



Application Guidelines

Project Selection Criteria

Applications for Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program 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 (NPS) is clear and fits the [National Park Service mission](#).
 5. The project advances one or more key National Park Service strategic initiatives (see section 5).
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How to Prepare the Application

1. **Project Description:**

Concisely identify:

- a. Your 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. Project accomplishments to date;
- d. Support: governmental/organizational support/recognition; endorsements from elected officials and boards, etc.;
- e. Community benefits that would result from implementing the proposed project (i.e. recreational opportunities in areas with little to no recreational access);
- f. Geographic location of your project and characteristics of that location (rural, coastal, wetland, urban, specific areas within a city or county, etc.);
- g. Important demographic characteristics of your project area that will benefit or be impacted with creation and/or addition of recreational opportunities.

2. Applicant and Partner Roles:

Please identify and explain the roles and commitment/services of the applicant and partners.

Commitment letters should be provided by each partner; listed in the application. Commitment letters need to include project partner's role, contributions, and responsibilities in the project.

3. 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. Provide letters of support from three key stakeholders.

4. 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.

5. National Park Service Strategic Initiatives

Listed below are the National Park Service strategic initiatives. Projects that contribute to one or more of these strategic initiatives are given emphasis in the project selection process. Please describe how the project will address/implement the initiatives.

- a. Builds partnerships with health and wellness organizations to promote healthy parks and healthy people;
- b. Engages youth or youth organizations to promote close-to-home resource conservation, stewardship, and outdoor recreation opportunities;
- c. Develops and/or improves local connections to parks, rivers, trails, and greenways within urban areas;
- d. Improves public access to National Park Service sites by enhancing connections to local communities;
- e. Advances the conservation and stewardship of natural landscapes;
- f. Expands public access to water resources, such as water trails, portages, and adjacent recreational opportunities.

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

- Completed Application package include:
 - Completed application form
 - Site location map
 - Commitment letters from each partner
 - 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.)