal budget process. Availability of grants under these programs depends on the amount and timing of grant funds made available from the federal government.

Public access is fundamental to this grant program. Reasonable public access is required for any trail property maintained, rehabilitated, or developed with grant funds. The DNR can help determine what constitutes appropriate and reasonable public access for grant-funded properties.

This booklet does not contain all the materials and forms needed to apply for RTP grants. Applicants should visit the following DNR websites to download current application materials and forms, **see also page six for a checklist of application materials required.**

Contact your Regional Grant Project Manager

There are many important details to understand when applying for a RTP grant. DNR Project Managers are located throughout the state and can help determine project eligibility and walk applicants through the grant process from project conception to final reimbursement. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact their regional Project Manager as early as possible in the planning stages of a project, ideally within two or three months prior to submitting an application, for a detailed explanation of the grant programs in general, a tentative determination of eligibility, and tailored guidance to make an application as competitive as possible.** Regional Project Managers are also an excellent source of information about other DNR grant and loan programs. Contact information for each regional Project Manager is provided below.

DNR Regional Project Managers, Grant Program(s) & Counties Served

<p>GRACE MIKELSONS – West Central Regions <i>Stewardship Local Assistance; LWCF; RTP Non-Motorized</i> 1300 W. Clairemont, Eau Claire, WI 54701</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Adams, Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Marathon, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Portage, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon, Wood 	<p>Phone: (715) 492-6091 Email: grace.mikelsons@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>KURT BYFIELD – South Central, West Central Regions <i>Motorized RTP Grants, Snowmobile and ATV/UTV Grants</i> 3911 Fish Hatchery Rd., Fitchburg, WI 53711</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Adams, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Dunn, Eau Claire, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jackson, Jefferson, Juneau, La Crosse, Lafayette, Marathon, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Portage, Richland, Rock, Sauk, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon, Wood 	<p>Phone: (608) 501-4274 Email: kurt.byfield@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>JESSICA TERRIEN – Interim Southeast Region <i>Stewardship Local Assistance; LWCF; RTP Non-Motorized</i> 1027 W. St. Paul Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53233</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha 	<p>Phone: (920) 461-2680 Email: jessica.terrien@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>JEREMY HOLTZ – Southeast, Northeast Regions <i>Motorized RTP Grants, Snowmobile and ATV/UTV Grants</i> 2984 Shawano Ave., Green Bay, WI 54313</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha, Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago 	<p>Phone: (920) 883-7428 Email: jeremy.holtz@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>PAT ANDERSON – Interim South Central Region <i>RTP Non-Motorized</i> 801 W Maple St, Spooner, WI 54801</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk 	<p>Phone: (715) 416-5020 Email: patricka.anderson@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>JEFF PENNUCCI – Northern Region - Rhinelander <i>Stewardship Local Assistance; LWCF; RTP, Snowmobile and ATV/UTV</i> 107 Sutliff Ave., Rhinelander, WI 54501</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, Price, Taylor, Vilas 	<p>Phone: (715) 499-1424 Email: jeff.pennucci@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>PAT ANDERSON – Northern Region - Spooner <i>Stewardship Local Assistance; LWCF; RTP, Snowmobile and ATV/UTV</i> 801 W Maple St, Spooner, WI 54801</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, Washburn 	<p>Phone: (715) 416-5020 Email: patricka.anderson@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>ELLIE CRABB – Southeast Region <i>RTP Non-Motorized Grants</i> 101 S. Webster St., Madison, WI 53703</p>	<p>Phone: (608) 516-6146 Email: ellie.crabb@wisconsin.gov</p>
<p>JESSICA TERRIEN – Northeast Region <i>Stewardship Local Assistance; LWCF; RTP Non-Motorized</i> 2984 Shawano Ave., Green Bay, WI 54313</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counties Served: Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago 	<p>Phone: (920) 461-2680 Email: jessica.terrien@wisconsin.gov</p>

For information on program policy and statewide coordination, contact Statewide Grant Program Manager:

Recreational Trails Program Grants

Pat Anderson

Phone: (715) 416-5020

Email: PatrickA.Anderson@wisconsin.gov

Grant Program Description Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program can award up to 80% grant assistance to maintain, rehabilitate, or develop trails. Typically, grant requests in this program exceed available funds by 3:1.

Statute/Code: [23 U.S.C. § 133\(h\)](#); [23 U.S.C. § 206](#); [Ch. NR 50.21, Wis. Admin. Code](#).

