

 COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

**2025 MASSTRAILS GRANTS PROGRAM**

**Grant Application Template**

 *This application template is provided for reference purposes only. All proposals must be submitted electronically through the program’s online application portal. For assistance, refer to the MassTrails Grant Guidelines or contact the MassTrails Grants Administrator. READ ALL APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS and GUIDANCE NOTES under each question for the most accurate submittal. An asterisk (\*) indicates a required field. All application materials and guidance documents (including the Grant Guidelines and the Budget and Timeline Spreadsheet) are located online here:* [*https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-masstrails-grant*](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-masstrails-grant)*.*

 **SECTION I: APPLICANT INFORMATION**

1.1: **\*Organization:**

1.2: **\*Contact Name:**

1.3: **\*Contact Phone:**

1.4: **\*Contact Email:**

1.5: **\*Mailing Address:**

1.6: **\*Has this entity received state trail grant funding in previous years (i.e., MassTrails, Recreational Trails Program Grants)?** Yes / No

1.7: **If yes, please indicate the funding source, project name(s) and year(s) awarded**.

**SECTION II: PROJECT INFORMATION**

2.1: **\*Project Title:** *Please limit the project Title to a maximum of 5 words.*

2.2: **\*Municipality(ies) where the project will take place:**

2.3: **\*Brief Project Description**: *Provide a brief description of the proposed project in* ***3-4 sentences****. This description will be used to describe the project in abbreviated form for various purposes including approvals, press, and announcements going forward.*

2.4: **\*Total Project Value**: *See the “MassTrails Budget and Timeline Spreadsheet” and attach at the end of this application. The spreadsheet can be accessed on the MassTrails Grants website.*

 $

2.5: **\*Grant Amount Requested:** (Up to 80% of Total Project Value)

 $

2.6: **\*Matching Amount Committed:** (Minimum of 20% of Total Project Value)

 $

2.7: \***What is the source of Match funding?**

2.8: **\*What is the primary activity of the project?** (Check one)

 Project Development

 Design / Engineering / Permitting

 Construction

 Maintenance

 Maintenance Equipment Purchase

 Other:

2.9: **\*What is the designed use of this trail?** (Check one)

 Shared-Use Path

 Hiker/Pedestrian Trail

 Off-Road Motorized Trail (Snowmobile / ATV / Off-Highway Motorcycle, 4-Wheel Drive)

 Other:

*For further guidance, see definition of “designed use” and definitions of the above listed trail types in the MassTrails Grant Guidelines document. Note that if this is a project development or design/engineering/permitting project, indicate the anticipated designed use of the trail that is being planned. And, if this is an equipment purchase only, indicate the designed use of the trail that the equipment will serve.*

2.10: **\*What user group(s) will this trail allow?** (Check all that apply)

Walkers / Runners / Hikers / Bicyclists / Mountain Bikers / Cross-Country Skiers / Equestrians / Snowmobiles / ATV Riders / Off-Road Motorcyclists / 4-Wheel Drive Trucks / Paddlers/Rowers

Other:

*Note that if this is a project development or design/engineering/permitting project, indicate the user groups anticipated to utilize the trail. And, if this is an equipment purchase only, indicate all user groups anticipated to benefit from the trail.*

2.11: **\*Please explain in 2-3 sentences why this project should be funded.** *Provide information based on how it supports or expands the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trail experiences used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors.*

2.12: **\*Briefly describe the project site/location. Include the closest address to the site.** *Describe the specific project site and limits, starting/terminus points, and destinations.*

2.13: \***List the name of the landowner(s) and other relevant interest held on the property and by what entity (e.g., Conservation Restriction, Leasehold, Right of Way, Easement).** *Carefully provide accurate information on all landowners and CR holders on land where the project will take place. Documentation of permissions for project work by all required entities is required in Section 7.3 of this application, using the MassTrails Grants Landowner Permission Forms uploaded as attachments. For more information on required permissions, see the MassTrails Grant Guidelines.*

