

# IOWA'S FEDERAL RECREATIONAL TRAILS FUND

## Introduction

The Federal Recreational Trails (FRT) Fund – also known as the National Recreational Trails (NRT) Fund – was established in the state in response to the Federal Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. This is a national program to provide funds to states to allocate grants for trails and trail-related projects. The NRT Program was later reaffirmed in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) in 1998. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) administers the program.

The Iowa department of Transportation (DOT) has been designated as the state agency responsible for the program in Iowa. The Iowa DOT and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) co-administer the program.

Each state is responsible for creating an advisory committee for the program comprised of representatives of the user groups that are predominant in the state. Iowa's FRT Advisory Committee was originally created in 1996 and currently consists of six members representing the following user groups:

- Hiking/walking
- Bicycling
- Cross-country skiing
- Snowmobiling
- Off-highway vehicles
- Horseback riding
- Canoeing
- Persons with disabilities

The advisory committee provides guidance to the Iowa DOT on the program's administration and assists with both the public input process and the review and ranking of applications for funding.

Interested applicants should contact the Iowa DOT for additional information on the program:

Yvonne Diller  
Iowa Department of Transportation  
Office of Systems Planning  
800 Lincoln Way  
Ames, IA 50010  
Phone 515-239-1252  
[Yvonne.Diller@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:Yvonne.Diller@dot.iowa.gov)

# Federal Recreational Trails Program

## Section I. General Provisions.

### A. Eligible Applicants.

Federal and state agencies, local governments, private individuals and organizations (if co-sponsored by a government agency) are eligible to apply for funding.

### B. Funding Distribution.

Not less than 30 percent of the funds received annually will be reserved for projects related to motorized recreation and not less than 30 percent will be reserved for projects related to non-motorized recreation. To ensure diversified trail use, the remaining 40 percent may be used for both motorized and non-motorized projects, but preference will be given to projects with the greatest number of compatible recreational purposes and/or those which provide for innovative recreational corridor sharing to accommodate motorized and non-motorized recreational trails.

Each state may use up to 7 percent of the funds received annually for administrative costs and up to 5 percent of the funds received annually for safety education programs related to the use of recreational trails.

### C. Grants.

The minimum grant amount is \$5,000. The maximum federal share for a project is 80 percent of eligible costs. Please note that this is a reimbursement program. Grant recipients will only be reimbursed for eligible costs actually expended. No costs or in-kind services incurred prior to FHWA approval of the grant are eligible for reimbursement or use as a match.

### D. Uses Permitted.

NRT funds may be used for projects from the following categories, which are in no order of priority:

- Maintaining and restoration of existing trails;
- Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages;
- Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment;
- Construction of new trails (with restrictions for new trails on Federal lands);
- Acquisition of easements or property for trails;

- Operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection related to trails (limited to 5 percent of a state's funds).

These funds are intended for recreational trails. They may not be used to improve roads for general passenger vehicle use or to provide shoulders or sidewalks along roads.

E. Uses Not Permitted.

- Property condemnation (eminent domain);
- Constructing new trails for motorized use on National Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management lands unless the project is consistent with resource management plans; or
- Facilitating motorized access on otherwise non-motorized trails.

F. Planning Provisions.

Projects funded through the Federal Recreational Trails Program must be identified in or further a goal of Iowa's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP); the Iowa Trails 2000 document; or a regional, county, or local plan.

G. Design/Safety.

All projects generally comply with currently accepted design guidelines for meeting minimum facility, space, orientation, safety, and site compatibility requirements. All trails must comply with the published guidelines in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities and/or the Iowa Trails 2000 resource manual. Signage must conform to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

## **Section II. Project Application Package.**

Procedure to Apply for a Grant.

- Applicants must be a city, county, or state agency. Other organizations are eligible to apply as a co-sponsor.
- At least 9 copies of the completed application and all attachments must be submitted to the Iowa Department of Transportation. Applications must be postmarked by October 1 mailed to the Iowa Department of Transportation, Office of Systems Planning, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50010. Questions can be directed to Yvonne Diller, phone 515-239-1252, e-mail [Yvonne.Diller@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:Yvonne.Diller@dot.iowa.gov)

### **Section III. Application Review and Selection Process.**

■ Applications will be scored and ranked by Iowa's Federal Recreational Trails Advisory Committee based upon the following criteria:

- 1) *The degree of innovative trail sharing to accommodate motorized and non-motorized use.*
- 2) *The number of compatible user groups allowed on the facility.*
- 3) *The facilitation of access for use by persons with disabilities, older citizens, economically disadvantaged and other special groups.*
- 4) *The development of trail linkages.*
- 5) *The creation of opportunities for new partnerships.*
- 6) *The furtherance of goals of Iowa's SCORP, Iowa Trails 2000, or a regional/county/municipal plan.*
- 7) *The usage of grant funds to leverage other investments (in services and materials, as well as dollars).*
- 8) *The level of citizen involvement in the project's concept and implementation.*
- 9) *The degree to which the project ties in to other trails, natural, cultural, or recreational areas.*
- 10) *The level of public/private partnerships for the ongoing operation and maintenance of the project.*
- 11) *The degree the project will result in the cleanup of an area.*

■ Projects recommended for funding will be presented to the Iowa DOT's Transportation Commission for approval.

