

2026 Recreational Trails Program Grant Workshop

March 24, 2026

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation
Division of Planning & Recreation Resources



Webinar Information:

- Webinar is being recorded and transcribed. Video and slides will be posted to website.
- Enter questions into Q&A box at any time. We will stop periodically to respond. At the end of the webinar, microphones will be activated for spoken questions.
- To turn on captions: in upper right of screen, click *... More > Language and speech > Show live captions*

Agenda

- **RTP Overview & Funding**
- **Eligibility**
- **Grant Administration & Procedures**
- **Application Process**
- **Application Guidance**

Recreational Trails Program



RTP 350D230 – Appalachian Conservation Corps

Purpose

To develop and maintain public recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized use.

Funding

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
FY21-26 – IIJA/BIL

RTP in Virginia

Since 1993, over 380 projects awarded

Award Basics

Payments

Made on reimbursement basis; must pay upfront then request periodic reimbursements

Match Requirement

Minimum 20% of total project cost (ie. 25% of grant amount)

Funding Rates for past five years:

Grant Round	Applications Received	Applications Funded	Percent Funded	Requested Funds	Awarded Funds
2021	35	9	26%	\$ 9,135,800	\$ 2,140,579
2022	22	5	23%	\$ 5,476,796	\$ 1,511,889
2023	25	9	36%	\$ 4,010,807	\$ 1,652,000
2024	29	7	24%	\$ 6,304,857	\$ 2,101,260
2025	24	12	50%	\$ 4,380,961	\$ 1,798,344

RTP Categories

Category	Description	Examples
Diversified/ Multi-use 40%	Multiple non-motorized uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared use pedestrian and cycling path• Hiking, plus mtn biking or equestrian trail• Trailhead that serves a hiking trail and kayak launch
Non-motorized (single use) 30%	Single non-motorized use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian hiking trail or walking path• Mountain bike-only trail• Bicycle pump track• Canoe/kayak launch
Motorized 30%	Single or multiple motorized uses*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ATV, UTV, and/or OHV trails• Motocross track• Motorboat launch ramp

*Motorized can allow non-motorized uses but must be primarily designed for motorized

2026 Funding and Award Amounts

Category	Funding Available	# Grants Anticipated	Minimum Request	Maximum Grant Award
Diversified/ Multi-use	\$590,000	2-4	\$50,000	\$300,000
Non-motorized single use	\$435,000	2-4	\$50,000	\$250,000
Motorized	\$435,000	1-3	\$50,000	\$435,000*

*Motorized maximum may be lower if multiple competitive applications received

2026 Schedule

- **March 10** – Grant round opened
- **Tuesday May 5** – **Applications due via email by 4pm**
- **May-June** – Applications reviewed by DCR and Advisory Committee
- **Late June** – Applicants of projects recommended for funding are contacted
- **Late July** – Applicants not funded are notified
- **July-August** – Site inspections and preparing FHWA documents
- **September (tentative)** – Project authorizations and grant agreements*

*Do not begin work until grant agreement is signed

Applicant Eligibility



RTP 326N190 – Shenandoah Valley
Bicycle Coalition

- Local governments
- State agencies
- Tribal governments
- Federal government agencies
- Public recreation government entities (park authorities, park agencies, etc.)
- Non-Profit Organizations (must have letter of support from local government body)

Public Access and Right-of-Way

Projects must remain open to the public for a minimum of 10 years following grant closeout

At time of application, property must be either:

- Owned by a local, state, federal, or tribal governmental entity, or
- If privately-owned, must be protected by an easement or other legally-binding agreement that allows the work to occur and ensures public access*

If property not owned by applicant: Letter of support from property owner



RTP 323M190 – Isle of Wight
County

*At application must be effective through 3 year grant period, at closeout must be effective for minimum of 10 additional years

Eligible Match

- Cash
- Force account labor from applicant
- Equipment use rates
- Other grants
- Volunteer labor (\$34.42/hr)
- In-kind or donated labor, materials, equipment (professional services valued at local market rates)
- Pre-award environmental review and design costs incurred within 18 months of award date (from March 2025)



RTP 355N230 – DCR Division of Natural Heritage

All non-cash match must be outlined in **application and proposed budget** and **written into the grant agreement.**

