



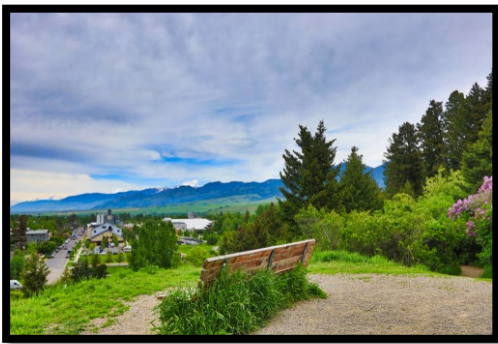
## Montana Trail Stewardship Program

### 2024 Grant Application Guidelines



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# GRANT GUIDELINES

## Trail Stewardship Program

### Program Overview

The Trail Stewardship Grant Program (TSP) is a state program that provides funding for the development, renovation, and maintenance of motorized and nonmotorized recreational trails and trailside facilities throughout Montana (23-2-108 and 23-2-109, MCA). TSP is administered by the Parks & Outdoor Recreation Division within Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

In 2019, the Montana Legislature passed Senate Bill 24 which generates about \$950,000 per year to fund projects that benefit small communities, urban centers, and backcountry landscapes. Funding for TSP comes from a portion of Montana's \$9.00 light vehicle registration as well as tax revenue from recreational marijuana sales. TSP has awarded approximately \$3.6 million in its first three grant cycles (2021-2023) to 104 different trail access and improvement projects across the state.



#### Available Funding

The amount of available funding for the 2024 cycle is approximately \$2 million. Applicants may request a maximum of **\$100,000** in grant funds, and there is no minimum request amount. The number of \$100k awards made in the grant cycle will depend on the number of applications received and the overall scoring/quality of the applications.

#### Match Requirement

Each project must have a ratio of 90% TSP funds to **10% matching funds**. Matching funds may be in-kind or cash.

#### 30% Motorized and 30% Non-Motorized

For the 2024 cycle, TSP will award 30% of available funds to motorized projects and 30% to non-motorized project, while the final 40% of funding will fall into a general pool.

#### Eligible Applicants

Grant applicants may include tribal, state, county, municipal or federal agencies, school districts, and nonprofit recreational organizations and clubs. An organization can submit one (1) grant application per grant cycle.

#### Application and Project Period

**The application period is open November 1, 2023 to January 15, 2024 at 5:00pm MST.** Applications are accepted via WebGrants at [funding.mt.gov](https://funding.mt.gov). FWP anticipates announcing grant awards and issuing contracts in April/May.

#### Project Start

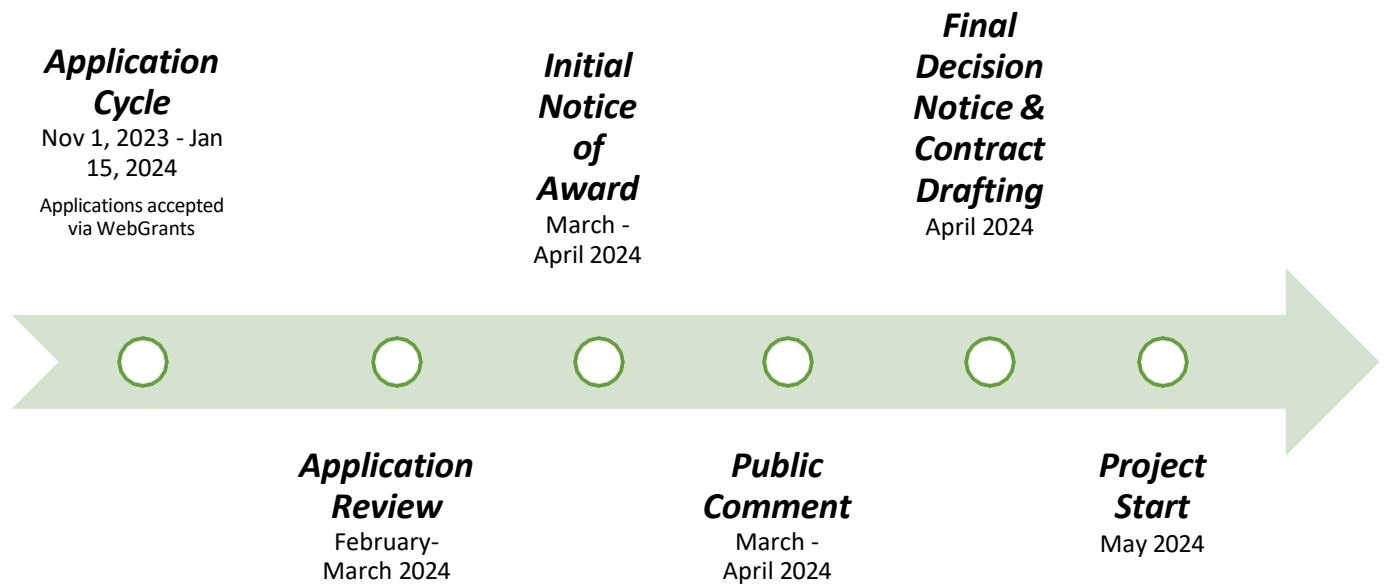
Projects may begin once the Contract Agreement has been completed, it is expected all contracts will be signed and projects may begin in May 2024. Project expenses incurred prior to the start date are ineligible for reimbursement or match.