■ Project agreements will be executed between the Iowa DOT and the local sponsors of those projects selected for funding.

■ Final funding approval will come from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) after National Environmental Policy Act approval has been received.

■ The Iowa DOT reserves the right to reduce or adjust grant recommendations to meet the requirement that 30 percent of the funding be allocated each to motorized and non-motorized projects.

■ Following commission action, the Iowa DOT will notify each applicant of the status of their application.

### **Section IV. Federal Funding Requirements.**

A. All projects selected for funding are subject to all applicable federal requirements and FHWA approval. These requirements may include:

- 1) Involvement of the public, including the adjacent property owners, in the development of the project.

- 2) Conformity with the federal guidelines for the acquisition of land for the project. This includes fair treatment practices and may include the completion of an appraisal on parcels to be acquired.
- 3) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA Act includes verification the project is not harmful to the environment in the following areas:

- Noise – impacts of noise during and after construction.
- Air Quality - compliance with Iowa's state implementation plan for maintaining its attainment status relative to the national ambient air quality standards. Conformity with the requirements of the Clean Air Act must be verified.
- Cultural Resources - disturbances to areas of archaeological or historical significance. Properties proposed for rehabilitation or preservation must be eligible for on the list of the National Register of Historic Places.
- Water Quality - impacts to water quality.
- Wetlands - impacts to wetlands.
- Floodplains - impacts to regulatory floodways or to a 110-year floodplain.
- Farmland Protection - impacts to surrounding farmland.
- Hazardous Waste Sites – location of and impacts to hazardous waste sites.

- 4) Americans With Disabilities Act. Projects must conform to the Americans With Disabilities Act, which allows for reasonable access to the project for persons with disabilities.
- 5) Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBE). Verification must be received that efforts have been made to solicit bids from disadvantaged and minority business enterprises.
- 6) Davis-Bacon Wage Requirements. Projects being developed within the right of way of a federal-aid highway will be required to comply with Davis-Bacon wage requirements, which state that consultants or contractors will conform to federal minimum wage requirements.

The above federal funding requirements will be addressed through the preparation of an environmental document. This document will be in the form of a categorical exclusion (CE), and environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS).

## B. Work on Public Lands.

Organizations receiving grant approval for work on public lands are required to enter into a separate agreement with the agency or agencies with jurisdiction over that land prior to undertaking the proposed work.

The agreement between the project sponsor and the public agency landowner must address the following:

- 1) The project must be open for public use for a minimum of 20 years after completion of the project.

- 2) The project site must be adequately maintained for a minimum of 20 years after completion of the project.

C. Permits or Other Approvals.

It is the project owner/sponsor's responsibility to obtain all permits or other approvals that may be required as a result of the activities proposed as part of the project.

D. Land Acquisition.

Grant recipients receiving approval to acquire an easement or purchase land in fee simple will be required to comply with the terms of the Federal Uniform Relocation and Acquisition Act of 1970.

## **Section V. Reimbursement of Costs/Matching Funds.**

A. Reimbursement Guidelines.

Federal Recreational Trails grant projects may be reimbursed for up to 80 percent of the total eligible projects, or the approved grant maximum, whichever is less. At least 20 percent of the eligible costs must be provided by the project sponsor/applicant. Matching funds can consist of cash and/or in-kind costs and labor for which a value can be documented.

**This is a reimbursement program.** Reimbursement requests to the Iowa DOT must be accompanied by sufficient documentation that the bill(s) have already been paid.

B. Eligible and Ineligible Costs.

Eligible costs are generally all land acquisition, development, and maintenance costs.

Ineligible costs include any and all costs incurred prior to Iowa DOT and FHWA authorization of the project. Other ineligible costs include, but are not limited to, costs of administering the project, costs of writing the grant application, office supplies, hand tools, travel, and costs of borrowing money. Costs associated with the preparation of the grant application, fund raising, meeting attendance, etc. are not eligible for reimbursement and may not be used as part of the match.

Donated equipment and materials may not be used unless the value of the donation can be adequately documented. Donated or volunteer labor is not eligible for reimbursement unless adequate documentation of its value can be provided.

Federal recreational Trail funds may be matched with funds available under other Federal funding programs e.g. Transportation Enhancement Funding.

In-kind cost refers to donated funds, right-of-way, services, materials and or equipment at fair market value provided by local or private parties.

Adequate documentation of costs incurred and paid (such as invoices, cancelled checks, etc.) are required for reimbursement from the Iowa DOT.