2.14: **\*Has landowner permission been obtained using the MassTrails Grant – Private/Public Landowner Permission Form and/or has permission been obtained for work on land where a Conservation Restriction is held?** *If the project involves work on land with a Conservation Restriction, the MassTrails Grants – Conservation Restriction Work Authorization Form or letter from CR holder is required* ***in addition to*** *Land Ownership Permission Forms. For more information on Land Ownership Forms, see the MassTrails Grant Guidelines.*

 Yes / No

2.15: **\*Does this project comply with state and federal guidelines for accessibility?** *All MassTrails projects must comply with state and federal guidelines for accessibility. See the MassTrails Grant Guidelines and the Trail Accessibility Guidelines Checklist for assessing a project's regulatory requirements regarding accessibility.*

 Yes / No

2.16: **If applicable, has a Project Need Form (PNF) / Project Initiation Form (PIF) been submitted to MassDOT? What is the project number (if one has been assigned)?** *If Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) or State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) funding is anticipated for the project, a PNF must be submitted to MassDOT to qualify for MassTrails funding.*

2.17: **If applicable, is this project currently on the regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) or on the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP)?**

**SECTION III: NARRATIVE**

**MassTrails Grant Criteria**

**MassTrails seeks strong projects that:**

**Plan, Design or Construct off-road shared-use pathway and recreational trail connections between where Massachusetts residents live, learn, work, shop, and recreate (Connect)**

* MassTrails prioritizes building out long distance trails across the state
* MassTrails prioritizes filling in critical gaps in existing networks, or overcoming current barriers

to connectivity

* MassTrails considers the number of people that will potentially access a given project

**Serve the diversity of Massachusetts residents, especially: (Equitable**)

* Minority and Low-Income populations (Environmental Justice Communities)
* Underserved or Vulnerable Populations, including people with disabilities
* Youth

**Effectively address accessibility guidelines (Accessible)**

* Follow accessible design standards to maximize accessibility while recognizing and protecting the unique characteristics of the natural setting
* Follow Universal Design principles to meet the needs of all trail users
* Have a plan in place for ongoing maintenance to ensure continued accessibility

**Allow for efficient use of grant funds (Efficient)**

* Have a detailed and reasonable budget
* Have a strong local match (financial or other)
* Have funding in place or a plan for funding subsequent required phases

**Are ready for the proposed phase (Ready)**

* Previous planning work supports proposed phase
* Appropriate community input and outreach has been completed
* Environmental, permitting and right-of-way challenges have been identified and alternatives and solutions have been fully explored.
* Climate resiliency and weather impacts have been considered and incorporated.
* Have a plan in place for ongoing required maintenance once the project is complete

**Effectively incorporate safety (Safe)**

**Create diverse, high quality recreational experiences and connect users of all abilities and backgrounds to the natural and cultural wealth of Massachusetts (Experiential)**

3.1: **\*Describe specifically what kind of trail your project proposes to design and/or build?** *Describe in detail the characteristics of the proposed trail (including length, width, surface material, grades / terrain, structures, signage, and amenities).*

3.2: **\*Describe the specific tasks required to complete this project.** *Be as specific as possible about the steps the grant project will take and the results you hope to achieve. Include the specific trail location(s), starting and ending points, and trail distances. Describe the trail surface material, and any proposed structures involved. All tasks must coincide with the project's budget.*

3.3: **\*Describe how this project will fill in a critical network gap and/or connect directly to other existing trails, trail segments or trail networks, and to residential, commercial, and recreational “community anchors.”** *Describe how the proposed project connects directly to existing trails and trail networks. Describe how it will connect directly to important community anchors. If this project creates an off-road trail connection under, over, or around a significant barrier (e.g., major roadway) describe and highlight that. In supporting materials, include a map that shows these specific direct connections to support your narrative.*

