

2026 Funding Application Portal Instructions



January 2026

FY2028 Funding Application Available Starting 4/1/2026; Legacy Development and Acquisition/Connect People and the Outdoors closes 7/31/2026

Introduction

The following document outlines the contents of the online Funding Application portal. The portal is available to any city, county or tribal government in Greater Minnesota that operates a Regionally Designated park or trail facility that is eligible to apply for Legacy Parks and Trails funding. Applications must be completed online in the [Data Management System portal](#). *Each bullet is an information item that must be completed in the application, with additional guidance in brackets.* Attachments are encouraged and, in some cases, required. For assistance contact the System Plan Coordinator at coordinator@gmrptcommission.org.

Overview

This year's application has been updated based on feedback from last year's applicants and changes to the Commission's goals. Please review the [Funding Application Guidelines](#) document. A Master Plan Linkage tool can help link key items in your application to your online Master Plan. Please contact the GMRPTC at coordinator@gmrptcommission.org with any comments, questions or suggestions you have about the application itself.

Special Eligibility Notes

- All infrastructure or physical development projects must have a minimum \$25,000 grant request. CPO, Access/Inclusion or Environmental/Archeological projects may be less.
- Accessibility improvement projects are now available as a stand-alone grant application. See Funding Application Guidelines or contact Commission staff for details on all Commission grant programs.
- Contingency funds are allowable in project budgets up to 10% of development costs. The contingency must be included in the local match and will not be funded by Legacy. If the proposed project does not use the contingency, the funds must still be spent under the grant contract as mutually agreed to by the applicant and GMRPTC.

****Project Contract Deliverables Note****

Depending on the project, the following may be required for parks and trails development projects. Find more information on each item in the Grants Management section of the Application Toolbox, document [DNR Pre-Contract Checklist](#).

If funded, the grant contract will be executed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on behalf of the Commission. Therefore, all DNR contract requirements must be fulfilled and include (but not limited to) the following:

- ✓ Provide required documents for the pre-award risk assessment.
- ✓ Pre-review of the project from the Minnesota State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO).
- ✓ Completion of an [Environmental Assessment Statement \(EAS\)](#). Review of the project by the DNR's Natural Heritage Information System Review.
- ✓ Compliance with water and wetlands regulations (per DNR grant guidelines).
- ✓ Compliance with Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Environmental Review rules for trail projects.
- ✓ Consultation with relevant Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO) to assess cultural resources on site is highly recommended.
- ✓ For trail projects, a [Land Approval Certification Form](#) signed by all administrators of public land crossed or utilized by the trail project AND a completed long term or permanent lease/easement on land now owned by applicant.
- ✓ Campground Plan approval through Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

The above items should be initiated upon notification of award, prior to the execution of the grant contract to allow for review times. Check with your DNR contract manager for additional guidance.

- ✓ Applicant has confirmed acceptance of the [GMRPTC Grant Awardee Obligations](#).
- ✓ Provide twice per year project status and final project reports (with photos) to the GMRPTC.
- ✓ NO funds nor match may be expended until there is a fully executed contract. Work on the pre-contract items must be completed prior to contract execution per DNR requirements.

More information on post-award requirements can be found at https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/pt_legacy.html

Master Plan Linkage Feature



This linkage icon is located next to most of the items in the Funding Application. Its purpose is to allow the applicant to create a direct link between specific items in the Funding Application and supporting information in the Master Plan. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to use this tool to directly show how the Funding Application fulfills parts of the Master Plan.**

By clicking the icon, the Master Plan for that park or trail will pop up in a separate box. Simply scroll through the Master Plan until you find the description or item that you wish to link to, set your cursor on that item and click on the icon. A new “anchor” icon will appear in the Funding Application that will take reviewers directly to the appropriate item in the Master Plan. Currently the system is only capable of one link per application item.