Purpose: The RTP program provides funds to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. RTP grants are to be used on trail projects that further a specific goal or are included in the State Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP) or a local plan referenced in the SCORP.

Allocation: RTP grant awards may not exceed \$100,000 for individual projects submitted in the Federal Fiscal Year 2025-2026 application cycle. Projects compete statewide within three project categories:

Nonmotorized/Nonmotorized Diversified (30%): Projects designed to benefit nonmotorized recreational trail use where motorized use would not be allowed.

Motorized/Motorized Diversified (30%): Projects designed to benefit motorized recreational use; projects may also benefit some nonmotorized uses as long as motorized use is the primary intent.

Diversified (40%): Projects designed to benefit multiple uses; includes projects where motorized use would be permitted (e.g. seasonally) but where motorized use is not the predominant beneficiary. Diversified projects are not required to have motorized use.

Eligible Projects: RTP funds may only be used on trails which have been identified in or which further a specific goal of a local, county, or state trail plan included or referenced in the SCORP. These include traditional trails as well as water trails recognized by the DNR (see <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/watertrails/> for more information about water trails). Eligible RTP projects, in order of priority, are:

1. Rehabilitation and maintenance of existing trails and trailhead facilities.
2. Development of new trails, trail linkages and trailhead facilities (some restrictions apply on federal lands); and
3. Acquisition of property for trails in areas with limited trail opportunities. **Note:** applications for acquisition projects are not being accepted for 2026.

The following activities are common examples of eligible projects:

- Resurfacing trails, replacement of culverts or bridges, mowing, grooming, or grading trails.
- Trails, trailheads, and assoc. trail amenities (e.g. restrooms, benches, lighting, kiosks, safety signs)
- Canoe/kayak launches – RTP (if part of a water trail system)
- Fishing piers – RTP (if part of a trail system)
- Campgrounds – RTP (on a case-by-case basis)

Ineligible Projects & Pre-award Expenses:

A State may not obligate funds apportioned to carry out this section for:

- condemnation of any kind of interest in property;
- construction of any recreational trail on National Forest System land for any motorized use unless
 - the land has been designated for uses other than wilderness by an approved forest land and resource management plan or has been released to uses other than wilderness by an Act of Congress; and
 - the construction is otherwise consistent with the management direction in the approved forest land and resource management plan;
- construction of any recreational trail on Bureau of Land Management land for any motorized use unless the land
 - has been designated for uses other than wilderness by an approved Bureau of Land Management resource management plan or has been released to uses other than wilderness by an Act of Congress; and
 - the construction is otherwise consistent with the management direction in the approved management plan.

Pre-award expenses are not eligible for reimbursement under RTP grants. Examples of pre-award expenses include pre-engineering and design, and any expenses incurred before a grant agreement is received, except for expenses incurred for the completion of an archaeological or endangered resources investigation that may be required by the DNR.

The following types of projects are typically not eligible for RTP grant funding:

- Purchase of equipment
- Income-generating facilities (e.g. concession buildings)
- Stand-alone maintenance facilities that do not specifically serve the grant property
- Splash pads, Soccer/baseball fields, and Sport courts

Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants: Towns, villages, cities, counties, tribal governing bodies, school districts, state agencies, federal agencies, or incorporated organizations are eligible to apply for funds. Incorporated organizations are those that are incorporated under Ch. 181, Wis. Stats., whose primary purpose is promoting, encouraging, or engaging in outdoor recreation trails activities.

The following table summarizes entities and organizations that are eligible for RTP grant awards. Additional eligibility details for each program are provided in the “Program Description” sections below. Entities that are not directly eligible for these grant programs are encouraged to consider partnering with eligible entities.

Rec. Trails Program	
Local Governments (Towns, Villages, Cities, & Counties)	Y
Tribal Governments	Y
Lake sanitary districts and public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts ¹	N
Nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs) whose primary purpose includes acquisition of property for conservation purposes ²	N
Nonprofit organizations with a primary purpose of promoting, encouraging, or engaging in trail activities ⁴	Y
Incorporated trail organizations ⁴	Y
School districts / UW System	Y

¹ Lake Sanitary Districts are further defined in S. 30.50(4q), Wis. Stats.

² NCOs are further defined in S. 23.0955(1), Wis. Stats., Ch. NR 51.002(21), Wis. Admin. Code, and Ch. NR 51.04, Wis. Admin. Code.