Eligible Project Types for 2026



RTP 339N210 – Hampton Roads Sanitation District

- Construction*, maintenance, rehabilitation of trails
- Development or rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and/or amenities on land and water trails
- Features that increase access for people with disabilities
- Lease or purchase of trail construction and maintenance equipment
- If on-the-ground work is also included:
 - Acquisition of easements and fee simple property
 - Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance

*In odd years (2025, 2027, etc.) only existing trail maintenance and amenities are eligible

Cost Eligibility

Eligible

- Preliminary engineering (design, engineering, NEPA environmental review, permitting, bid advertisement)
- Grant administration
- Force account labor + fringe for project – related work
- Contractor or consultant services
- Construction materials
- Trail construction & maintenance equipment
- Trail amenities (signs, interpretative aids, lighting, benches)

Ineligible

- Indirect costs
- Feasibility studies
- Food or gifts
- Ornamental landscaping
- Rental equipment for trail users
- Most legal fees
- Penalties or late payment fees
- Costs incurred before agreement date (except certain preliminary engineering costs as match)

Ineligible Project Examples

- Boat launches on lakes or other waters without water trail or blueway designation
- Fishing piers
- Recreational facilities not directly supporting trail use (playgrounds, sports fields, campgrounds accessed by vehicle)
- Multi-use facilities near recreational trails (visitor centers, community centers)
- Equipment for general grounds maintenance
- Design or preliminary engineering funding-only (must have constructed element)
- Purchase of property for future trail development (eligible if development also occurring with RTP project)

RTP Grant Project Administration

Pre-Award



- Listed contact will be notified
- Virtual kick-off meeting followed by on-site pre-work inspection
- Finalize Scope of Work statement and other project details
- DCR submits the project information to FHWA for authorization
- Grant is authorized by FHWA, subaward agreement between DCR and applicant is signed

Grant Phases – 1. Preliminary Engineering

- Usually first 12-18 months
- Completion of design and construction plans
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review & Section 106 historic review
- Prepare bid documents
- Acquire permits, if applicable



RTP 340N210 – City of Richmond

Environmental Review

- ALL PROJECTS must complete NEPA and Section 106 Review
- Process: contact state and federal agencies with project details, save all correspondence, fill out forms, possibly adjust design/scope
 - See Environmental Review Guidance document for agency contact information
 - Most projects qualify as a Categorical Exclusion (CE)
 - Project reviewed by agencies including US Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Historic Resources, US Army Corps (Joint Permit Application)
 - If agencies request surveys for more information, must be completed (consider in budget proposal)
 - Public Comment/ Input
- Must be completed, reviewed, and approved by FHWA prior to bidding for Construction and any on-the-ground work

Procurement

- All project goods and services must be competitively procured following federal and state procedures, including by non-profit applicants
- Procurement procedures – FHWA 1273, 2 CFR 200, & VPPA
 - See **Procurement Procedures** document on website
 - Bid/RFP must contain notice that partial funding is provided by RTP (specific language provided) & be reviewed by DCR
 - Since 2023: Waiver of Buy America requirements for iron, steel, construction materials, and manufactured products if federal funds <\$500,000
- *Qualified* youth corps can be non-competitively hired



RTP 335D210 – Tazewell County

Grant Phases - 2. Construction Phase



RTP 338N210 – James River National Wildlife Refuge

- Begins once FHWA approves/ makes a NEPA determination
 - No bid advertising or site work (including vegetation removal) prior to approval
- Hire contractor/s, if applicable
- Purchase materials and/or equipment, if applicable
- Obtain permits, if not already obtained
- Site work and construction
- Leave time for closeout procedures within grant period

Reimbursement Payments

- Submissions are reviewed by DCR and by FHWA
 - Expense and proof of payment
 - Certification form and other templates from RTP website
 - Matching fund proof if not cash (25% value of grant funds requested)
 - Buy America materials certification for iron, steel, construction materials if federal funds \$500,000 or greater
- Funds will pass from FHWA, to DCR, to project sponsor (typically 4-8 weeks)
- Register on SAM.gov, VA-W9
- Recommended once every 3 months to keep project active with FHWA