#### Project Close

The deadline to expend project funds or matching funds and complete project work is April 15, 2026. All reimbursement requests and a final report are due by May 31, 2026.

*TSP is a reimbursement program. If awarded, an entity may receive reimbursement only **after** the entity has expended funds on an eligible expense and submitted adequate documentation.*

## Grant Cycle Timeline



## Project Eligibility

Not all activities are eligible for TSP reimbursement or match. The following is a list of eligible and ineligible project types.

### Eligible Project Types

- ▶ Construction of new trails and paths
- ▶ Rehabilitation and maintenance of existing trails and shared-use paths, including grooming of trails for motorized and nonmotorized winter recreation
- ▶ Construction and maintenance of trailside and trailhead facilities, including but not limited to bridges, fencing, parking, bathrooms, latrines, picnic shelters, trail signs
- ▶ Provision and integration of features to assist individuals with disabilities
- ▶ Maintenance or storage of equipment, including winter grooming equipment
- ▶ Restoration of areas damaged by trail use
- ▶ Trail projects on routes legally designated or otherwise appropriately approved by the land managing agency
- ▶ Weed management inside established trail corridors
- ▶ Development of urban trail linkages near homes, workplaces, and commercial centers

### Ineligible Project Types

- ▶ Acquisition of easements and property for trails
- ▶ Purchase of equipment (an article of nonexpendable, tangible property having a useful life of more than five years and with an acquisition cost that exceeds \$1,000)
- ▶ Development of marketing and ethics education programs/materials

- ▶ Feasibility studies and planning
- ▶ Facilities (shelters, toilets, picnic tables, benches, etc.) located in park or other settings which are not clearly and solely for the benefit of trail users (versus an enhancement for park users)
- ▶ Weed management outside of an established trail corridor
- ▶ Projects managed as profit-making entities
- ▶ Trail projects on routes not legally designated by the appropriate land managing agency
- ▶ Projects that displace fish and wildlife species, reduce habitat effectiveness, cause irreparable damage to vegetation, soils, water, and wild public lands, and/or substantially increase conflicts
- ▶ Trails, or any project pertaining to that trail, currently under litigation in a court of law
- ▶ Projects that have the potential to substantially alter legal use patterns or make the trail substantially less desirable for the spectrum of current users

## General Requirements

### **Landowner Permissions, Easements, and Public Access**

The public must be assured legal access to trails and trail-related facilities developed or maintained with State funds. The program places a higher value on longer-term easements or agreements that have the potential of allowing for public access in perpetuity.

#### ***Private Property***

On the application, you must include an owner-signed legal easement or lease agreement that will allow public access to the area/trail for a minimum of fifteen years *past the time of application*. The exception is for winter grooming operations; winter grooming operations on private land must include an easement or legal agreement that will allow for winter grooming for a term of at least five years.

#### ***Public Land***

On the application, you must include documentation of approval for the project from the corresponding land management agency (e.g. a Collection Agreement or letter of support from the land management agency).

In each case above, if the agreement will expire before the TSP project start date, the application should also include a letter/documentation from the landowner or land management agency stating its intent to reissue the agreement in time for project work to begin.

### **Right-of-Way, Railroad Certifications, and Public Utility Certifications**

Each application must include all necessary public right-of-way, railroad, and/or public utility certifications or confirm that no such certifications are required for the project. All certifications must be guaranteed at the time of application for your project to be considered for funding.