THIS IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE for providing detailed project information in the Funding Application. Successful applications will demonstrate how they complete regionally-significant components of the Master Plan; this link is a way for the applicant to support that goal. Applicants should focus on providing links to key Master Plan information, particularly in these application components:

- Project Description
- Connection to a Regionally Substantial Component of the Master Plan

They can also provide linkages that support any other application component that is useful and relevant. Common items may include acres of restored parks, project cost breakdown, or project outcomes.

General Tab Instructions

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the applicant organization. All fields are required.

- GMRPTC Park or Trail ID # [Set by the system]
- Funding Application Number [Autofilled by system]
- Park/Trail Name [Autofilled by system]
- Last Update [Automatically updates when information about the park or trail was last updated.]
- Existing Acres or Miles [Number of current acres or miles as the facility exists today.]
- District [Autofilled by system]
- Project Name [Provide a title that describes the key focus of the funding request, such as “Nature Trail Area Restoration” or “Environmental Learning Center Construction.” A project may be developed by any local government or joint powers, but a city, county or tribal government needs to be the official applicant and fiscal agent for the project.]

- Project Overview [Provide a maximum 75 word overview of the project that helps communicate project scope and outcomes for public and legislative reporting.]
- Project Description [Describe in detail the project(s) that would be covered under this funding request. Include current pictures of the project site and descriptions of what is going to change in each picture. Description should EXPLICITLY tie back into the Master Plan’s Implementation Plan for the designated park or trail to aid review of this request relative to the full implementation plan. Carefully review Section II: Application Guidance for your particular grant category in the [Funding Application Guidelines](#).]
- Project Area and Facility Maps [See “Map Content Requirements” and “Plan Requirements” at the end of this document.]
- Applicant Organization [The lead organization should be the Greater Minnesota city, county, or tribal government leading this funding request and a part of the overall joint organization described in the Master Plan, if not the overall lead organization.]
- Lead Contact Full Name
- Lead Contact Title
- Mailing address, Phone, Email (lead applicant)

Funding Tab Instructions

This section describes the project that is requested for funding.

Description

- Development, Rehabilitation, or Both [Drop Down Button]
- Grant Category: Legacy Development and Acquisition, Connect People and the Outdoors (CPO), Environmental/Archeological, Accessibility, or Emerging Opportunity [multiple Radio Button selection] [Applicant should select any and all relevant funding categories. Legacy Development and Acquisition and CPO projects may be applied for on the same application. All others should be applied for separately. Applications that identify more than one category should clearly differentiate between those components in the descriptions and budget.]
- Acres of Park Land to be Acquired [Enter amount]
- New Trail Miles to be Acquired [Enter amount, radio button for Types: Existing Easement, New Easement, Fee Title ROW]
- New Trail Miles Developed [Enter amount]
- Miles of Trail Restored or Improved [Enter amount]
- Trail head facilities developed [Enter number]
- Number of trail bridges/culverts to be developed or restored [Enter number]
- Number of toilets built [Enter number of vault or shower/restrooms built]
- Number of campsites built [Enter number]
- Acres of prairie restored [Enter amount]

- Number of Connect People and the Outdoors programs created or administered [Enter number] [The number of CPO programs is the total of individual, discrete events or activities that include a defined group of individuals. For instance, a series of three snowshoeing events that attract a different audience each time would count as three programs. A series of six weekly, one hour classes with the same group of school children would count as one program. More programs do not equate to a better score; effectiveness in accomplishing participation and retention goals is more important.]
- Anticipated number of participants/users in Connect People and the Outdoors project [Enter number]