³ NCOs are eligible to receive Local Assistance Grants for land acquisition projects only. Local Assistance regulations apply.

⁴ Further defined in S. 181.0103(17), Wis. Stats.

Application Submittal Process, Application Deadline, and Grant Award Timeframe

Application deadlines

Complete grant applications must be submitted electronically. Please use zip files, the file transfer portal, WiBox: <https://wibox.wi.gov/messageportal/#/dropoff> or email application materials to your Regional Project Manager by 11:59 pm on **March 1, 2026**.

If you cannot open the application forms, or you are getting an error message rather than a grant application form, it's likely due to an incompatibility issue between your web browser and the PDF format. Troubleshooting tips are available here: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/site/pdf>.

Contact a Regional Project Manager for information or questions regarding required application components. See page 2 for contact information.

Timing of grant evaluation and award – If your project is selected for funding, you will be notified of a *tentative* award approximately 3-4 months after application deadline. Final award (via a grant agreement) and payment will be subject to several additional required reviews. **The time between submitting a complete application and receiving a grant agreement ranges from 6 to 12 months depending on the details of each project.** While we strive to make tentative grant awards as quickly as possible, applicants should keep this timeframe in mind when applying for a RTP grant.

Application Materials

The following documents are required as part of a complete grant application. Please contact a regional Project Manager for information about required documents and documentation examples. Application materials, forms, and example documents are available at:

- RTP – [Recreational Trails Program \(RTP\) | Wisconsin DNR](#) (see Applying tab)

Recreational Trail Program Required Application Documents		
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Grant Application (Form 8700-191R) – <i>Must be Signed by Project Applicant</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Response to Ranking Questions & Criteria (Form 8700-338R) and required documentation
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Grant Applicant Governing Board Resolution supporting the project and approval of budgeted matching funds. Refer to a sample resolution template found at ExampleResolution.pdf
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Project Location Map. Applicant can use WisDOT County maps to indicate location.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	Aerial photo of project area of disturbance. Applicant can use Surface Water Data Viewer WDNR to create.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	Site Plan (<i>for Development Projects: show facilities to be constructed with grant assistance</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	Cost Estimate Worksheet (Form 8700-014)
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	Environmental Hazards Assessment Form (Form 1800-001)
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	Remediation Plan and (if available) signed DNR Final Close-out Letter (<i>applicable only to projects with brownfields</i>).
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	Copy of related Grant Application and/or Grant Agreement (<i>applicable only if applicant is proposing a grant as all or part of their local match</i>).
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	Required permits, if available.

Governing Board Resolution Requirements

A current signed resolution (within the past 2 years) from the applicant's governing board is required as part of the application. A resolution provides the DNR with an official approval of the project and the governing board's commitment of funding to complete the project. The resolution must include:

1. A statement that the applicant has budgeted enough funds to complete the project or acquisition.
2. The name of an authorized representative designated (by title) to act on behalf of the applicant to:
 - a. Submit an application;
 - b. Submit reimbursement claims along with necessary supporting documentation 60 days of project completion date; and
 - c. Take necessary action to undertake, direct, and complete the approved project.
3. A statement that the applicant will comply with all local, state, and federal rules, regulations, and ordinances relating to the project and maintain the completed project in an attractive, inviting, and safe manner; will keep the facilities open to the general public during reasonable hours consistent with the type of facility; and will obtain from the DNR or the National Park Service approval in writing before any change is made in the use of the project site.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to refer to a sample resolution template found at:

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/RTP.html> (see Applying tab)

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (NR 50 requirement for RTP)

For projects supported with RTP grants, the proposed project needs to be consistent with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) adopted by the DNR.

See Wisconsin's latest SCORP <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fl/PropertyPlanning/Scorp>

Applicant Share (Matching Funds)

Project applicants are required to provide matching funds equal to or greater than the amount of the grant award. RTP requires a 20% match. Eligible sources of matching funds must be identified in the grant application. Common eligible sources of matching funds include:

- Applicant funds.
- Financial donations from private organizations and individuals.
- Municipal labor, equipment, and materials provided by the municipal applicant (i.e. "Force account")
- In-kind donations of labor, services, materials, and equipment from private organizations and individuals. Professional service donations (e.g. engineering services, landscape design, etc.) are valued at an hourly rate consistent with similar professionals in the same part of the state. Donations of unskilled labor are calculated at an hourly rate consistent with federal minimum wage and must be documented on Volunteer Labor Forms found on the grants webpages.
- Federal grants can typically be used as match funding for state grants and vice versa. In most cases, federal grants cannot be used to provide matching funds for other federal grants. Contact a regional Project Manager to determine which funding sources can be used for match funding.