If your project includes trail construction or improvements along any State Highway right-of-way, you must contact your local Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) office and follow all applicable requirements. Typically, applicants working along a State Highway will need to submit an Encroachment Permit with the application or a Letter of Intent stating that the project has been approved by MDT. Coordination and certification with a railroad and/or public utility must include certification of one of the following:

- ▶ No railroad/utility facilities will be affected
- ▶ All railroad/utility work will be completed prior to the start of project work
- ▶ Arrangements are in place to have railroad/utility work undertaken during project work

### **Documentation of Project Support/Approval**

General letters of support are not required but are accepted in Section 7 of the TSP application. Letters of commitment and access permission are required for some project types which you will be prompted for in Section 2 and 4 of the application, if applicable.

- ▶ **If your proposed project takes place on land not owned by the entity applying for funding, you must provide:**
  - Permission to access the land: a current Collection Agreement, Land Use Agreement, or other such legal document demonstrating landowner permission for your organization to access and use the land. If the documentation is not current, you must provide a letter from the entity affirming their commitment to enter into such an agreement before the project start date.
  - Permission to conduct specific project work on the land: If the agreement does not specify the type of work or timeframe that you may do work, additional documentation is required to demonstrate that your project is allowable. For example, if you have a Collection Agreement for winter grooming but plan to use funds to install culverts—and installation of culverts is not specified in the Collection Agreement—additional documentation is required.
  - Permission for the public to access the land: [Landowner Permissions, Easements, and Public Access.](#)

▶ **If the applicant is a nonprofit organization,** you must provide a copy of meeting minutes or a letter from the organization’s leadership committing to the project if funding is awarded.

▶ **If your application references a match commitment from another entity** (cash, donation, volunteer labor, etc.), you must provide a current letter or other such documentation from the entity stating their commitment to this specific TSP project.

▶ **If your application references any other type of commitment from another entity** (e.g. a commitment to maintenance), you must provide a current letter or other such documentation from the entity stating their commitment to this specific project.

No other documentation of support is required to apply although Letters of Support are accepted. If you choose to submit any Letters of Support, be sure they meet the following requirements:

- ▶ Letters are typed
- ▶ Letters are from an organization, not an individual (unless an individual is expressing a commitment to the project or landowner is an adjacent, affected landowner)
- ▶ Letters are signed and dated
- ▶ Letters are current and reference the specific project/grant year for which you are applying
- ▶ Letters are unique

## **2024 TSP Application Review Focus Areas**

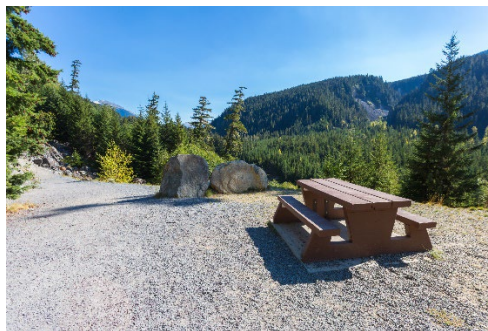
For the 2024 TSP grant cycle FWP, with advisement from the State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC), and in conjunction with aspects of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Management Plan (SCORP), have established two funding focus areas to encourage investment into critical outdoor recreation infrastructure improvements. The focus areas for the 2024 cycle include: 1) *Improving Accessibility to the Outdoors*, and 2) *Reducing Waste in the Outdoors*. If a project plan incorporates elements which directly address either or both focus areas, additional points will be included into the scoring of the application. Below is a description of the two focus areas.

### **Improving Accessibility to the Outdoors**

Applicants should seek opportunities to incorporate accessibility improvement elements into project planning while maintaining a landscape's character and natural features. TSP does not require all projects to comply with accessibility guidelines and standards; however, an additional point is given when scoring applications that incorporate accessible features and elements, especially for new construction projects.

For example, where appropriate, TSP projects should:

- ▶ Provide the required level of accessibility and be served by an accessible route where trail-related facilities such as parking lots, shelters, toilets, drinking fountains, and other features are provided on or along an accessible trail site
- ▶ Include trail routings that meet accessibility criteria to ensure that there are recreation opportunities for a variety of trail users, both traditional and non-traditional
- ▶ Account for people experiencing disabilities that may arrive at trail facilities by horse, OHV, or snowmobile, with assistance, or by other means



### **Reducing Waste in the Outdoors**

Issues pertaining to the accumulation of solid waste and/or human waste at trailheads and trail corridors has become a challenging problem in outdoor recreation management. Applicants should seek opportunities to incorporate waste management improvement elements into project planning to help reduce negative impacts. TSP does not require all projects address waste management issues; however, an additional point is given when scoring applications that incorporate waste management elements into their grant project.