Project Outcomes

- Evaluation of Impact [Applicants must describe how the project will be evaluated/measured compared to the deliverables. What are the specific deliverables, i.e. number of users benefitted, perceived quality of facility, protection of a resource, etc.?.]
- Select Legacy Pillars (A link to the [25-Year Legacy Plan](#) is included. Only check those pillars that are directly and clearly supported by your project.) [The following four Pillars serve as the heart of the 25-year, long-range Parks and Trails Legacy Plan, establishing the future direction for parks and trails of state and regional significance. Select pillars supported by your project.
 - Connect People and the Outdoors: better develop Minnesota’s stewards of tomorrow through efforts to increase life-long participation in parks and trails.
 - Acquire Land, Create Opportunities: create new and expanded park and trail opportunities to satisfy current customers as well as to reach out to new ones.
 - Take Care of What We Have: provide safe, high-quality park and trail experiences by regular re-investment in park and trail infrastructure, and natural resource management.
 - Coordinate Among Partners: enhance coordination across the large and complex network of public, private, and non-profit partners that support Minnesota’s parks and trails to ensure seamless, enjoyable park and trail experiences for Minnesotans.]
- Connection to Pillars [Describe how the project reasonably supports or fulfills each of the pillars selected above. It is not necessarily more valuable to support more pillars rather than less. The quality of the connection is also important. Note application guidance and criteria for all funding categories are included in the [Funding Application Guidelines](#). Address those criteria directly where possible.]
- Connection to a Regionally Substantial Component of the Master Plan [Describe how the project completes a user-friendly, regionally substantial or impactful component of the Master Plan. Descriptions of or links to Master Plan priorities or phases that match the project are required.]

Project Readiness

- Project Lead [Describe how the lead applicant/agency is qualified and experienced in delivering this type of project or has established partnerships or other mechanisms to ensure project success. Include professional credentials of any involved or anticipated staff or consultants/contractors.]

- Implementation Timeline [Describe the project timeline, including pre-contract deliverables, should funding be awarded and a grant contract offered for early FY2028 (grant contract period starting after July 1, 2027, terminating June 30, 2030.)]
- Availability for Public Use [All facilities must be designed and available for general public use and open during typical park and trail hours. This includes restrooms, picnic shelters, campgrounds, playgrounds and other structures. For parks that include marina, campground or other rental facilities, review the seasonal eligibility requirements in the [Funding Application Guidelines](#).

State the specific hours of operation and any current or anticipated programmed use for the facilities proposed to be funded with this application. Also describe any arrangements with schools, local organizations, clubs or city programs for the use of the facilities. Explain how this may impact facility availability to the general public. Describe what fees, if any, will be charged for use of the park facilities and/or access to the park.]

- Design Standards [All projects must meet current industry and state of Minnesota design standards and are encouraged to exceed relevant Americans with Disability Act (ADA) standards and state regulations. The GMRPTC requires all Connect People and the Outdoors projects to identify and consider all barriers to access, such as cultural, auditory, sight, mobility, and language, and has specific strategies to address the ones viable to this project. Describe which standards the proposed project components meet and the qualifications of the certified professional who will be signing off on this project.]

STATEMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY: All facilities improved with this grant project and all critical components of the park listed below, must be made compliant with the ADA requirements even if they are not part of this application proposal.

Critical components include:

- Accessible parking spaces serving each park area.
- Accessible restrooms, if restrooms are provided.
- Accessible drinking water, if drinking water is provided.
- Accessible routes to all critical components and recreation facilities provided in the park. For this program, an access route must be a minimum of 5 feet wide, slip resistant, firm and stable.

If a grant is awarded, part of the grant will be withheld pending verification of ADA compliance and overall project completion by an on-site final inspection.

The following design standards documents are available at <https://www.access-board.gov/>:

- [ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#), 2010 (For local and state government facilities covered by Title II including recreation facilities such as playgrounds, recreational boating facilities, fishing piers and platforms).
- [ADA technical guides on the minimum requirements](#).
- [The Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards \(ABAAS\) for Outdoor Developed Areas, 2015](#), (re minimum requirements for federal sites and serve as a best practice for state and local government facilities such as campgrounds, picnic areas, pedestrian trails, beach access routes, and viewing areas).