Grant Forms and Templates

Documents and Forms for grant recipients

General Administrative Documents and Forms

Reimbursement Documents and Forms

1. RTP [Reimbursement Request Guide](#) (PDF) Version March 2024.
2. RTP [Example Reimbursement Package](#) (PDF) Version March 2024.
3. RTP [Reimbursement Certification Form](#) (PDF) Version March 2024.
4. RTP [Reimbursement Certification Form](#) (Excel) Version March 2024.
5. RTP [Data Sheet Summarizing Invoices](#) (Word) Version March 2024.
6. RTP [Data Sheet Summarizing Volunteer Labor](#) (Word) Version March 2024.
7. RTP [Data Sheet Summarizing Employee Labor](#) (Word) Version March 2024.
8. RTP [Volunteer Daily Timesheet](#) (Word) Version March 2024.
9. RTP [Daily Equipment Record](#) (Word) Version September 2021.
10. RTP [Buy America Compliance Form](#) (Word) Version March 2024.
11. [VA W-9 Form](#) (PDF) Version March 2022.

Environmental Review Documents and Forms

Grant Closeout & Post-Completion

Closeout Steps (see Closeout Procedures doc)

1. DCR site inspection
2. Submit final report
 - Description of work accomplished
 - Project costs and matching contribution breakdown
 - Photographs
 - Lessons learned
3. Project open to public
4. Final reimbursement payment

Post-completion Requirements

- Record retention – three years from FHWA closeout
- Equipment purchase reporting – every two years until value falls below \$10,000
- Open to public – minimum 10 years

Project Delays and Modifications

- Typically due to environmental or archeological findings, cost increases, time of year restrictions, or contractor availability
- Notify DCR of any issues or delays (even if still expected to complete by end date)
- Grants are only awarded for the agreed upon scope and three-year time period, **however:**
 - **Minor scope changes are *usually* possible, subject to approval from FHWA**
 - Must still meet goals of application, result in usable public trail/ trail amenity
 - **A one-time extension is *usually* possible, subject to approval from FHWA**
 - Must be requested at least 90 days prior to agreement expiration
 - Must have been submitting regular quarterly reports

Open communication is KEY!

We are here to help make your project successful.

Grant Application

Application Certification Form

- Separate file, requires signature
- Applicant Name = Grant recipient if selected
- Please list contact person who will be the main coordinator for the project first, can insert additional emails to be notified of award status
- Signatory authority is up to the applicant

DCR		2026 Virginia Recreational Trails Program Application Certification		Virginia Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration	
This form must be completed, signed, and submitted with your complete application package					
Applicant Name					
Contact Person Name & Title					
Applicant Street Address					
Mailing Address (if different from street address)					
Telephone Number					
Contact E-mail Address					
Applicant Type (select one)		US Congressional District			
<input type="checkbox"/> State.		Virginia State Senate District Virginia			
<input type="checkbox"/> Local.		House District			
<input type="checkbox"/> Tribe.		County/Independent City & FIPS Code			
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal. or		Tax Parcel ID Number			
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit (if non-profit, please also list locality)		Project Title			
Total Project Cost (100%)		Award Request Amount (up to 80% of total cost but not more than category maximum request)			
\$		\$			
Certification Statement					
By submitting this application package for consideration for funding through the Recreational Trails Program, I hereby certify the information contained in this application is true and correct. I understand this application will be rated on the basis of the information submitted and the submission of incorrect or inaccurate data or an incomplete application can result in this application becoming ineligible for funding.					
I hereby certify that if awarded, the applicant will comply with all applicable Federal, Commonwealth of Virginia, and local laws and regulations. I hereby certify that the applicant understands the Recreational Trails Program is an 80-20 matching reimbursement program requiring verification of expenditures in order to receive reimbursement. Further, in signing and submitting this application, I hereby certify that the applicant is capable of providing the matching contribution and of financing the project while seeking periodic reimbursement.					
Name of Official with Signatory Rights					
Title					
Signature					
Date					

Application File

- MSWord document - Create PDF of completed application and insert attachments between each section as indicated
- Minimum 10pt font, maximum 32/35 pages including attachments (but no word limit), 30MB
- Contact us to obtain an alternative format if you are unable to access or use the fillable document
- Please reference Appendix A: Application Guidance in Manual
- **NEW THIS YEAR: Two versions of application ...**