For example, where appropriate, TSP projects should:

- ▶ Provide documented of existing waste management issues through data collection, photographs, letters of concern, or other means of documentation
- ▶ Describe the negative impacts such waste issues have had on the landscape and to recreational users
- ▶ Design waste management features or services that address long-term maintenance and management planning.

## Application Scoring Criteria

Application review panels score applications based on the criteria described below.

### **Project Location**

The proposed project location is described in detail to include information about the city and/or county in which the work will take place, as well as the land ownership category and listed landowner approval. The physical attributes of the work, including length, width, surface type, location, and seasonal use are also described. If a project is requesting funds for maintenance or improvement activities, information about the current condition of the trail(s) or facilities are included, as well as maps and photographs.

### **Project Benefits**

*Recreation Benefits:* The application describes the intended recreational benefits of this project and how specific user groups will experience enhanced recreational opportunities and access to the outdoors.

*Partnership Benefits:* The application describes the intended benefits that will result from local and/or regional partnerships, and how the formation of these partnerships will promote public access and resource stewardship.

*Community & Economic Benefits:* The application describes the intended community and economic benefits that will result from the work and provides data and/or information to support such claims.

*Environmental Benefits:* The application describes how the project will benefit the local environment by reducing negative impacts to natural resources and references supporting materials and/or research reports.

### **Project Implementation Plan**

The application aligns with an existing goal or strategy defined within a local, state, or federal plan or published report. The proposed project has articulated a realistic timeline for implementing multiple project phases and has provided a list of practical tasks that will monitor the progress of implementation. The qualifications of the workforce are described in detail and the listed skills and ability match the needs of the proposed project. All long-term maintenance needs have been expressed, and a plan to sustain project gains following the completion of the grant contract is demonstrated.

### **TSP Project Budget & Narrative**

A detailed budget outlines the applicant's funding request and aligns with the technical needs of the project. The budget narrative describes in detail how the requested funds will be spent and distributed. The cash match and in-kind narrative describes in detail how the organization is invested in the successful completion of the project.



## Budget and Matching Funds

### Creating a Budget in WebGrants

When applying for TSP funding in WebGrants, you will be instructed to fill out two budget forms: the Budget Form and the Funding Strategy Narrative Form. The WebGrants Budget Form should summarize your budget numbers. The WebGrants Funding Strategy Narrative Form should detail budget line items and provide short narratives about your funding strategy. Be sure the information on your Budget and Funding Strategy Narrative Forms is clear, detailed, and justified.

### Match Requirements

The minimum amount of match shown on an application must be 10% of the total project cost. This means, if an applicant is requesting \$30,000.00 in TSP funds, they must produce a match of \$3,000.00 in order to meet the 10% match requirement.

Entities must ensure matching funds meet FWP requirements. Applications that do not include the minimum amount of match may not meet preliminary review requirements.

To meet FWP requirements, matching funds must:

- ▶ Be an eligible TSP activity
- ▶ Be clearly tied to the proposed project scope
- ▶ Be incurred after the project start date
- ▶ Be guaranteed at the time of application
- ▶ Have a total value of at least 10% of the total project cost (funding request plus match)

Within the WebGrants application, match items should be categorized as Sponsor Funds or In-Kind Contributions, according to the descriptions below.

**Sponsor Funds:** The cash an entity has guaranteed to spend on the proposed project, including materials and salary it will use on the proposed project. Partner organization materials and salaries are also considered sponsor funds.

**In-Kind Contributions:** The value of volunteer labor, donated professional services, donated materials, etc. For calendar year 2024, general volunteer labor may be calculated at \$25/hour.

**Volunteer Hours as Match:** The TSP allows volunteer hours to be used as match with proper documentation. The number of volunteer hours shown on your application must be guaranteed and/or justified based on the amount of volunteer labor your organization utilized on similar projects.

