



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS



MASSTRAILS GRANTS PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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 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 benefiting communities across the state.

Who can apply for a MassTrails grant?

Eligible applicants include municipalities, state or federal agencies, 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 (i.e.: Charles River Pathway, Mystic River Greenway); rail trails (i.e.: Mass Central Rail Trail, Norwottuck Rail Trail, Clipper City Rail Trail); natural surface trail systems (i.e.: Appalachian Trail, Worcester East-West Trail, Stone Farm Trail System in Brockton); community/accessible trails with various surfaces (i.e.: Riverwalk in Great Barrington, Watertown Riverfront Park and Braille Trail, New Bedford Harborwalk); water trails (i.e.: Connecticut River Paddlers Trail, Alewife Brook Greenway), off-road motorized trails (i.e.: accommodate ATV's, off-road motorcycles, snowmobiles).

When is the grant deadline?

MassTrails grants are due on February 1st of each year.

What is the maximum grant amount that can be requested?

Grant amounts are dependent on the project and its needs, with a minimum grant award of \$5,000 and a maximum grant award of \$300,000 awarded to high priority projects. 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 themselves and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. Costs eligible for reimbursement include all approved project costs incurred on or after 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 cost. The source of match can vary dependent on the project type, but can include cash match (can be obtained from other state or federal 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, an \$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 1st to June 30th of the following year). Trail construction and maintenance projects may be permitted a longer timeframe of up to two years, dependent on the scope and specifications of the project. For more details, contact the MassTrails Program Manager.

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:

- 1) Plan, design, or construct off-road shared-use pathway and recreational trail connections between where Massachusetts residents live, learn, work, shop, and recreate,
- 2) Serve the diversity of Massachusetts residents,
- 3) Allow for efficient use of grant funds,
- 4) Are ready for the proposed phase,

- 5) Adequately address safety,
- 6) Adequately address accessibility, and
- 7) Create diverse, high quality recreational experiences and connect users to the natural and cultural wealth of Massachusetts.

A detailed listing of grant criteria can be accessed on the MassTrails Grants website.

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.

Who will review and approve the applications?

All applications are reviewed by the Inter-Agency Trails Team or the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board (MARTAB) depending on the scope and specifications of the project. The Inter-Agency Trail Team consists of representatives from the Governor's Office, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Department of Transportation and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. MARTAB is made up of representatives from each major trail user group in Massachusetts, appointed by DCR, with the purpose of advising and making recommendations for grant projects funded through the federal Recreational Trails Program. All feedback and review notes are gathered and evaluated to determine score and rank for each project. Grant funding recommendations are submitted to the Secretary for review and approval and final decisions are confirmed by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

How do I submit an application for a MassTrails grant?

All applications must be submitted through the online application portal 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 that 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 downloaded in Section VI of the application will not be saved and must be downloaded 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.

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 or have all required permissions in place before applying for a MassTrails grant. However, the project must have all required permitting and permissions in place before construction, and those documents must be on file at DCR. For information on what permit and permission are required, see the MassTrails Grant Application.

When will the MassTrails Grants be awarded?

Notification to applicants on the status of their grant application is expected to be on or about 100 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 1st.