



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS



MASSTRAILS GRANTS PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is MassTrails?

MassTrails is an inter-agency initiative of the Commonwealth lead by the Governor's Office, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Department of Transportation, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. MassTrails seeks to expand and connect the Commonwealth's networks of off-road, shared-use pathways and recreational trails for all users across Massachusetts by providing matching grants, technical assistance and resources to individuals, municipalities, non-profits, and other public entities to design, construct, and maintain high quality Massachusetts trails.

What is the MassTrails Grants Program?

MassTrails provides matching grants to communities, public entities, and non-profit organizations to plan, design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trails experiences used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors. Applications are accepted annually for a variety of well-planned trail projects benefitting communities across the state.

Who can apply for a MassTrails grant?

Eligible applicants include municipalities, state or federal agencies, Native nations, and non-profit organizations. Two or more entities can apply jointly, with one acting as the fiscal agent. MassTrails grants can be in addition to other forms of secured local, state, and federal assistance that the applicant will receive.

What can MassTrails funds be used for?

MassTrails provides federal and state capital grant funds to eligible communities to pay for project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of trails in Massachusetts. A "trail" is defined as an off-road linear corridor with varied surface type, width, length, and terrain. It can be primarily recreational in nature and/or serve the purpose of connecting communities and people to distinct destinations. Eligible project activities can include:

- Trail planning, design, engineering, and permitting.
- Construction of new trails.
- Maintenance and restoration of existing trails.
- Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead amenities.
- Purchase and lease of trail-related construction and maintenance equipment.
- Acquisition (in limited cases) of easements and fee interest in property for trail corridors.

*Sidewalks and/or road improvements are not eligible as trail projects under this program.

What types of trails can be funded under MassTrails?

Types of trails can include shared-use pathways (e.g., Charles River Pathway, Mystic River Greenway); rail trails (e.g., Mass Central Rail Trail, Norwottuck Rail Trail, Clipper City Rail Trail); natural surface trail systems (e.g., Appalachian Trail, Worcester East-West Trail, Stone Farm Trail System in Brockton); community/accessible trails with various surfaces (e.g., Riverwalk in Great Barrington, Watertown Riverfront Park and Braille Trail, New Bedford Harborwalk); water trails (e.g., Connecticut River Paddlers Trail, Alewife Brook Greenway), and off-road motorized trails (i.e., accommodate ATVs, off-road motorcycles, snowmobiles).

When is the grant deadline?

MassTrails grants are due on Monday, February 3, 2025.

What is the maximum grant amount that can be requested?

The minimum grant award amount is \$5,000. The award maximum depends on the project type and needs and is generally \$100,000 for recreational trails projects and up to \$500,000 for shared-use path projects demonstrating critical network connections of regional and statewide significance. The grant amount requested should realistically align with the proposed project, with details supported within a submitted budget.

MassTrails is a reimbursement grant program. What does this mean?

MassTrails grantees must first pay for expenditures and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. Costs eligible for reimbursement include all approved project costs incurred on or after a grantee's contract execution date up to the end date of the contract. Documentation includes invoices, receipts, time sheets, and other acceptable records along with proof of payment for those expenditures.

Is there a match requirement?

MassTrails grants are MATCHING grants and require that proponents provide a minimum of 20% of the total project value. The source of match can vary depending on the project type but can include cash match (can be obtained from other federal or private grants, CPA funds, donations, etc.), donated services, and volunteer labor. The project application must include estimates for the matching portion of the project cost. The match must cover a minimum (greater amounts are encouraged) of 20% of the total value of a project. For example, a \$100,000 grant funding request would require at least \$25,000 in matching contributions, for a total project value of \$125,000 (80% of \$125k = \$100k, 20% of \$125k = \$25k).

How long do grantees have to complete the project?

Most project development and design projects will have one year to complete all spending and match under the grant, with the funding available within the state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30 of the following year). Trail construction and maintenance projects may be permitted a longer timeframe of up to two years, depending on the scope and specifications of the project. For more details, contact the MassTrails Grant Administrator.

How will my application be evaluated?