If your project is funded, all volunteer hours used as match must be documented using the most current volunteer log (which requires volunteer and volunteer manager signatures). Volunteer hours will not be accepted as matching funds if documentation is missing information required on FWP's volunteer logs.

**Using Other FWP Grant Programs' Expenses as Match:** TSP applicants may include expenses/reimbursement from other FWP grant programs as match in their project budgets. For example, expenses from a Recreational Trails Program award may be used as match on your proposed

TSP project. For such match to be eligible, the work that will be reimbursed through another grant program:

- ▶ Must fall under your TSP project scope
- ▶ Must take place during your TSP period of performance

All match requirements must be guaranteed at the time of application. Therefore, you cannot include match from a unawarded grant, an application in review, etc.

It is recommended you contact the Program Manager if considering including match from another grant program in your application.

## Considerations for Specific Project Types and Expenses

### **Administrative Cost Rate for Grantees**

Administrative costs are those that support the entire organization and are not specific to the proposed project. The TSP allows grantees to use an administrative cost rate (up to 7% of the grant request) to cover such expenses. The administrative cost rate must be included in the budget at the time of application. The administrative cost rate must be included as a project expense and may not be used as match.

For example, if you are requesting \$10,000.00 in TSP funds, you may include a line item of up to \$700.00 ( $\$10,000 \times 7\%$ ) for administrative costs.

If the administrative cost rate is in the grantee's approved budget, it must be applied consistently on reimbursement requests throughout the project period. No documentation is required to substantiate the administrative cost rate once the budget documents are approved by the Program Manager.

### ***Administrative costs may include:***

- ▶ Accounting, auditing, contracting, budgeting, and general legal services
- ▶ Facility occupancy costs (e.g., rent, utilities, insurance, taxes, and maintenance)
- ▶ General liability insurance that protects the organization
- ▶ Depreciation on building and equipment
- ▶ Office supplies
- ▶ General and administrative salaries/wages

***Constructing or Resurfacing a Trail:*** Applicants proposing to build or resurface a trail should justify the chosen trail-surface type in their application.

Regardless of trail surface, construction costs and maintenance costs vary widely for each surface type. Applicants should therefore reach out to potential contractors for a quote(s) to develop the most detailed, accurate budget for their proposed project. Applicants may also consider reaching out to trail groups/communities that have undertaken similar projects to get more information.

***Proposals for Asphalt or Concrete Trails:*** TSP can be used to fund asphalt or concrete trails or shared-use paths. Due to the high upfront cost of these mediums, applicants must answer additional questions on the application to justify the need for asphalt/concrete. A detailed maintenance plan and parties

responsible must also be identified.

**Maintenance Plans:** Any applicant proposing to construct or resurface trails must include a detailed maintenance plan on the application. A detailed maintenance plan should:

- ▶ Identify the entity(s) which will perform both short- and long-term maintenance
- ▶ An explanation of how the maintenance will be funded
- ▶ The maintenance activities which will take place; and
- ▶ The anticipated timeline for performing maintenance

**Winter Grooming Costs:** TSP uses a groomer reimbursement methodology that employs an hourly rate based on average groomer expenditures. These rates are used in lieu of receipts for trail groomer expenses. For projects using the trail grooming reimbursement rates, the included expenses (see below) may not be reimbursed for exact cost or used as match.

Expenses covered by the grooming reimbursement rate:

- ▶ Fuel
- ▶ Oil
- ▶ General maintenance and repairs (including labor)

Hourly Rates:

- ▶ Utility sled used for trail grooming: \$20.00 per hour (does not include operator labor)
- ▶ Large groomers (e.g. PistenBully): \$120.00 per hour (does not include operator labor)

TSP funds may be used to reimburse groomer expenses, according to the groomer type and record of hours. Grooming hours and mileage must be documented using daily grooming logs and monthly summary sheets. Examples of these sheets can be found on the [Program Website](#).

On the application, show the math you used to calculate your overall grooming cost. Include a breakdown of expected hours by month.