Application to Use	Project Type	Use this version if:	Examples
Version 1	New Trail Construction	There never was a public trail or boat launch where you're building a trail or boat launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of a new trail or new trail segment • Extension of an existing trail • New water trail access points • Conversion of road or rail corridor into trail
Version 2	Existing Trail Maintenance/ Amenities	The project improves an existing trail, serves users of the existing trail, or returns a trail to usable condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair or maintenance work on existing trail • New amenities for existing trail (restroom, parking area, signage, etc.) • Repair and reopening of trail fallen into disrepair
Version 3 (available on request)	<i>Combination New Trail & Maintenance/ Amenities</i>	<i>The project has significant/ equal amounts of both types</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Construction of a new trail plus significant maintenance repairs</i> • <i>Constructing new boat launch plus installing restroom at existing hiking trailhead</i> • <i>Resurfacing existing trail and extending trail with new segment</i>

Based on past applications, the majority of projects are primarily type 1 or type 2. If there is a significant amount of both, then reach out to DCR to obtain Version 3.

Section A: Project Details

- **2. Project Title:** Descriptive but not long, 3-7 words
- **9. Scope:** RTP and match project scope only. Not meant to be a narrative purpose statement. Include all proposed trail work and amenities that will be installed.
- **Attachments:**
 - Two location maps (county and zoom) for offline reviews
 - Trail map with project location/s
 - Photos (up to two pages, multiple per page) – very important for maintenance projects
 - Proof of Right of Way (if not owner) – easement, use agreement, letter from property owner, etc.
 - Locality letter (non-profit applicants) – letter of support from locality project is located in
 - May need to consult with them on environmental review, permitting, procurement
 - Proof of public access (private property) – provide easement or lease documentation

Section B: Project Need – Version 1 (New Const.)

- **15. Project need:** This is the really one of the only places to tell the project story and make a more narrative case for the project
- **16. Nature-based Recreation Access Model:** Follow links to access the model, step by step in manual appendix. Can also use/check ParkServe Model
- **17. ConserveVirginia:** Follow links to access the models, step by step in manual appendix
- **18. Local & Regional Plans:** Will receive more points for meeting specific vs general need
- **19. Virginia Outdoors Plan:** follow links to relevant sections of 2024 VOP
- **Attachments:**
 - Local and regional plans w/ highlights (only 3 pages, can include a link to larger doc for reference)

Section B: Project Need – Version 2 (Existing)

- **15. Trail info & 16. Need statement:** Respond to each sub-question and bulleted item in your response as they may correspond to a scored item
- **17. Virginia Outdoors Plan:** follow links to relevant sections of 2024 VOP
- **Attachments:**
 - None



RTP 354N230 – Friends of the Rappahannock
(before improvements)

External links

- [Natural Heritage Data Explorer](#) (Nature-Based Recreation Access Model & ConserveVA)
- [ParkServe® | Trust for Public Land](#)
- [Virginia Outdoors Plan](#) (Recreation for All prioritization recommendations in 2.1.6 and Regional Featured Projects dashboard)

Section C: Public Involvement and Impact



- **Public Participation:** place to describe community meetings or public design charrettes, hearings, public comments, planned public input periods, planned volunteer sub-projects or workdays
- **Collaboration:** place to describe public/private partnerships, collaborative management plans, planning and design team
- **Workforce Development:** Youth workforce or volunteer involvement
- **Accessibility:** Minimally must be ADA-compliant, but encouraged to exceed minimums. Resources are provided in Appendix B.

Section D: Design, Sustainability, and Environmental Impact

- **Design:** Explain level needed for this project (engineered bridge vs corridor clearing)
- **Design Standards:** Such as Forest Service Standard Trail Plans and Specifications, ABA Accessibility Standards, AASHTO, etc. and/or describe (slopes <8%, 4" of 3/8" minus, 60 inches wide, etc.)
- **Sustainability and Resiliency:** How will the investment be protected, include floodplain map.
- **Future Maintenance:** Tasks, frequency, labor source, and funding are all scored items
- **Attachments:**
 - Up to 4 pages of construction or preliminary design plans to help reviewers understand the project - conceptual plans are okay for early-stage projects.
 - Project location relative to floodplain

External links

- [Virginia Outdoors Plan](#) [Mapping Resources – Coastal, Floodplains, and Aquatic Areas – Virginia Flood Risk Information System (VFRIS)]

Section E: Project Implementation

- **Schedule:** Include both project design and construction milestones *and* grant administrative milestones
- **Budget:** Be sure to attach *and* explain how it was estimated
- **Grant match:** List *and* include estimated values for every source
- **Procurement:** Outline all anticipated goods, services, and materials
- **Environmental review:** ALL projects (including maintenance) must complete full NEPA-level review
- **Attachments:**
 - Schedule if not included in question box
 - One-page budget
 - Proof of match availability