3.4: **\*Is the project located in or near an Environmental Justice Community or in close proximity to an “underserved” community according to the Massachusetts Environmental Justice map?** *(Link to* [*Environmental Justice Map*](https://mass-eoeea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1d6f63e7762a48e5930de84ed4849212)*)* **If applicable, describe the impacted EJC or underserved community. What is the proximity of the community to the trail (does the trail intersect with the population block, run adjacent, or is it a certain distance away?) How will this project improve access, mobility, safety, health, and/or quality of life for these populations?** *See Grant Guidelines for information and resources on Environmental Justice Communities. "Underserved" can encompass population groups such as low income, minority, elderly, children, limited English proficiency, geographically isolated communities (e.g., rural), or persons with disabilities.*

3.5: **\*Describe the steps already taken during this project or planned in future steps to ensure that the project is inclusive of under-represented voices and populations in the community, region, or state.** *For example, how has the project solicited feedback and comments from non-English speaking, low-income populations, and/or populations of color and integrated those into project design and implementation?*

3.6: **\*How does this project specifically address or improve accessibility for people with disabilities?** *Provide a brief overview of how the project will facilitate new or improved access for populations with limited mobility, including but not limited to elderly, visually impaired and wheelchair users. \*Note that all projects must comply with state and federal trail accessibility guidelines according to the designed use of the trail (see the Grant Guidelines for accessibility information and resources).*

3.7: **\*Describe the "readiness" of this project for the proposed phase.** *What planning / engineering steps have already been accomplished? What permits are anticipated, which ones are already in place? How have climate resiliency and weather impacts been considered and incorporated into this project? Is there a plan in place for ongoing maintenance?*

3.8: **\*Describe community support for this project.** *How was the public involved in the project's selection and planning and what is the public's role going forward? What votes are required and have those taken place and passed? If no public outreach has taken place, explain why. Describe any existing or anticipated opposition to the project and how that is being addressed.*

3.9: **\*Does this project specifically address an existing or potential safety issue? If yes, describe the proposed installation / enhancement and how it will improve safety on the trail.** *All projects must meet minimum safety requirements for the intended use. This question only applies to projects which are specifically applying for funds to address an existing or potential safety issue.*

3.10: **\*What distinguishes this project as a unique, high-quality recreational experience for the visitors and residents of Massachusetts?**

3.11 **\*Will the project promote youth involvement or engagement?** *For example, will the project or components of it involve youth crews, scouting groups, technical and/or trade school students, or other youth-focused groups in any stage of planning, construction, or continued maintenance? In what ways, if any, have youth been engaged during community outreach?*

**SECTION IV: CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION**

*Any project that receives state or federal funding must comply with various laws and regulations to protect natural and cultural resources including, but not necessarily limited to:*

Historic Resources

Below-Ground Archaeology

Wetlands and Waterways

Rare and Endangered Species

Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act

The below questions will assist us in evaluating your project and helping us guide you through the natural resources and cultural permitting processes.

4.1: **\*To the best of your knowledge, is your project near any historic or archaeological resources?**

 Yes / No

4.2: **If Yes, please describe the resources and how your project will avoid, minimize, or mitigate any impacts to these resources**.

4.3: **\*Will your project involve even minimal digging or excavation, including stump removal?**

 Yes / No

4.4: **Please describe the locations and extents of digging or excavation.**

4.5: **\*Will your project require Wetland Protection Act permitting (i.e., Will any part occur within 100 feet of a wetland or 200 feet of a perennial stream?)**

 Yes / No

4.6: **If yes, please describe what communications you have had with the local Conservation Commission, if permitting is required and whether it has been obtained, and what steps you are taking to avoid wetland impacts.**

4.7: **\*Will the project occur within Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife and/or Priority Habitats of Rare Species, according to MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Natural Heritage Atlas?** *(Available at* [*https://maps.massgis.digital.mass.gov/MassMapper/MassMapper.html*](https://maps.massgis.digital.mass.gov/MassMapper/MassMapper.html) *by clicking on the “Regulated Areas” drop down menu, then clicking “Natural Heritage Data,” and finally selecting both NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife and NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species)*

 Yes / No

4.8: **If yes, please describe what communications you have had with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, the status of permitting, and what steps you are taking to avoid impacts to rare species.**