Acquisition Projects

The RTP grant program falls under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) so acquisition applications are not being accepted for 2026 (State fiscal year 2027) due to the timeframe that must be met.

Development Projects

Grant awards for development projects are based on costs associated with the development activities outlined in the grant application. Note that construction costs incurred prior to the date of the grant award are not eligible for reimbursement or match. For development projects applicants must own the property or have an easement or lease that provides legal access for the purposes of the project. The lease must have a minimum 15-year lease for Recreational Trails Program supported projects.

For rehabilitation, maintenance or development projects grant recipients must comply with state and federal procurement requirements for bidding, wages, and procurement of goods and services. See ProcurementGuide.pdf (Wisconsin.gov). Also see additional procurement requirements in the RTP section below.

RTP Program Requirements:

For information on the following RTP program requirements, please also check the RTP webpage: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/RTP.html>.

- Americans with Disabilities Act: projects involving development or modification of facilities must comply with 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act requirements to the greatest extent practicable. DNR guidance is available at: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Aid/grants/CF0031.pdf> (see also below)
- Buy America, Build America (BABA) specific to the RTP program (effective August 16, 2023) **If the total amount of the federal funding for a project is below \$500,000, the Buy America requirements for iron, steel, manufactured product, and construction materials is waived. If the total amount of the federal funding for a project is \$500,000 or more, the allowable threshold for noncompliant products is the lesser of \$1,000,000 or 5% of total applicable costs for the project. However, if the noncompliant products include iron, steel, manufactured products, the FHWA's threshold amount of 0.1% of the total contract amount or \$2,500 applies.** See <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/08/16/2023-17602/waiver-of-buy-america-requirements-for-de-minimis-costs-and-small-grants#further-info>
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program: see <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-business/civil-rights/dbe/default.aspx> for information.
- Davis-Bacon Act: see below for information regarding prevailing wage requirements.

The Recreational Trails Program promotes the following:

- Use of Youth Conservation Corps or Service Corps (<https://corpsnetwork.org>)
- Trails Designed for Universal Use

E-bikes Guidance:

- Under the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), 23 U.S.C. § 206(a), electric bikes, electric scooters, and personal mobility devices (such as a Segway) are considered motorized uses. See the American Trails website for more information: <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/basic-facts-on-department-of-justice-rule-on-power-driven-mobility-devices-for-accessibility>.
- Motorized recreation is different for RTP: it includes any motorized vehicle except for motorized wheelchairs.
- A trail that allows both bicycles and electric bicycles is considered a diverse trail and not a nonmotorized trail or a motorized trail for funding category purposes.
- If a trail is built as a nonmotorized trail, e-bikes should be prohibited.
 - Some state laws don't match with Federal law in this respect.

Americans with Disability Act

Projects involving development or modification of facilities must comply with 2010 Americans with Disabilities Act requirements to the greatest extent practicable. DNR guidance is available at: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Aid/grants/CF0031.pdf> . Please consult with an American Disabilities Act Specialist to ensure your project is meeting these requirements.

Labor Requirements and Davis-Bacon Wages Rates

If all or part of your project occurs within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway* you will need to follow these additional regulations:

- Davis-Bacon Act - federal prevailing wage law that applies to contracts and subcontracts in excess of \$2,000 (does not apply to force account work performed by highway agency forces) (23 U.S.C. 113).
- Convict (Inmate) labor is not allowed unless performed by persons who are on parole, supervised release, or probation (23 U.S.C. 114(b))

** Under title 23, all public roads are Federal-aid highways, except those that are functionally classified as local roads or rural minor collectors.*

IMPORTANT PROJECT LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

- **If your development is planned for property or a structure in a floodplain**, please contact your local floodplain zoning administrator, or [DNR floodplain engineer](#). There have been recent changes to the standard ordinance due to flood events in recent years and technical staff can aid with compliance with the ordinance interpretation and design, as well as data modeling for flood resilience.
- **DNR technical assistance for local floodplain administration** is welcome and often necessary to protect consistency statewide for ordinance standards. The standard floodplain ordinance is administered at the County or local level. Standard ordinance is reflective of state and federal requirements. DNR floodplain engineers assist municipalities on technical questions & reviews (H&H) for planned changes within the floodplain. A floodplain is considered to be the channel of a

river or stream plus the surrounding area which is covered by flood water during the regional flood, per Ch. NR 116.03, Wis. Admin. Code.

