

POLICY STATEMENT

Recreational Trails Grants-in-Aid

1) Purpose & Introduction

The Peace River Regional District recognizes the importance of recreational trails for its citizens in terms of enhanced quality of life, health and well-being, economic benefits, protection and conservation of the environment and preservation of local history and culture. In accordance with the Peace River Regional District's Parks and Trails Master Plan, the Regional District aims to provide support and supplemental funding for the development, maintenance and improvements of recreational trails within the region for public use.

2) Definitions

- a) **Board of Directors** in this document refers to the Peace River Regional District's Board of Directors.
- b) **Capital infrastructure** is defined as the addition of a permanent structural improvement or the restoration of some aspect of a property that will either enhance the property's overall value or increase its useful life.
- c) **Debt** is defined as an amount owed to a person or organization for services, products or loans funds not yet paid for.
- d) **Funding amendment** is defined as the reallocation of funds from a previously approved project to a new project or new project location.
- e) **Minor capital equipment** is defined as equipment valued at under \$3,000 and has an extended lifetime over one year.
- f) **Major capital equipment** is defined as equipment valued at over \$3,000.
- g) **Operation funding** is defined as funding provided for costs to ensure the day to day operation of a trail such as insurance and supplies.
- h) **Supplemental funding** is defined as funding that is an addition to other sources of funds or revenue.
- i) **Wages** is defined as any payment, stipend or honorarium made for labour or services to an employee or volunteer under the direction of an employer or organization.

3) Regional Trails Grant Funding

- a) Funding for recreational trail grants will be subject to annual review by the Regional Parks Committee and must be approved by the Board of Directors in the annual financial plan.
- b) Annual recreational trail grant funding will not exceed \$75,000 per year unless determined by resolution of the Board of Directors.

4) Eligible Applicants

An eligible applicant must:

- a) Be a registered non-profit society in good standing with the Province of BC; and
- b) Be based in the Peace River Regional District.

5) Application Limit

Each organization is allowed to submit no more than one application per year.

6) Amount of Grant

The cost-sharing formula will be up to a maximum of a 75% Regional District contribution, with the balance being the applicant contribution.

7) Eligible Projects

Eligible projects must:

- a) Be for construction, renewal, maintenance or expansion of recreational trails available for public use within the Peace River Regional District;
- b) Not start construction prior to approval of the application;
- c) Be duly authorized by resolution of the society(s) making the application – joint applications for partnership projects must include a resolution by all partner organizations;
- d) Be supported by at least one of the following land tenure arrangements:
 - a. Provincial land tenure agreement which may include a Recreation and Trail Sites BC agreement, Park Use Permit, or nominal rent tenure (e.g., license of occupation);
 - b. Private land owned by the applicant non-profit organization; or
 - c. Local government agreement supported by Council or Board resolution for projects on local government land.
- e) Avoid creating interface conflict between Crown and private lands.

8) Eligible Costs

Eligible costs are defined as all direct costs properly and reasonably incurred and paid solely and specifically in relation to the project. Eligible costs include:

- a) Trail and amenity design and engineering costs;
- b) Construction costs;
- c) Purchase of minor capital equipment (i.e., chainsaws);
- d) Purchase of capital infrastructure (i.e., bridges, warming shelters);
- e) Purchase of signage and trail markers;
- f) Marketing and promotion of the project upon completion;
- g) Volunteer celebration activities; and
- h) Training and safety courses.

9) Ineligible Costs

Ineligible costs include:

- a) Administrative costs and overhead;
- b) Major capital equipment purchases (i.e., mulchers, quads, etc.);
- c) Payment of debt;
- d) Direct payment of wages or volunteer honorariums; and
- e) Land acquisition.

10) Applicant Selection Criteria

- a) Primary project selection criteria will be focused on whether the project:
 - i. provides opportunities for healthy lifestyles – physical, mental and spiritual;
 - ii. fosters “regional pride” in the natural environment of the Regional District;
 - iii. strives to make recreational trails accessible for multiple different user groups and those with mobility challenges;
 - iv. utilizes public lands (Crown or local government) while avoiding conflict with private lands; and
 - v. builds on the Provincial Trails Strategy (i.e., Connecting Communities).

- b) Secondary consideration will be given to the degree to which projects meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - i. **Geographic coverage:** ideally the regional trail system should be effectively distributed throughout the Regional District. Potential sites should be of interest to the whole region in the interest of servicing all residents.
 - ii. **Environmental, education or heritage representation:** representative or regionally significant landscapes should be considered when developing a new trail or preserving an existing one. Potential sites should be chosen to represent the diverse landscapes that the area encompasses. Balancing wildlife values against the proposed benefits of trail development should also be considered along with the unique historic, cultural, ecological, and educational aspects of the area.
 - iii. **Project and ongoing operational costs:** development, maintenance and ongoing operational costs must be identified to be reasonably manageable by the organization responsible for trail development and ongoing management.
 - iv. **Partnerships:** fostering partnerships with interest groups or other government agencies should be considered as it will aid in offsetting costs to develop and maintain existing or future regional trails.
 - v. **Proximity:** trails that are located in close proximity to existing trails and parks or similar amenities should be considered.