**Expenses Not Included in the Reimbursement Rates:** Grooming-related costs may be reimbursed with TSP funds or used as match based on exact expenditures. Expenses not covered by the grooming reimbursement rate:

- ▶ Grooming machine operator labor
- ▶ Costs not associated with actual operation of the equipment (e.g. signs, weed spray)

### **Salaries/Labor Costs**

Proposed salary/labor costs must be associated with on-the-ground trail efforts. For salaries/labor costs to be considered for TSP funding, the application must identify the following:

- ▶ The title of each position proposed to be funded with TSP funds
- ▶ The number of hours each position will work on this project and an overview of the work they

- will perform
- ▶ Each position’s hourly rate of pay and/or how you’ve calculated the value of the salary(s) you are proposing for reimbursement

**Volunteer Trail Coordinator Positions:** Volunteer Trail Coordinator positions may be an eligible TSP expense. The application must include a compelling explanation as to the need for the position and how it uniquely benefits various trail user groups and recreation. Approved grant funding for Volunteer Trail Coordinator positions will cover salaries and travel per diem only. Projects requesting *only* Volunteer Trail Coordinator funding will not be considered. Volunteer Trail Coordinator funding must be utilized in connection to a larger trail project.

**Trail Steward Positions:** Trail Steward positions may be an eligible TSP expense. The application must include an explanation as to the need for the position and how it uniquely benefits various trail user groups. Approved grant funding for Trail Steward projects will cover salaries and travel per diem only. Enforcement activities are not an eligible use of TSP funds.

### Travel-Related Costs

Travel-related expenses may be used as proposed project expenses or match. If funded, the state rates applicable during the period of performance must be used for reimbursement. Current state rates for this biennium and/or calendar year are shown below for mileage, per diem, and use of personal property. Use the rates below to build your project budget on your application, bearing in mind the rates may have been updated once you submit a reimbursement request.

**Vehicle Mileage:** TSP funds can reimburse miles driven to or from an TSP project site at the current, approved state rate. The state rate to be used on the application is \$0.65.5 per mile. The current Travel Form must be used to document the miles being reimbursed; that form will include the current state rate at the time of reimbursement. (If you are seeking reimbursement for more than 1,000 miles driven by one individual in a calendar month, the reimbursement rate for the miles driven over 1,000 miles lowers to \$0.62.5 per mile.)

**Meals by Receipt (at Real Cost):** A grantee organization may be reimbursed for groceries purchased for TSP-funded trail crew meals. In this case, all itemized grocery receipts and proof of purchase(s) must be included with a reimbursement request.

**Meals by Meal Allowance (Per Diem):** TSP funds can reimburse meals by allowance at the current, approved state rate. To be eligible for a meal allowance while traveling to/from a TSP project, an individual must be in a travel status for more than three continuous hours within one of the following time ranges. The individual must also be at least 15 miles from the organization headquarters or home, whichever is closer. The current Travel Form must be used to document the meal allowances being requested; that form will include the current state rate at the time of reimbursement.

Time Range	Meal Allowed	State Rate
12:01am to 10:00am	Morning Meal	\$8.25
10:01am to 3:00pm	Midday Meal	\$9.25
3:01pm to Midnight	Evening Meal	\$16.00

If the individual travels each day from headquarters or home to a specific TSP work site(s) within the vicinity of their headquarters or home, they are not in a travel status.

### ***Use of Property***

If an individual uses the property listed below specifically for a TSP project, you may claim the appropriate amount for property expenses. The current Travel Form must be used to document the property expense(s) being requested; that form will include the current state rate at the time of reimbursement.

Type of Property	State Rate (per day in use)
Motorized OHV or Boats	\$15.00
Horse Trailer	\$15.00
Other Trailer	\$5.00
Horse (Pack Animal)	\$16.00

## **Environmental Review Requirements**

According to the applicable requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act or “MEPA” (Title 75, Parts 1-3, Montana Code Annotated), before a project proposed under the Trail Stewardship Program or “TSP” may be approved, environmental review must be conducted to identify, consider, and disclose potential impacts of the proposed project on the affected human population and environment.

FWP will conduct environmental review of each proposed TSP project based on the environmental review information provided by the applicant. The applicant will provide such information by completing the appropriate environmental review forms provided in the TSP grant application package. Applicants are expected to complete and attach all relevant environmental review documentation regardless of whether documentation of prior environmental review has been submitted with another grant program application. For example, an applicant seeking funds for projects under the TSP *and* Recreational Trails Program or “RTP” must submit environmental review documentation with both applications.

### **Project Types**

#### ***Construction and Improvement***

**Description:** New construction and improvement of a trail\* or trailside facility:

- ▶ Any new trail tread proposed, including creation of a new trail, widening of an existing trail, or resurfacing of an existing trail.
- ▶ Construction of new trail structures (e.g., new culverts/drainage structures, bridges).
- ▶ Construction of new trailhead/trailside structure (e.g., latrine, picnic area, parking area).
- ▶ Construction and/or placement of sheds/structures beyond an existing, established building footprint.