Please see <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/floodplains/modelZoningOrdinances.html> for more information.

- **Wetlands/Waterways:** For projects in or near a navigable waterway or wetland, the following resources are available:
 - Surface Water Data Viewer: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/surfacewater/swdv/>
 - Wetland ID Service: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Wetlands/identification.html>
 - Waterway/wetland questions hotline: (608) 267-3125 or DNRWMSPublicInquiry@wisconsin.govPlease work with [DNR staff](#) to determine permitting and regulatory requirements as early as possible in your project development process.

Long-term Obligations for Grant Recipients

Terms and conditions for property developed, rehabilitated or maintained with RTP grants are outlined in the grant agreement or contract and include all applicable state and federal statutes and codes. It is important for potential applicants to understand long-term obligations that are associated with these grant programs, as some of these obligations apply in perpetuity. Details about long-term obligations for grant recipients are available from regional Project Managers. The following are several key requirements:

- **Ownership:** Grant recipients must retain legal control and oversight of the property (via fee title ownership, permanent easement or for some grant programs leases are allowed) and maintain facilities on the property developed with a RTP grant. Transfer of ownership of property developed with a grant requires written approval from the DNR and applicable federal agency.
- **Clear Title of project area:** Grant recipients must demonstrate that the title to the project site or property to acquire does not contain any issues that impact the legal authority of the applicant to construct the proposed development project or acquire the grant-funded property.
- **Public Access:** Grant recipients must ensure that the grant property or facility remains open to the public for outdoor recreation, consistent with provisions of the original grant contract. Recipients may place reasonable access restrictions on grant properties (e.g. closing a park during nighttime hours).
- **Reasonable User Fees:** Grant recipients may charge reasonable user fees (e.g. state park daily entrance or camping fee) to defray operation and maintenance costs. However, any income accruing from the property should be used for purposes that support the original grant project application.

RTP Useful Life Requirements:

1. If the trail property is **acquired** with RTP funding, the area must be used for the trail category purposes for which it was funded for at least 20 years. After 20 years, if the grantee is no longer able to maintain the trail or trailhead facilities, the area will need to remain in outdoor recreational use in perpetuity. See **NOTE** below.
2. If the trail property is **developed** with RTP funding after May 1, 1991, the area must be used for the trail category purposes for which it was funded for at least 20 years. After 20 years, if the grantee is no longer able to maintain the trail or trailhead facilities, approval from the WDNR and FHWA to abandon the project area is required. See **NOTE** below.
3. If the trail property receives funding for **rehabilitation** of a trail or trailhead facility, the project area must be used for the trail category purposes for which it was funded for at least 20 years. See **NOTE** below.

4. If the trail property receives funding for **maintenance** of a trail or trailhead facility, the project area must be used for the trail category purposes for which it was funded for at least 5 years. If property received development or rehabilitation funding within the last 15 years, the project area must be used for the trail category purposes for which it was funded until the development or rehabilitation grant has reached its useful life if the **NOTE** below does not apply.
5. If the trail property is located on public or private land and has a lease or easement but the lease or easement is not renewed after 20 years, the property is no longer required to be maintained for trail use. Trails on private property with a lease or easement less than 15 years at the time of application are not eligible for RTP funding.*

NOTE: If the trail was open for use on May 1, 1991, and was predominantly used by nonmotorized recreational trail users and motorized uses were prohibited or had not occurred, then the trail can not be upgraded, expanded or otherwise facilitated for motorized use. This is a permanent ban and no useful life provision.** If the trail was open for use on or after May 2, 1991, this prohibition does not apply.

* The DNR lease maximum length is 15 years (s. 23.305(3) Wis. Stats).

** Federal Highways Administration Recreational Trails Program Guidance

Reimbursement

Payment of grant funds is on a reimbursement basis. Accurate and comprehensive documentation of project costs is critical. As applicable to the project and grant program, applicants will be required to submit a DNR Grant Payment Request ([Form 8700-001](#)) and detailed documentation (e.g. proof-of purchase, proof-of-payment, force account details, etc.) prior to reimbursement.

Because RTP is federal funding, applicants are also required to complete DNR Form 9300-230 titled Grant Partner Cost Sharing or Matching Report;

<http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/forms/9300/9300-230.pdf>

The completed form must be completed and submitted to DNR along with each reimbursement request.