4.9: **\*Does the project meet or exceed any thresholds for MEPA review set in 301 CMR 11.03? List all relevant thresholds and indicate if ENF and/or EIR are required.**

4.10: **Are there any other permits required for this project? Please indicate the permit type and how/when it will be obtained.**

**SECTION V: TRAIL ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES CHECKLIST**
*This portion of the application is to confirm compliance with the Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG). Projects on trails designated for Hiker/Pedestrian use where the activity is* ***construction*** *or* ***alteration*** *must comply to FSTAG technical requirements to the fullest extent possible. If the project falls under this category, please read FSTAG carefully before continuing to this section.(*[*https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FSTAG-2013-Update.pdf*](https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FSTAG-2013-Update.pdf)*)*

**PART 1: Determination of Applicability**

5.1 \*Designed Use (Check ONLY one):

 Shared Use Path

 Hiker/Pedestrian

 Off-Road Motorized

 Other

5.2 \*Project Activity (Check all that apply):

 Project Development

 Design / Engineering / Permitting

Maintenance

Construction

 Alteration (defined as a change in the original purpose, intent, or function of a trail)

**PROCEED TO NEXT SECTION of this form if:**

* The project’s Designed Use is Hiker/Pedestrian AND project activities include Construction or Alteration.

**DO NOT PROCEED to the next section of this form if:**

* The project’s Designed Use is a Shared-Use Path. **All Shared-Use Path projects MUST be built as accessible.** DO NOT submit a MassTrails application if the trail will not be accessible.
* The project’s Designed Use is Hiker/Pedestrian AND project activities include Project Development, Design/Engineering/Permitting, or Maintenance.
* The project’s Designed Use is Off-Road Motorized.
* If your project falls in the “Other” category, contact the MassTrails Administrator to determine if the next section of this form needs to be completed.

**PART 2: Trail Accessibility Guidelines Compliance**

5.3 Length of New/Altered Trail (linear feet):

5.4 Does the trail connect directly to a trailhead or trail that complies with accessibility guidelines without any exceptions? Yes / No

**Tread Stability:** *See Section 7.4.1 of FSTAG.*

5.5 Is the trail tread firm and stable? *See FSTAG Definitions, Section 7.3*. Yes / No

5.6 If not, what is the length (linear feet) of trail tread that is NOT firm and stable:

**Trail Width:** *See Section 7.4.2 of FSTAG.*

5.7 Is the full trail width at least 36 inches? Yes/ No

5.8 If not, what length (feet) of trail is NOT 36 inches wide?

5.9 If/where the trail is not 36 inches wide, what is the width (inches) of the trail?

**Tread Obstacles:** *See Section 7.4.6 of FSTAG.*

5.10 Are there tread obstacles on the trail greater than 2 inches in height? Yes / No

**Tread Slope:** *See Section 7.4.3 of FSTAG.*
The majority of the trail should be at a 5% slope or less. Trail segments with a slope between 5-8.33% must be no longer than 200 feet without a resting interval provided. Trail segments with a slope of 8.33-10% must be no longer than 30 feet without providing resting intervals. Segments with a slope of 10-12% must be no longer than 10 feet without providing resting intervals. Resting intervals must be a minimum of 60 inches long by 36 inches wide with a slope of no more than 5%.

5.11 Does the trail slope exceed 5% for any segment of the trail? Yes / No

 **If NO, proceed to Question 5.16. IF YES, answer questions 5.12 through 5.15.**

5.12 Does trail slope exceed 12% for any segment of the trail? Yes / No

1. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

5.13 Are there segments of trail longer than 10 feet that are between 10 and 12% slope? Yes / No

1. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

5.14 Are there segments of trail longer than 30 feet that are between 8.33 and 10% slope? Yes / No

1. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

5.15 Are there segments of trail longer than 200 feet that are between 5 and 8.33% slope? Yes / No

1. If yes, provide length (feet) of each segment:

**Passing Spaces:** *See Section 7.4.5 of FSTAG.*
If tread width is less than 60 inches, passing spaces of 60 inches by 60 inches, with a slope of 5% or less and cross slope of 5% or less, shall be provided at no more than 1,000-foot intervals.