\* The definition of “Trail” includes shared-use paths.

#### **Environmental Review Documentation Requirements:**

Projects proposed under the TSP program must demonstrate compliance with MEPA. MEPA compliance

for the purposes of the TSP program is accomplished through preparation and public processing of a project-specific Draft EA. **To facilitate MEPA compliance, the applicant must complete and attach to their application the EA Form** located on FWP's website and within the Webgrants portal. Other forms may be accepted if they require analysis equivalent to or greater than that provided using FWP's EA Form. FWP will develop the Draft EA and conduct the required public processing using the information provided by the applicant. If additional information is required FWP will solicit the needed information directly from the applicant.

### ***Maintenance and Repair***

**Description:** General maintenance and repair of established trails or trailside facilities:

- ▶ Grooming for cross-country ski areas on existing and approved grooming routes.
- ▶ Brushing, clearing of vegetation from a previously established trail corridor.
- ▶ Repair of trail tread and trail structures (e.g., drainage structures) to their previous condition.
- ▶ Replacement of trail signage or placement of new signage within an established trail corridor or trailhead/trailside facility.
- ▶ Weed management within an established trail corridor.
- ▶ Other activities identified as "maintenance" in the landowner's management/maintenance plan

#### **Environmental Review Documentation Requirements:**

A proposed maintenance and repair project, as defined above, is **excluded from the requirement for environmental review** pursuant to MEPA's maintenance exclusion ([ARM 12.2.432\(5\(c\)\)](#)) The applicant must certify the proposed project meets the criteria for exclusion from environmental review by checking the applicable box in the completed and signed application. . No further environmental review will be required for proposed TSP maintenance and repair projects.

### ***Grooming for Snowmobile Areas on Existing Routes***

**Description:** Grooming of existing snowmobile routes as approved by the affected land management agency.

**Environmental Review Documentation Requirements:** A proposed project that including only grooming of existing, approved routes within an existing snowmobile area is exempt from environmental review pursuant to [23-2-657\(2\), MCA](#).

### **Public Lands Projects: *Environmental Review Requirements***

Other affected state, federal and tribal public land managers must also comply with applicable environmental review requirements. For example, TSP projects occurring on federal lands may be subject to both the applicable requirements of MEPA and the National Environmental Policy Act or "NEPA." Therefore, entities proposing TSP projects on state, federal, or tribal public lands must also consult with all other affected land management agencies and obtain any additional required environmental review documentation as part of the TSP application process.

It is the applicants responsibility to collect, review, and submit all required environmental review

documentation with their completed TSP grant application. This ensures environmental review conducted by other affected land management agencies has been approved and is relevant to the proposed TSP project. Any environmental review documentation submitted with the TSP grant application must be signed and approved as well as contemporaneous, completed within the three-year time-period immediately preceding submittal of the TSP grant application. TSP applicants proposing a project(s) on United States Forest Service or “USFS” lands may utilize the USFS Categorical Exclusion form located on the TSP [Program Website](#).

Pursuant to 23-2-657(2), MCA, proposed projects that include only grooming of existing, approved routes located within an existing snowmobile area located on public lands does not require environmental review, see additional information below under the section titled *Grooming for Snowmobile Areas on Existing Routes*. In addition, proposed TSP projects meeting the criteria for “maintenance and repair” do not require environmental review, see additional information below under the section titled *Maintenance and Repair*. Further, TSP projects proposed by tribal applicants on tribal lands do not require environmental review.

## **Tiering to Other Environmental Review Documents**

As applicable, environmental review for a proposed TSP project may tier to an existing environmental review document. Tier or tiering, for the purposes of MEPA, means preparing an environmental review by focusing specifically on a narrow scope of issues because the broader scope of issues was adequately addressed in previous environmental review document(s) that may be incorporated by reference.