Pre-engineering costs for development projects are NOT eligible under RTP grants. Contact a regional Project Manager for more information about eligible and ineligible costs for the RTP grant program and reimbursement documentation requirements.

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/RTP.html> (see Reimbursement tab)

Ranking Criteria

Below are the criteria DNR uses to score, rank, and select projects RTP grant awards. Criteria reflect program eligibility and priorities outlined in public law, statute, code, and policy. Upon receipt of an application, DNR staff review information submitted and score the application relative to the criteria outlined below and program eligibility.

Applicants should provide a narrative response to each question below as stated on Form 8700-338R.

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/RTP.html> (see Applying tab)

Form 8700-338R and any required supporting documentation should be submitted with the application package. Supporting documentation can either be linked with an active weblink, or provided as a referred attachment with application. If documentation is not provided, the applicant will not be awarded points for the criteria question. Please complete all sections A, B, & D of the 8700-338R form.

RTP Scoring Category Definitions:

Rehabilitation

- Restoration of trails, trailheads, and trailhead facilities that have been damaged/worn, restoring facilities to their former condition.
- Culvert replacement
- Trail re-route that extends outside of the original footprint by less than one acre
- Resurfacing trail with new material (e.g. was gravel, now pavement; adding new gravel to a trail segment that is damaged due to heavy use)
- Repairing/updating trailhead or trailhead facilities (replacement of items, e.g. roof, parts of wood structure, lights)
- Project within original footprint
- Replacing something that is already there
- Bridge replacement or total deck and rail replacement

Maintenance

- Maintaining or preserving; keeping trails, trailheads, and trailhead facilities in good condition.
- Brushing, grooming, or mowing
- Minor miscellaneous (replacing parts of a railing or a few boards on a bridge; adding gravel to small area(s) of a trail; adding riprap to a bridge abutment)
- Resurfacing with same material in short sections of the trail
- Minor repairs of trailhead or trailhead facilities (signs; painting and filling holes of parking lots; replacing lightbulbs or plexiglass/acrylic, etc.)
- Project within original footprint
- Fixing or maintaining what is already there

Development

- Growth, expansion, or development of new trails, trailheads, and trailhead facilities.
- Constructing new trailhead or trailhead facility (restrooms, kiosks)
- Construction of new trails, trail linkages (segments)
- Major trail re-routes (due to loss of easement, ground washout/sinkhole, unsafe bridge, etc.)
- Project extends outside of original footprint by more than 1 acre

Acquisition (**NOTE: applications for acquisition projects are not being accepted for 2026, State Fiscal Year 2027**)

SECTION A: All RTP Applicants

All applicants must provide a narrative response to each question in this section.

Initial Eligibility Ranking Questions		Max. Points	Question Details and Documentation Notes
1	<p>STATE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN (SCORP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project support a goal identified in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)? 	No points. Question is an eligibility requirement.	Please identify the specific goal(s) in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, supported by the proposed project.
2	<p>LEGAL RIGHT TO CONSTRUCT (Trail Rehabilitation, Maintenance or Development Projects):</p> <p>The applicant has the legal right to construct, operate and maintain the proposed project and meet post-grant compliance requirements.</p> <p>For RTP, must be located on public land or have a lease or easement for at least 15 years. Property with development/rehabilitation projects must be open and maintained for at least 20 years. Property with maintenance projects must be open and maintained for at least 5 years. If a property received development funding for rehabilitation within the last 15 years the project area must be used for trail purposes until the development or rehabilitation grant has reached its useful life.</p>	No points. Question is an eligibility requirement.	State your authority to construct and submit copy of deed, lease, easement, memorandum of understanding, or other documentation to support your response. Draft lease or easement documents are acceptable if negotiation of key components (e.g. legal description, compensation) have been deemed acceptable to all parties.

SECTION B: All RTP Applicants

All applicants must provide a narrative response to each question in this section.

Ranking Questions		Max. Points	Question Details and Documentation Notes
3	<p>GREEN TIER:</p> <p>The applicant is a designated Green Tier Legacy community. (0.1 pt.)</p>	0.1	<p>See the Green Tier website for eligible Legacy Communities for this point.</p> <p>https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/GreenTier/Participants/CharterPages/LegacyCommunities.html</p>
4	<p>RAILROAD CORRIDOR:</p> <p>The project will acquire or develop an abandoned rail corridor for outdoor recreation. (0.1 pt.)</p>	0.1	This tiebreaker is only awarded for the acquisition or initial development of a property.