- vi. **Already established as an unofficial trailhead:** trails that are already established or maintained in a positive manner and demonstrate a high utilization rate should be considered.
- vii. **User and site safety and the capacity to maintain:** user and site must be considered to ensure the non-profit groups are able to maintain them to a reasonable and safe standard expected of a natural trail for the safe enjoyment of the public.

11) Mandatory Application Documentation

Applicants must submit the following documents in their application:

- a) Completed application form (Schedule 'A')
- b) Application checklist (Schedule 'D')
- c) Resolution from the society(s) board of directors authorizing the project and application to the Regional District for funding
- d) Project budget which includes:
 - i. detailed cost estimates;
 - ii. sources of confirmed revenue;
 - iii. sources of revenue yet to be confirmed (i.e., other grant applications still pending decision); and
 - iv. Sources of confirmed donations for labour and/or materials.
- e) Three (3) quotes for any items valued at over \$3,000
- f) Current and year-end financial statements (balance sheet and income statement)
- g) Map and pictures showing the location of the project and planned route
- h) Evidence of a land tenure agreement with the Province of BC or local government or proof of ownership by the non-profit organization.
- i) Two (2) letters of support from other organizations or groups supporting the project

Failure to provide adequate documentation during the application process and/or comply with the eligibility requirements for funding assistance may jeopardize funding eligibility. Late applications will not be accepted.

12) Application Deadline

- a) Applications must be received by the Regional District by November 15 of each year.

13) Adjudication Process

- a) The Regional Parks Committee and the Board of Directors have the discretion to accept, reject or amend any application. Applications may be rejected for the following reasons:
 - i. Incomplete or late applications;
 - ii. Failure to maintain society status;
 - iii. Failure to rationalize the need for funding;
 - iv. Failure to prove that the project is in the best interest of the community at large.

- b) Upon receipt of applications, the Regional Parks Committee will meet to review all eligible applications and to make funding recommendations to the Board of Directors for final decision.
- c) All applications will be adjudicated based on need, availability of funds in the fiscal year and selection criteria noted in section 10 of this policy.
- d) Successful applicants will be advised of the Board's decision by April 15 of each year subject to the adoption of the Annual Financial Plan and funding for the grant has been approved by the Board of Directors.

14) Unallocated Funds

Any funds that are not allocated in a calendar year shall be utilized to reduce the tax requisition in the next calendar year.

15) Unspent Funds

- a) Organizations must utilize allocated funds within three (3) years of ratification by the Board of Directors and will not be permitted to carry over funds past three years.
- b) Any funds not claimed by an organization after three (3) years will be returned to the service area by resolution of the Board of Directors and utilized to reduce the tax requisition in the next calendar year.

16) Claim Reimbursement

- a) Approved applications must provide proof of costs by submitting invoices and a completed claim form attached as Schedule 'B'.
- b) Copies of all invoices must be submitted for expense claim reimbursement. Claims may not be made for goods or services incurred before the approval of the grant.
- c) In exceptional circumstances, organizations may request in advance the total or partial payment of the approved grant from the Regional District. Organizations must make this request in writing to the Chief Financial Officer.

17) Annual Reports

- a) All organizations that receive a Regional Trails Grant-in-Aid must complete an Annual Report as attached hereto as Schedule 'C' by the last calendar day in December.
- b) Funds for the current year will not be reimbursed to an organization until any outstanding Annual Reports for that organization have been received by the Regional District.
- c) Photos must be provided showing project progress and/or completion as part of the annual report.

18) Funding Amendment:

- a) Organizations may apply for a funding amendment to reallocate funds already approved by the Board of Directors only in exceptional circumstances where the following may occur:

- i. An emergency situation has occurred and if not rectified immediately it will pose a liability to the organization (e.g., major bridge crossing lost and poses a hazard to the public); or
 - ii. The location or scope of the project is required to be moved or altered to meet requirements imposed by the land owner.
- b) Applicants must provide:
 - i. a completed funding amendment form;
 - ii. a resolution of support from their organization;
 - iii. a letter from the property owner (e.g., Crown, local government, etc.) detailing why the amendment is necessary, their support of the change to the project and their authorization to proceed; and
 - iv. a map of the area(s).
- c) The Regional Parks Committee will review the request and recommend to the Regional Board to approve or deny the funding amendment request.
- d) The Regional Board has the sole discretion to approve or deny all funding amendment requests.

19) Recognition

- a) Grant recipients will recognize the financial contributions of the Regional District by prominently displaying a plaque or sign at the trail head.
- b) Grant recipients who maintain websites, social media sites and/or membership newsletters will provide Regional District with recognition in the form of prominently displaying a note of thanks next to the Regional District's logo.
- c) Grant recipients may be requested to issue a joint press release and photo with the Regional District from time to time.