State and federal land management agencies, for example, often tier environmental review to a more-encompassing environmental review document such as an approved USFS Forest Plan or Motor Vehicle Use Travel Plan, a related and approved Environmental Assessment (“EA”) or Environmental Impact Statement (“EIS”), etc. TSP applicants tiering to another applicable environmental review document must attach to their application a letter or other form or documentation including the following information:

- ▶ The name of the document being tiered to, the environmental review document itself, or a readily-accessible link to the environmental review document being tiered to.
- ▶ A reference to where potential impacts from the proposed TSP project are analyzed in the environmental review document being tiered to.
- ▶ As applicable, a summary of mitigation measures necessary to limit any identified significant adverse impact(s) to a level below significance.
- ▶ If the environmental review being tiered to is not contemporaneous (i.e., developed within the last three years), a statement of revalidation from the affected agency is required and must be submitted with the completed and signed application.

## **Compliance with Other Existing Laws, Regulations, Policies, and Ordinances**

Proposed TSP projects must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances. TSP applicants must identify and list any federal, state, and/or local agencies that have overlapping or additional jurisdiction, or environmental review responsibility for the proposed project, as well as any permits, licenses, other required authorizations, and any enforceable mitigations or stipulations. This list should be included in the section of the environmental review titled “#####.” .

## **Non-Public Land Projects: *Environmental Review Requirements by Project Type***

For proposed TSP projects located on lands other than *state, federal or tribal*, the descriptions included in the sections below will be used to determine the project type(s). Environmental review requirements are included for each identified project type below.

If the proposed TSP project includes more than one project type, the applicant must meet the environmental review requirements for the project type with the most stringent requirements. For example, if a proposed snowmobile trail grooming project, which is excluded from environmental review, also includes new trail construction, the applicant must complete the environmental review documents for trail construction.

FWP encourages public involvement in all proposed TSP projects. FWP, not the applicant, will serve public notice and conduct a formal public comment period for all proposed TSP projects. At the time of application, however, the applicant should be able to demonstrate it has involved the public, adjacent landowners, and other interested parties in the proposed project's planning process. Documentation of public participation conducted by the applicant may be uploaded with the completed and signed application.

## **Application Review**

All award decisions will be made in spring 2024 by FWP. The TSP application review process consists of multiple steps.

### **Review Panels**

**Internal Review Panel:** 2-3 FWP employees, a representative from the Access and Landowner Relations Bureau, and/or another representative of the agency.

**State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC):** a group of individuals (members) appointed by the Governor and agency officials from the state and federal government (advisors) who represent trail interests throughout Montana. Additional information available on the STAC webpage. Members serve three-year terms.

### **Application Review Process**

*Internal Review – Preliminary Review:* The TSP program manager, in conjunction with the Internal Review Panel, performs a technical review of eligibility for each application. Applications which do not pass preliminary review will not be scored by the internal review panel. Those applications will be included in materials sent to the State Trails Advisory Committee for awareness.

*Internal Review Panel – Review:* Internal Review Panel members also review the overall application based on the TSP Scoring Criteria and provide individual scores per criterion.

*Internal Review Panel – Meeting:* The Internal Review Panel meets to determine which applications did not meet preliminary review requirements based upon the preliminary review rubric. Changes to the self-reported applicant percentages for motorized and nonmotorized use are discussed; all changes



must be approved by the Panel.

*State Trails Advisory Committee Review:* State Trails Advisory Committee (STAC) members review all applications and give each eligible application an overall project score based on the Scoring Criteria.

*Scoring Review Meeting:* The STAC meets with Department staff to review the Internal Review Panel's ranked recommendation list and discuss the committee members' review and scoring of projects. At the scoring review meeting, the STAC may recommend a project move upwards or downwards on the Internal Review Panel's ranked recommendation list. The STAC may recommend removal of a project from consideration if:

- New concerns about the project have materialized that were not brought to attention during the review period
- Documentation required prior to the review meeting was not provided by the applicant;
- A MEPA review of the project found the applicant's [MEPA analysis](#) to be unsatisfactory

*Recommended Awards:* The STAC's list of recommended awards is provided to the Parks & Outdoor Recreation Division Administrator for consideration with the scoring of the Internal Review Panel. The Division Administrator, in consultation with the Director's Office, will propose a final list of recommended TSP awards and release for public comment. At this time, applicants are notified of their recommended award subject to completion of the public comment period and final FWP decision notice.

*FWP Decision Notice:* At the close of the public comment period, the TSP Program Manager incorporates all public comments into a FWP Decision Notice for final review by the Parks & Outdoor Recreation Division Administrator and Director's Office. After receiving final approval, awards are finalized as official awards.