5	<p>SAFE ACCESS: Users have an existing opportunity for safe and legal parking and access to the project site or the proposed project will significantly improve safe and legal access to the site. (0.1 pt.)</p>	0.1	Projects that provide access only via roadside parking would not receive points for this question.
6	<p>RURAL PROSPERITY INITIATIVE: The project area is located in a rural city, village, town, of less than 2,500 residents. (1 pt.)</p>	1	The majority of the project area needs to be located in a rural city, village, town or township of less than 2,500 residents. If project spans multiple municipalities all need to meet the less than 2,500 pop.
7	<p>PROJECT ADDRESSED IN PLANS OTHER THAN A CORP OR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: The project is referenced in or supports other applicable plans, such as a local green space plan, integrated resource management plan, riverfront restoration plan, water quality plan, or other applicable plan approved by a governmental unit (including DNR Master Plans or State Trail Plans). (1 pt.)</p>	1	<p>Provide copies of the plan cover page and page(s) that describe the subject project.</p> <p>The SCORP is not considered an additional plan.</p>
8	<p>PREVIOUS GRANT COMPLETION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has successfully completed and closed all previous Stewardship Local Assistance, LWCF, or RTP grants. (1 pt.) • Applicant did not receive a Stewardship Local Assistance, LWCF, or RTP grant in application years 2021-2025 (3 pt.) and applicant has closed all grants issued prior to said application years. 	4	<p>Applicants should provide a list of applicable grants.</p> <p>Stewardship Local Assistance, LWCF, or RTP development/rehabilitation grant applications received in 2024 (Fiscal Year 2025)</p> <p>RTP maintenance grants automatically receive these 4 points.</p>

SECTION B, cont'd

Ranking Questions		Max. Points	Question Details and Documentation Notes
9	<p>ACCESS TO OTHER OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES: The proposed project provides direct access to other existing developed facilities, such as campground, fishing pier, local park, etc. (1 pt.)</p>	1	Provide documentation that shows the relationship between the proposed project and the existing facility/facilities.
10	<p>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION: The project is being developed in close cooperation between two separate governmental entities. (2 pts.)</p> <p>Note: Nonprofits are not eligible for these points.</p> <p>The project will fulfill goals for two separate governmental entities. Both entities will contribute to the project either financially (land, matching funds), with labor or management of the property once the project is complete.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The project is being developed in a joint effort between two or more governmental entities.</p>	2	<p>Provide plan name, copy of cover page, and page number/chapter reference, if applicable.</p> <p>The partner jurisdiction must have a joint role in the project, such as voluntary contribution of matching funds or force account services. Letters of support are not sufficient to receive these points. Regional projects that are being developed cooperatively by multiple governmental entities also will receive credit for this question. Land owned by one government entity and developed by a separate government entity would be eligible for these points (land use agreements or memorandum of agreement are eligible).</p>
11	<p>SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY: Project will use sustainable and green infrastructure practices and products in its development/construction projects:</p> <p>Applicant will take steps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Contributors to Climate Change Examples: reduce heat island effect, cool/green roofs, canopy improvement, use of renewable/zero emissions energy sources, etc. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Water Quality Examples: stormwater retention and/or filtering (bio basins for site), eliminate impervious surfaces, use of pervious pavements, protection and restoration of wetlands, provide public a source for contaminate-free drinking water. (1 pt.) 	1	<p>Applicant should describe the way materials, design, and other project elements promote and reduce contributors to climate change, improve water quality or similar sustainability principles.</p> <p>For development projects, applicants should provide documentation regarding the extent to which proposed practices or products are above-and-beyond traditional construction. Examples include stormwater retention ponds exceeding the size of the requirements or designing trails to avoid tree removal will be considered reducing heat island effect.</p> <p>Installation of solar lighting will qualify for the point. Use of LED lighting is standard practice and will not result in receiving the point.</p> <p>Crushed gravel is considered an impervious surface.</p>

SECTION D: RTP Eligible Projects

Applicants with a project that is eligible for RTP grants should provide a response to questions in Section D. All other applicants should answer "N/A" to questions in this section.