- [ABA technical assistance guide for outdoor developed areas.](#)
- [ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines for the Public Right of Way](#) address the minimum requirements for shared use paths. Those routes are intended for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Technical assistance is available from the U.S. Access Board at 202-272-0800 or ta@access-board.gov
- Technical assistance is available from the Department of Justice at 800-514-0301 or www.ada.gov.

Applicant should state that they have reviewed and understand the ADA standards, final accessibility guidelines and our program requirements, stated above, and agree to comply with these requirements.

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- Sustainability Plan [Infrastructure projects must include a plan for sustaining the facility through its full life cycle, including how and when maintenance and refurbishment/rehabilitation will be funded. Mountain bike and other natural surface trails must consider trail reconstruction/refresh needs on a 5-7 year basis to ensure trails are kept in best possible condition. Early life cycle repair and rehabilitation costs are not typically funded, particularly if original construction was Legacy funded. Connecting People to the Outdoors projects are required to submit sustainability plans per the [GMRPTC Non-Infrastructure Policy.](#)]
 - Project Cost Breakdown [Provide a list of the key acquisition, development and programming elements along with associated costs. Intent is to outline how the funding will be allocated along with associated costs and how that element helps achieve the facility’s regional purpose. Add attachments with additional background and cost breakdown as is available. Park and trail construction costs must be prepared by professional licensed architects or engineers; land acquisition costs must be prepared in accordance with State of Minnesota public appraisal requirements. Review the list of *Project Eligibility Guidelines* in the [Funding Application Guidelines](#) document]

Funding Request Breakdown Please use valid currency formats (e.g. \$100,000/100,000/100000)

- Grant Funding Request [Provide total amount of regional grant funds being requested through Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission.]
- Local Match [Provide amount of non-state matching funds (cash only, not in-kind funding) from each of the project partners. Identify project partner in adjacent box. If no non-Legacy match is provided, place a 0 (zero) in the box. Qualified match consists of secured, non-state funds that will be spent on the project only after the GMRPTC grant agreement is finalized. Unsecured fundraising goals and campaigns do not qualify]
- Funder Listing [Space for up to 5 local match sources provided] [Funding request resolutions are required for all agencies providing a local match.]
- Non-Eligible Local Match [Provide amount of local-level or non-eligible funds used to complete non-eligible project components.]

- Non-Eligible Item Description [Describe how non-eligible project components are being funded. Check [funding guidelines](#) for eligible and ineligible costs.]
- Total Funding [Total amount of regional Legacy grant funds being requested plus total amount of non-Legacy match being provided.]
- Percentage of local match [Percentage of non-Legacy match relative to overall project budget.]
- Completion Timeframe [Provide the length of time needed (in months) to complete the project once funding is authorized.]

Funding Request Resolutions [Resolutions of support using the Commission’s funding request resolution template are required for all joint applicants and partners. Park or trail projects are not eligible for funding until signed resolutions with the required language are attached.]

- Attach signed resolutions from each official project applicant [[Required template](#) provided in the Application Toolbox, check for latest version.]
- [Budget Spreadsheet](#) [A completed version of the provided budget spreadsheet must be attached. A blank version of the required budget template is available on the application portal or in the Application Toolbox.]
- Appraisal [For projects that include property acquisition, a qualified appraisal meeting DNR regulations must be completed and submitted with the application.

Appraisals must be performed by a qualified licensed appraiser and meet the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) and the [DNR Supplemental Appraisal and Appraisal Review Guidelines](#) (link includes documents below).

Submit an appraisal report and a completed DNR Appraisal Certification Form. The appraisal must include the DNR as an intended user and the landowner or designated representative must be given an opportunity to accompany the appraiser during the inspection of the property.

To ensure the appraiser understands the appraisal requirements, we suggest using the sample engagement letter provided.

Appraisals will be reviewed by the state to ensure that they meet applicable standards. If the appraisal is not accepted, the applicant will be contacted for additional clarification or modification. If you or the appraiser has any questions, please contact GMRPTC staff prior to completing the appraisal assignment.]