5.16 Is the trail tread width less than 60 inches? Yes / No

1. If yes, are passing spaces utilized to the technical specifications of FSTAG? Yes / No

**Tread Openings:** *See Section 7.4.7 of FSTAG.*
Openings in surfaces (boardwalk, bridges, etc.) shall be small enough to prevent passage of a 1/2-inch diameter sphere. Elongated openings should be placed perpendicular to the dominant direction of travel.

5.17 Are there openings in the trail tread, resting, or passing areas of the trail? Yes / No

1. If yes, are openings smaller than 1/2 inch? Yes / No
2. If yes, are openings placed perpendicular to the direction of travel? Yes / No

**PART 3: Accessibility Guidelines Exceptions**

**Conditions for Exception:** *See Section 7.1 of FSTAG.*
Where one or more of the following conditions exists on a trail, an “exception” for that specific requirement can be used **where that condition exists**. All appropriate design options should be considered before applying the exception. You will be asked to describe the conditions in 5.21.

5.18 Check all that occur at least once within the project:

Condition for Exception 1: Where compliance with the technical provision is not practicable due to terrain.

Condition for Exception 2: Where compliance with the technical provision would fundamentally alter the function or purpose of the facility, trail, or the setting.

Condition for Exception 3: Where compliance with the technical provision cannot be accomplished with the prevailing construction practices.

Condition for Exception 4: Where compliance is precluded because the cultural, historic, or

significant natural features are eligible for protection under Federal, State, or local law.

**General Exceptions:** *See Section 7.2 of FSTAG*.
After assessing projects to determine conditions for exception, one of two general exceptions may be applicable. These exceptions are determined based on established limiting factors.

5.19 Limiting Factors for Determination of Impracticability (check all that apply):

Limiting Factor 1: The combination of trail running slope and cross slope exceeds 40% for over a distance of 20 feet.

Limiting Factor 2: The surface is not firm and stable for a distance of 45 feet or more.

Limiting Factor 3: The minimum trail width is 12 inches or less for a distance of at least 20 feet.

Limiting Factor 4: A trail obstacle of at least 30 inches in height extends across the full width of the trail.

Limiting Factor 5: One or more conditions for an exception exist that result in significant deviations from the technical provisions for over 15% of the length of the trail.

5.20 If NO Limiting Factors exist, but one or more Conditions for Exception apply to the project, check General Exception 1. If one or more Limiting Factors apply, choose General Exception 2. If no Conditions for Exception or Limiting Factors apply, no General Exception may be used. The trail project must fully adhere to the technical guidelines of FSTAG.

General Exception 1: Where a condition for exception prohibits full compliance with a specific requirement on a trail segment, that segment shall comply with the requirement to the maximum extent possible.

General Exception 2: If it is determined that it is impracticable to provide a trail fully complying with the technical requirements of FSTAG, the trail shall not be required to comply with technical guidelines.

**\*A note on the extent of impracticability:** Where General Exception 2 permits exemption of an entire trail from following accessibility guidelines, it is important to construct portions of the trail to meet the trail accessibility guidelines where feasible. Consider doing so especially if a prominent feature (such as a scenic view, waterfall, or other feature that would be of interest to visitors) is located between the trail terminus and the first extreme environmental barrier and there are few or no significant conditions requiring exceptions on that portion of the trail.

5.21 Use the space below to describe any conditions that make it impracticable to comply with the guidelines.

5.22 Use the space below to describe alternatives considered. Explain why alternatives were not chosen.

**SECTION VI: EQUIPMENT WORKSHEET (Required for Equipment Purchases Only)**

Equipment purchases are permitted under the MassTrails grant program. This can include equipment necessary for trail construction and maintenance activities, such as mowers, chainsaws, snow grooming machines and all-terrain vehicles (for hauling people and materials). Equipment is defined as tangible personal property having a useful life of at least five years and a per-unit acquisition cost of $5,000 or greater. Equipment must be purchased in full with the title held by the Grantee and must be used for the proper authorized use as stated in the project proposal.

