



# Application Guidelines

## Project Selection Criteria

Applications for Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program assistance are competitively evaluated based on how well the applications meet the following criteria:

1. The project has specific goals and results for conservation and recreation expected in the near future.
2. Roles and contributions of project partners are substantive and well-defined.
3. There is evidence of broad community support for the project.
4. The anticipated role for the National Park Service is clear and fits the [National Park Service mission](#).
5. The project advances one or more key National Park Service strategic objectives.

## How to Prepare the Application

### **Project Description:**

Concisely identify:

- a) Vision and summary statement of the overall project goal;
- b) Tangible outcomes of the project (recreational opportunities developed, plan creation, development of ideas and goals, miles, acres);
- c) What has been accomplished with the project to date;
- d) Governmental/organizational support/recognition; endorsements from elected officials and boards;
- e) The direct benefit to the community of implementing the project (i.e. recreational or conservation opportunities in areas with little to no access);
- f) Geographic location of your project and characteristics of that location (rural, coastal, wetland, urban, etc.); and
- g) Important demographic characteristics of the project area that will benefit or be impacted with creation and/or addition of recreational opportunities.

### **Applicant and Partner Roles:**

Please explain the roles and contributions of the applicant and partners. If there are potential partners that have not been contacted but that you are or will reach out to, please list these also along with the anticipated roles and contributions.

Commitment letters should be provided by at least three partners listed in the application. Commitment letters need to include project partner's role, contributions, and responsibilities in the project. Form commitment letters or those that have identical language with different signatures are not acceptable.

### **Public Support**

Please explain current or past public support, meetings, outreach, etc. Discuss past and future methods of garnering support as well as any future plans for public outreach, participation, community inclusion, or governmental/organizational support.

### **National Park Service Assistance:**

The NPS can help with many aspects of your project. Provide a short description of the kind of assistance needed by your project; prioritize needs in order of importance. The following are examples of assistance that the NPS has provided to projects in the past:

Defining project vision and goals—Assistance with focusing ideas and thoughts into a well-defined project vision with tangible goals.

Identifying and analyzing issues and opportunities— Assistance with clarifying challenges, evaluating choices, seeking and providing solutions/opportunities and developing action plans.

Assessing and engaging partners and stakeholders— Assistance with reviewing current partners/stakeholders, reevaluating current engagement strategies, developing new partnerships and engagement strategies, and identifying new/different stakeholders.

Inventory and mapping of community resources— Assistance with identifying and mapping existing and possible resources and connections to provide a comprehensive inventory for planning and implementation

Priority setting and consensus building— Assistance with facilitating discussion of partners and communities to set project priorities, ensure all voices are recognized and build consensus among the varied voices.

Identifying funding sources— Assistance with reviewing current/past funding sources, reviewing grant applications, and identifying new grant sources. Please remember that we do not provide funds or fundraise for your project but we can help develop a funding strategy to include grant sources, local businesses, and other organizations.

Organizational development— Assistance with developing and organizing a sustainable group, advisory committee, or organization to help implement the project's goals.

Designing community outreach and participation strategies— Assistance with designing community engagement and outreach strategies to gather and maximize input and to reach all members of the community.

Planning (trail, park, open space, greenway, water trail, etc.)— Assistance with developing/creating conceptual plans for projects based upon stakeholder and community input. Components include inventorying existing conditions, analyzing options, considering safety issues, and the engaging project partners to create conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities in local communities.

### **National Park Service Strategic Objectives**

The National Park Service has specific objectives and measurable actions to integrate our mission, leverage resources and expand our contributions to society. Listed below are the strategic objectives for the 2015 project year. Projects that have one or more of these strategic objectives are given emphasis in the project selection process. If your project does incorporate any of these objectives, please describe how the project will address/implement the objective(s), specific partners (youth, health, nearby national parks, community organizations) that will help address/implement the objective(s), and/or elements of your project that address the objectives.

- a. Builds partnerships with health and wellness organizations to promote healthy lifestyles;
- b. Engages youth or youth organizations to promote close-to-home resource conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation opportunities;
- c. Develops and/or improves connections to parks, rivers, trails, and greenways in diverse urban areas and communities with limited resources and facilities;
- d. Develops or improves access to National Park Service sites by enhancing connections to nearby communities;
- e. Advances the protection and stewardship of large natural landscapes (parks, open spaces, and working lands) through partnerships;
- f. Expands public access to water resources, such as creeks, rivers, lakes, bays, and coasts, and the development of water trails.

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## **How to Apply**

Please [contact](#) the regional NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program office closest to your project as early as possible before the August 1 application deadline to discuss your proposed project and inform us of your intent to apply. We encourage applicants to consult with National Park Service staff about their proposal at least 30 days prior to the application deadline to ensure that our assistance is appropriate for your proposal and that your application is the best that it can be. Staff can help with application questions and assist with formulating an application. Remember - it's never too early to talk to us about your project.

By August 1, send your completed application package via email or by U.S. mail to your National Park Service [Regional Program Manager](#).

- Completed Application package includes
  - Completed application form
  - Site location map
  - At least three commitment letters
  - Supplementary information that can help us learn more about your project (background documents, examples of media coverage, support letters, maps, list of links to resources, etc.)