Evaluation and Scoring

- Criteria revised and posted each year
 - Two versions this year – one for new trail construction, one for existing trail improvements
- All applications are reviewed by DCR Recreation Grants staff for eligibility and completeness
- All eligible and complete applications are scored by RTP Advisory Committee
- Advisory Committee meets to review the compiled scores and recommend projects for funding
- Selected project applicants contacted in late June
- Unawarded applications are provided opportunity to receive feedback in August/September

2026 RTP Scoring Criteria
Version 1 - New Trails

Question	Point Range	Points
15. Degree of Need (select from range)	0-4	
Severity of need		
<i>Max. points: 4</i>		
16. Nature-based Recreation Access Model/ParkServe or Water-based Recreation Access Model need (select one)	0-3	
Project area has demonstrated need for new recreation based on the DCR Nature-based Recreation Access Model or Trust for Public Land ParkServe Model (land trails) OR Water-based Recreation Access Model (water trails)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate, High, or Very High (3 pts) • Low (2 pts) • Very Low or None (0 pt) • Very Low but will serve area of at least moderate need (up to 2 pts) 		
<i>Max. points: 3</i>		
17. New Public Access and ConserveVirginia (select one)	0-3	
Project will provide public access to a property that was not previously open to the public		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, and project area intersects at least one ConserveVirginia layer (3 pts) • Yes, but project area not within ConserveVirginia (2 pts) • No (property previously open to the public), but project provides new public access to a significant feature (1 pts) • No (property previously open to the public), and project does not provide new public access to significant features (0 pts) 		
<i>Max. points: 3</i>		
18. Local or regional plan need (select one)	0-4	
Project need demonstrated in local and/or regional plans		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project fulfills a general need or meets a general goal of a local or regional plan (1 pt) [for example, "increase access to natural areas" or "develop new trails in county"] • Project fulfills a specific need or specific goal of a local or regional plan (2-3 pts) [for example, "develop multi-use trails at Riverside Park"] • Project is specifically identified by location, layout, and features in a local or regional plan (4 pts) [for example, "complete section IV of Riverside Greenway from Main Street to River Ave."] 		
<i>Max. points: 4</i>		
19. Virginia Outdoors Plan needs (select from range for each)	0-2	
Project is listed as (2 pts) or connected to (1 pt) a regional feature project in the VOP (2024)		
Degree to which project meets Recreation for All project prioritization recommendations of the 2024 Virginia Outdoors Plan (Section 2.1.8) (includes projects on publicly owned lands, expanding recreation programming, increasing access for people with disabilities, serving historically underserved communities, improving safety, contributing to health and wellbeing)	0-3	
<i>Max. points: 5</i>		
20. & 21. Close to home trails (select from list or range for each)	0-3	
Close to home trails (select from range)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project will create a new close to home trail for a community within a city, urban area, or tribal land that does not currently have access to public trails within a 10 minute (1/2 mile) walk (3 pts) • Project will create a new close to home trail for a non-city or rural community that does not currently have access to public trails within a 15 minute drive (3 pts) • Project doesn't meet either condition above but is still underserved by public trail opportunities; applicant has provided sufficient detail to justify the need (1-2 pts) • Project area is already served by public trail opportunities (0 pts) 		
Project creates a community linkage (for example: between neighborhoods, to/from community features, between parks)	0-2	
<i>Max. points: 5</i>		

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Other DCR Grant Opportunities

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local Assistance Program (LWCF)**

- Acquisition and development of outdoor recreation sites/amenities
- 50%:50% grant:match
- 2026 grant round to be announced, expected June- August 2026
- <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/lwcf>

- **Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF)**

- Fund protection of open spaces and parklands, lands of historic or cultural significance, farmlands and forests, and natural areas
- 50%:50% grant:match
- 2026 grant round to be announced, expected June-August 2026
- <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/land-conservation/vlcf>

RTP Grant Contact Information



RTP 310E170 – Rockfish Valley
Foundation – Trails Educational Grant

Email: recreationgrants@dcr.virginia.gov

Phone: (804) 786-1119

Kellie Seaton, Recreation Grants Coordinator

Website:

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/trailfnd>