Ranking Questions		Max. Points	Question Details and Documentation Notes
12	<p>RTP PROJECT TYPE (see page 17 in Guidance Booklet for Definitions):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation and/or Maintenance (8 pts.) • Development (3 pts.) 	8	Projects that include more than one activity type will be reviewed to determine which category is appropriate.
13	<p>YEAR-ROUND USE: Project area is open for year-round use. (1 pt.)</p> <p>Project area is also open for year-round motorized use. (0.5 pt.)</p>	1.5	To qualify for the 0.5 points the trail must be open to either (a.) year-round ATV/UTV, or (b.) warm season ATV/UTV and cold season Snowmobile.
14	<p>NUMBER OF COMPATIBLE USES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motorized Activities: 1 pt. if any of the following are allowed on the trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ATV/UTVs - Off-highway motorcycles - Snowmobiles - E-bikes - E-scooters - Segways • Pedestrian Activities: 1 pt. if any of the following are allowed on the trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-country skiing (ungroomed) - Hiking/walking/jogging/running - In-line skating - Photography - Snowshoeing - Wildlife observation/bird watching • Other Activities: 1 pt. if any of the following are allowed on the trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biking - Canoe/kayak access - Cross-country skiing (groomed) - Horses 	3	Please list all compatible uses for the project area. Compatible uses can include a mix of motorized and nonmotorized uses (e.g. hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or using other off-road motorized vehicles). All uses must share the same project (trail) area to be counted. Points can also be given for trailhead and restroom projects.
15	<p>RESOLVES CONFLICTS BETWEEN USERS: Proposed trail project will provide for increased safety of recreational users by separating uses on a shared corridor, e.g. separating motorized use from nonmotorized, establishing trail segments to resolve pedestrian conflicts, or creating pedestrian paths at blind curves. (1 pt.)</p>	1	Typically, user conflicts are resolved via development projects, not rehabilitation or maintenance. Resolution may occur through development of separate trails for different use types, etc. Applicants must provide documentation regarding historical user conflicts on the existing trail.

SECTION D, cont'd

Ranking Questions		Max. Points	Question Details and Documentation Notes
16	<p>TRAIL PATROL: The applicant has the ability to ensure enforcement and safety for trail users, either directly or through cooperative agreements with non-governmental organizations or other governmental entities. (1 pt.)</p>	1	Applicants may receive points for this question if the applicant patrols the trail or if the applicant has a written trail patrol agreement with another non-state entity. An email or letter from the local police or similar enforcement entity stating how often they check the trail is sufficient.
17	<p>SAFE TRAIL DESIGN: Proposed project area does not cross or use any public motorized vehicular or access roads unless the road is closed for maintenance seasonally or is a maintenance-only road. Trailhead-only projects receive this point and water trails can receive this point if there are no portages that cross public motorized vehicular roads. (1 pt.)</p>	1	<p>Applicants should provide a map showing the proposed project relative to the overall trail system, roads, and bridges.</p> <p>For full credit on this question (1 pt.), the project needs to be located completely off the road surface with no at-grade crossings. The only exception are roads that are closed to motorized vehicles seasonally (when trail use is in effect), or roads that are used for maintenance-only access to a property.</p> <p>If a driveway crosses the trail, the applicant may not receive this point.</p>
18	<p>QUALIFIED YCC OR SERVICE CORPS: Applicant has entered into a contract or service agreement with a state youth conservation or service corps to perform construction or maintenance on the project. (2 pts.)</p>	2	<p>Applicants should provide a copy of the contract, service agreement or letter of intent.</p> <p>Corps Network: https://corpsnetwork.org</p>
19	<p>LOCAL DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEER SUPPORT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project will include donations of labor materials, and/or equipment from sources other than the applicant unless the applicant is a non-governmental entity. (1 pt.) • Donations comprise 20% or more of the total project cost. (1 pt.) • Applicant manages the trail system where the project area is located but does not own the property and has a written agreement in place with the property owner for this management. (1 pt.) 	3	Letters of support are not sufficient to receive points for this question. Applicants must provide letters of commitment from local contributors, proof of budget approval, or similar documentation of financial support and provide management agreement documentation.
20	<p>TRAIL CONNECTIVITY (Development Only): The applicant will develop a new segment of a linear corridor that connects one or more segments of an already established trail. Off-road trail connections only. (2 pts.)</p>	2	<p>Provide a narrative description of the relationship between the proposed project and the linear corridor. This does not apply to trails leading into campgrounds, parks, etc. unless directly connecting to another trail.</p> <p>Applicants should include a map that shows the off-road trail connectivity. Exception for on-road bridge connection.</p>