A grant review team uses the grant criteria to assess, score and rank proposals. 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)
- Serve the diversity of Massachusetts residents, especially: (Equitable)
- Effectively address accessibility guidelines (Accessible)
- Allow for efficient use of grant funds (Efficient)
- Are ready for the proposed phase (Ready)
- 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)

A detailed listing of grant criteria is listed in the MassTrails Grant Guidelines document, posted here www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-masstrails-grant.

What is the program looking for in terms of trail connections?

MassTrails prioritizes building out the longer distance trail networks across the state, filling in critical gaps in existing networks, and overcoming current barriers to connectivity while taking into consideration the number of people that will potentially access a given project.

How do I submit an application for a MassTrails grant?

All applications must be submitted through the online application portal accessed at www.mass.gov/guides/masstrails-grants. No paper applications will be accepted. There is no log in ID or password required. The application can be saved while working on it. Click “Save and Resume Later” and then click on “Save and Get Link.” A link to the application will be provided which must be copied and saved in order to return to the application. A good way to ensure that the link is not lost is to email it to yourself. Please note that any forms which have been uploaded in Section VII of the application will not be saved and must be uploaded again before the application is submitted.

It is recommended that applicants review the “Application Template” provided on the MassTrails Grants website and fill in all fields before beginning the online application process. The template covers all questions, and information can be copied and pasted into the online application when ready.

If my project was not funded in a previous MassTrails round, and I want to submit the same project again, will I need to reapply to be considered in the current MassTrails round?

Yes. If you wish to resubmit a previously unfunded project for consideration in the next funding round, you are required to submit a new application.

Can I apply for more than one project in the same grant round?

Yes. Eligible applicants can submit funding requests for more than one project in the same round. However, a separate application is required for each project. Each proposal will be evaluated independently against the criteria.

Are there public access requirements for projects funded by MassTrails?

Yes. The public must be assured legal access to trails and trail-related facilities developed or maintained with MassTrails funds.

What landowner permission documentation is required when applying for a MassTrails grant?

The applicant must identify all outstanding rights and interests held by others on the land upon which the project is proposed. All applications must include a signed statement from the landowner(s) or manager(s) specifically authorizing the project and ensuring that the property is open for continuing public access, in addition to any other required forms specific to a given landowner/entity. Required landowner permission forms can be accessed on the MassTrails grant application site. Applications without adequate landowner permissions will be considered incomplete and will not be considered for funding. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to obtain landowner permission.

*If there is an existing Conservation Restriction (CR) on the property, authorization for the proposed work must be submitted with the application. A Conservation Restriction Work Authorization Form or letter from the entity holding the CR are permissible forms of authorization.

Do I need to obtain permitting or complete other regulatory reviews before I can apply to MassTrails?

No. A project does not need to be fully permitted before applying for a MassTrails grant. However, the project must have all required permitting in place before construction, and those documents must be on file with the MassTrails Grants Administrator. For information on what permits are required, see the MassTrails Grant Guidelines document.

When will the MassTrails Grants be awarded?

Notification to applicants on the status of their grant application is expected to be on or about 150 days after the grant application deadline. All applicants will be notified by email and informed of the status of their proposed project (approved or not). The effective start date of a contract (grant award) shall be the latest of the following dates: the date the Standard Contract Form has been executed by an authorized signatory of the contractor and the procuring department; the date of secretariat or other approval(s) required by law or regulation; or a later date specified in the Standard Contract Form. The earliest start date for a MassTrails grant project will generally be on or after July 1.

How can I find out more information and guidance on steps to apply for a MassTrails Grant?

Any and all information about the MassTrails Grant application, scoring, requirements, and forms is available in the MassTrails Grant Guidelines document accessed here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/masstrails-grant-guidelines-and-application-information/download>. Read through this document before applying or taking any steps towards applying for a MassTrails Grant. Contact the MassTrails Grants Administrator with questions.

Additional Steps:

Step 1: Go to the MassTrails Grant Application website: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-masstrails-grant>

Step 2: Download the MassTrails Grant Application Template and all other required forms.

Step 3: Contact the MassTrails Grants Administrator with any questions.

Step 4: Obtain landowner permission for the project and Build America, Buy America (BABA) documentation if needed.

Step 5: Fill out the Application Template, gather all required attachments (such as maps, pictures, specifications, and the signed Landowner Permission Form, CR Work Authorization Form, and Build America, Buy America documentation, if needed), and apply online.