

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

Policy Changes & Clarifications Effective for the 2021 Grant Cycle

Maximum Grant Request Amount (non-motorized projects only)

Revised Policy: The recommended maximum grant request amount for non-motorized trail projects is \$150,000. Applications will not be denied if they exceed \$150,000, but will be subject to increased scrutiny from the grant advisory committee and should include a strong justification in the fiscal considerations section of the application.

Description of Change: A maximum grant request amount was not in place prior to the change. The change does not apply to motorized projects (OHV and snowmobile trail projects).

Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.1

5% Non-Federal Share (federal agency applicants only)

Revised Policy: At least 5% of funds must be from a non-federal funding source when a federal agency is the grant applicant/recipient.

Description of Change: This policy previously applied to all applicants, including non-federal governments and organizations. The Federal Highway Administration clarified that the law only applies to federal agency grant recipients. If a non-profit partner of a federal land manager applies to RTP, 100% of match may be from federal funding sources. Or if a local or state government applies to RTP, 100% of match may be from federal funding sources.

The policy manual includes a list of federal programs or funding sources that can be treated as non-federal share. No changes were made to the list.

Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.3D

NEPA Documentation (projects on federal land only)

Revised Policy: Applications for projects on federal land must include final and approved NEPA documentation. If a Record of Decision (ROD) is required for the project, a copy of the signed ROD must be submitted along with a copy of the Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as applicable. If the project falls under a categorical exclusion, a letter or memo from the District must be submitted.

Description of Change: Previous policy was not as specific about requiring this documentation with the application, although it is always required prior to funding authorization and Notice to Proceed. Requiring NEPA documentation with the application ensures that the project is ready to proceed if selected for funding. Applications lacking NEPA documentation will not be submitted to the RTP Advisory Committee for consideration.

Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.6A, also refer to the Application Attachment Checklist

Interpretive Signage

Revised Policy: Incidental costs for natural and cultural interpretive signage are eligible as part of a trail construction or restoration project. Interpretive signage may also be eligible as a Safety and Education proposal.

Description of Change: Interpretive signage was previously ineligible under Oregon RTP policy.
Policy Manual Reference: Sections 2.3B

Bike Lanes (Transportation Facilities)

Revised Policy: Bike lanes, sidewalks, and other active transportation facilities are generally not eligible for RTP. However, if a bike lane or sidewalk is necessary to complete a missing link in a regional trail, a case may be made to demonstrate the recreational need and why transportation funds are not being used. Applicants proposing these types of facilities are required to consult with ODOT's Pedestrian and Bicycle Program as part of the application process. Contact the RTP Coordinator for more information.

Description of Change: Oregon RTP policy was previously silent on the eligibility of bike lanes. The policy change also includes the ODOT consultation requirement.
Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.3B

Law Enforcement & Emergency Services

Revised Policy: Law enforcement related expenses are not permitted in the federal RTP legislation. However, minimal use of projects supported by RTP for search and rescue or law enforcement activities may be allowed. Examples of eligible activities includes storing search and rescue equipment in a building primarily used to house a snowmobile trail groomer, or minimal use of equipment purchased with RTP funds for search and rescue operations.

Description of Change: Oregon RTP policy previously did not allow flexibility for law enforcement or other emergency use of RTP supported projects. This change in policy aligns with federal RTP guidance. It provides grant recipients the flexibility needed to maintain compliance with RTP policy in emergency situations.
Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.3B

Equipment

Revised Policy: For the purpose of trail building and maintenance, snowmobiles, ATV's, and other vehicles are eligible to purchase, lease, or rent with RTP funds. See the Buy America note below for current purchasing restrictions.

Description of Change: Oregon RTP policy previously did not allow the purchase of trucks, ATVs, side-by-sides, snowmobiles, or other vehicles used for transportation. These types of equipment may be necessary for trail building and maintenance and are now an allowable use of RTP funds, subject to certain restrictions.
Policy Manual Reference: Sections 2.3B and 2.4

Note: Buy America laws that apply to RTP require that 100% of all steel products and parts purchased with RTP funds, or counted as match, must be certified as sourced, melted, and manufactured in America. Because most equipment doesn't comply with Buy America, a waiver is required. Waivers are not being issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation until further notice. Unless waivers are considered at the federal level, RTP funds may only be used to lease or rent equipment that doesn't comply with Buy America. Refer to Policy 2.4 for more information about Buy America requirements.

Lighting

Revised Policy: Incidental costs for lighting at a trailhead or along a trail are eligible within a trail construction or restoration project.

Description of Change: Lighting was previously ineligible under Oregon RTP policy.

Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.3B

Skill Building Facilities

Revised Policy: Skill building facilities and features that are within a trail system or serve to enhance a trail system may be eligible (example: a beginner level pump track at a trailhead or within a larger trail system). Standalone skill building facilities that are not within or connected to a trail system are not eligible for RTP (example: an asphalt pump track in a park but not connected to a trail system).

Description of Change: This policy change allows for more flexibility to fund skill building facilities that are tied into or enhance a trail system. Project eligibility will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Factors considered by staff and grant advisory committee members include connection between the facility and trail system, level of difficulty, user needs, surface type, and more.

Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.3B

RTP Advisory Committee Scoring Criteria

Fiscal Considerations (new): The intent of this category is to award points to project proposals that demonstrate a strong financial need, superior leveraging of funds and partnerships, and a sustainable funding strategy. Up to five points may be awarded.

Discretionary Committee Member Criteria (revised): The discretionary scoring category was lowered from 20 to 15 points.

Policy Manual Reference: Section 2.3B, Criteria #10 and 12