Map Content Requirements

The GMRPTC has adopted mapping standards that meet Commission and MNDNR requirements for funding applications.

LOCATION MAP

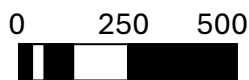
Provide a map that shows the location of the park or trail within your region. The map should identify the main roads in the community to access the park or trail.

PARK AND TRAIL MAPS

Park Map: This site map must be drawn to scale, show the existing park boundary, all facilities now in the park and all acquisition and/or development listed in the *Project Cost Breakdown* section. All facilities must be identified with legible labels.

Include the following:

- Draw and label the complete park boundary. This boundary must include all contiguous lands currently owned by the applicant and managed for public recreation and any additional land to be acquired with this grant.
- Entrance to site and location of existing or proposed public parking facilities.
- Location of all existing and planned recreation and support facilities such as restrooms, shelters, trailheads, culverts or bridges, and potable water, clearly identifying the proposed project items listed in the budget.
- Accessible (ADA qualified) routes connecting each amenity to accessible parking must be clearly identified as such.
- Indicate any rights-of-way, easements, reversionary interests, etc. to the park area including overhead utility lines.
- Geographic reference point such as a section corner or designated road intersection.
- All lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands and adjacent land uses.
- Acreage of the park and/or each parcel to be acquired.
- North arrow and Graphic Bar Scale using the example below:



Trail Map: This map should be in color and be effective at showing the trail identified in the *Project Cost Breakdown*.

Color Coding for All Maps

- Red Park boundary
- Green Existing park facilities or trail
- Yellow Acquisition and/or development accomplished with this grant
- Blue Future acquisition, development and/or trail extension

Site Plan Requirements

Please submit all applicable plan(s) according to the directions provided. These schematic-level plan and design requirements are in addition to the map requirements listed above. The goal of a schematic site plan is to be well enough developed to understand the viability of the design, costs, impacts and risks. Site plans that do not meet this goal will be returned for further development. Final design or construction plans are not required.

Building Plans

All buildings constructed with grant funds must meet the State Building Code. Building plans are required for all proposed facilities to ensure the development addresses accessibility and design priorities. Plans must be professionally developed and include the following:

- Front and side views.
- A floor plan with all dimensions.

Trail Plans

Trail plans are required for projects that include the development of any type of linear or park-based trail and should include the following:

- A typical cross section and alignment (typically at one mile or less per page scale) of the trail, including identification of features or amenities that impact the trail such as intersections, curbs, bridges, natural features, etc. and how the trail will address those impacts.
- The trail width, surfacing and base materials.

For the purposes of this grant program a multipurpose trail should be designed to a minimum 10' width. In some cases this minimum width may not be adequate and a width of 12' or more may be appropriate. All access routes connecting park facilities and parking lots must be a minimum of 5 feet wide with required passing zones and other features.

Other Features

Plans for all other features should show a schematic-level design of information. A clear understanding of the design, access, natural features, terrain from the plans should support an assessment of the viability of the budget and project risks.

Playground Plans

Naturescape and traditional playground designs must provide a high degree of safety and accessibility. The facility should be designed to provide an integrated play setting for both children and parents/care providers of all abilities using the ADA Accessibility Guidelines, Chapter 10, 1008 Play Areas.

Applications that do not include enough information to determine the degree of accessibility and safety typically do not rank high enough for funding. The playground must be built according to the plan provided if a grant is awarded.

The plan must be legible and:

- ✓ Show all the proposed playground components and all existing components that will remain. Label each component with its name and the height of its useable surfaces.
- ✓ Indicate which components are ground level and which are elevated.
- ✓ Identify all type(s), depth(s), and location(s) of the fall-protection surfacing.
- ✓ Highlight in yellow all accessible components.
- ✓ Highlight in green all accessible surface areas and accessible routes to and within the playground.