



## **Funded Non-Infrastructure Project Management Policy**

**Adopted January 2021**

*Background:* Legacy-funded grant projects through the GMRPTC are contracted and managed by the Department of Natural Resources as a fee-for-contract service, with general oversight provided by GMRPTC staff. Project funds must be spent and contracts completed generally within a 3-year timeframe. For physical infrastructure projects (trails, buildings, roads, playgrounds), the project development and completion process is fairly well defined and measurable. Once a project is completed and the grant contract is closed out, DNR staff will conduct site visits on a 5-year rotation to ensure that state-funded components remain in use. Currently GMRPTC staff review previous projects as opportunities arise, such as when reviewing new funding applications or when we are in the area and have the time to do so.

Over time, it is apparent that this model may not work completely for all types of projects. Connecting People to the Outdoors (CPO) programming projects are non-infrastructure based. CPO projects rely on defined sets of activities and/or equipment to engage people in recreation with the goal of creating new outdoor recreation habits. For these and potentially other types of projects, the current contracting model does not provide enough guidance or long-term support to help the partner agency succeed.

*Recommendation:* Adopt as policy additional application and contract guidance and long-term review and support systems for Connecting People to the Outdoors projects. Focus non-infrastructure Legacy projects on programming, access improvements, and recreation equipment. Eliminate Greater Minnesota Legacy funding for invasive species removal and woodland management/prairie restoration with the exception of landscaping within Legacy-funded project corridors.

### *Tools:*

Plans and Outcome Definition – Implementation agencies should include clear outcomes in their CPO applications, similar to the level of planning detail required for a park or trail project. Applications shall include adequate preliminary plans to judge project efficacy and final design/work plans are to be submitted after any award if required for inclusion in the grant contract, similar to infrastructure projects. Application details should include detailed maps of the geographic space to be impacted or improved, program or event educational objectives, number/characteristics of people served, clear implementation timelines, program models or best practices used, detailed budgets, long-term sustainability or management plans, and other parameters that help define the outcomes and long lasting impact of the project. Final design/work plans should include detailed work plans on the programs or events to be implemented, detailed marketing plans, etc. Commission requirements for

contracting will vary on a case by case basis. The Commission will publish a list of eligible and ineligible Legacy expenses for inclusion in its *Funding Criteria and Guidelines*.

Ongoing Management Plan – At the conclusion of the grant, the implementing agency for this type of project must also provide a detailed plan for continued management of the program or project for the expected lifetime of the investment. For example, detailed timelines, budget and techniques for programs and events; detailed budget, responsibility and outcomes for at least 5 year event or programming sustainability; and replacement schedules and budgets for recreation equipment through at least the first life cycle (typically 10 years). An initial plan should be submitted with the application, with a final modified plan submitted with the final report.

Contract Management – The DNR will continue to provide contract oversight for all grant contracts. For non-infrastructure CPO projects, clear guidance on eligibility and conditions for various project expenses should be written into the contract. Motorized recreational equipment purchases are restricted to electric only and must follow MN DNR standards for use on trails or in parks. Additional reporting requirements documenting key implementation steps may also be necessary. Firm documentation requirements for final reporting may include survey results, photographs, media stories, etc. as well as the traditional invoicing and budget.

Data Collection and Sharing – The Commission may determine a list of data tracking requirements for the project, to be submitted in report or other formats. Surveys tracking quantitative and qualitative user data can be gathered during events or programs. Documenting techniques and outcomes for marketing and other programmatic or non-programmatic projects can help show a link between that activity and its level of success, resulting in support for or modifying the activity in the future. This information can then be shared with other agencies through the Commission and its partners as an educational and planning service.

Ongoing Review and Support – Commission staff will be involved in oversight of all intermediate and final review reporting and approvals for non-infrastructure projects, with leadership responsibility for post-project sustainability oversight. Post-project sustainability reporting and site visit requirements will be determined and agreed upon at the conclusion of the grant contract. Periodic (typically annual) site reviews and reports, including during active programming, should be conducted to enhance communication and accountability.

Future Project Eligibility – Failure to complete reporting requirements, maintain improvements, programming or equipment, or otherwise fulfilling key components of an implementation plan may result in the Commission imposing a moratorium on future grant awards until the situation is agreeably rectified.