Three bids must be solicited and documented for all equipment purchases with a value of $5,000 or more, in order to be reimbursed. It is advised to do so at the time of application to determine the appropriate grant request amount, however, this is not required with the application.

Please answer each question listed below for ALL proposals to purchase equipment with a value of $5,000 or more. This is REQUIRED in order to be considered for a grant award.

6.1: **Have three quotes been obtained for this piece of equipment?** *Upload quotes in Section 7.*

 Yes / No

6.2: **What need will the purchase of this equipment fulfill? For multiple pieces of equipment, describe the individual benefit for each piece.**

6.3: **Describe the trail or trail system where the equipment will be used. Include the type of trail, length, surface, user groups and condition of the trail/system**.

6.4: **What is the estimated daily use of the section of trail/system where the equipment will be used?**

6.5: **Where and how will the equipment be stored (during both the winter and summer months, if different)?**

6.6: **Is this equipment replacing an older piece of equipment that was purchased using previous grant funds (i.e., Recreational Trails Program)? If so, what is the plan for that piece of equipment’s disposal/re-allocation?**

6.7: **If proposing to purchase accessories, justify each individual addition with an explanation, if applicable.**

**SECTION VII: REQUIRED DOCUMENTS AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

Uploaded Documents will not be saved if you intend to return to this application later. **Do not upload documents until you are ready to submit your application.**

\* Note that there is a 25MB limit for total files uploaded with this application.

**In this section, when you are ready to submit your application, you will upload:**

Project Budget and Timeline Spreadsheet

Maps of Project Location and Extent (Design documents do not qualify as maps)

Project Specifications, Plans, Drawings, Photos (as a single PDF)

Landowner Permission Forms and Conservation Restriction Work Authorization Form (as a single PDF)

Additional Project Information (Completed Permits, Conservation Restriction/Easement/Right of Way, Bids/Quotes, Town Votes, Letters of Support)

7.1: **\*MassTrails Grant Budget and Timeline Spreadsheet** (Note that there are two (2) tabs on this spreadsheet - BOTH should be completed). *The Spreadsheet can be downloaded at the MassTrails Grants website (*[*https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-masstrails-grant*](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-masstrails-grant)*)*

7.2: **\*Project Maps** *Submit at minimum two (2) project maps – a locus map, and another map of the project extents (as detailed as possible). Submit additional maps as needed using various imagery and data to depict the project as accurately as possible, especially if multiple non-contiguous locations are involved in the project scope. We also encourage you to submit a single zipped GIS file of the project extent under Additional Project Information below, though this is not required.*

***Locus map guidance:*** *use a quadrangle from the U.S. Geological Survey. Download U.S.G.S. maps at* [*https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer/#15/42.1649/-72.0961*](https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer/#15/42.1649/-72.0961)*. Boundaries of the project area should be specific. Maps should accurately show where on-the-ground work will be occur. Do not circle a large general area to show where the project will occur.*

7.3: **\*Documentation of Landowner Permission(s) / Authorization(s)**

7.4: **Project Documents (Photos, Plans, Drawings, etc.)** *Submit a single PDF file of photos showing the typical trail / location conditions. Be sure to clearly label each picture and provide a description of its context. Also include any plans, drawings, and other specification documents of the proposed structures to be built (bridges, boardwalks, kiosks, signage, platforms, trail drainage structures, culverts, etc.)*

**Optional:** Submit up to three (3) files containing additional information that reviewers may need in order to make informed determinations. These files should be relevant to the review process and not redundant. Files should not be included in place of answering the grant application questions (i.e., all application questions should be answered in FULL, and should not reference long, supplementary documents for reviewers to find the answers).

7.5: **Additional Project Information – A**. *Submit a file with any additional project information.*

7.6: **Additional Project Information – B**. *Submit a file with any additional project information.*

7.7: **Additional Project Information – C**. *Submit a file with any additional project information.*