



FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION  
**VERMONT**



AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# 2025 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM GRANT WEBINAR

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WELCOME



# Agenda

- About the RTP program
- Timeline and Process
- Applicant and Project Eligibility
- Project Planning
- Pre-Application Tips and Tricks
- Compliance Requirements
- Additional Resources
- Q&A



# About the RTP Program

- Reimbursement grant funded by the US Federal Highway Administration
- Have awarded over \$9M in the last 16 years through competitive grants!
- Approximately \$500,000 to award in 2025
- 20% match requirement
- \$50,000 request maximum



# RTP Funding Goals

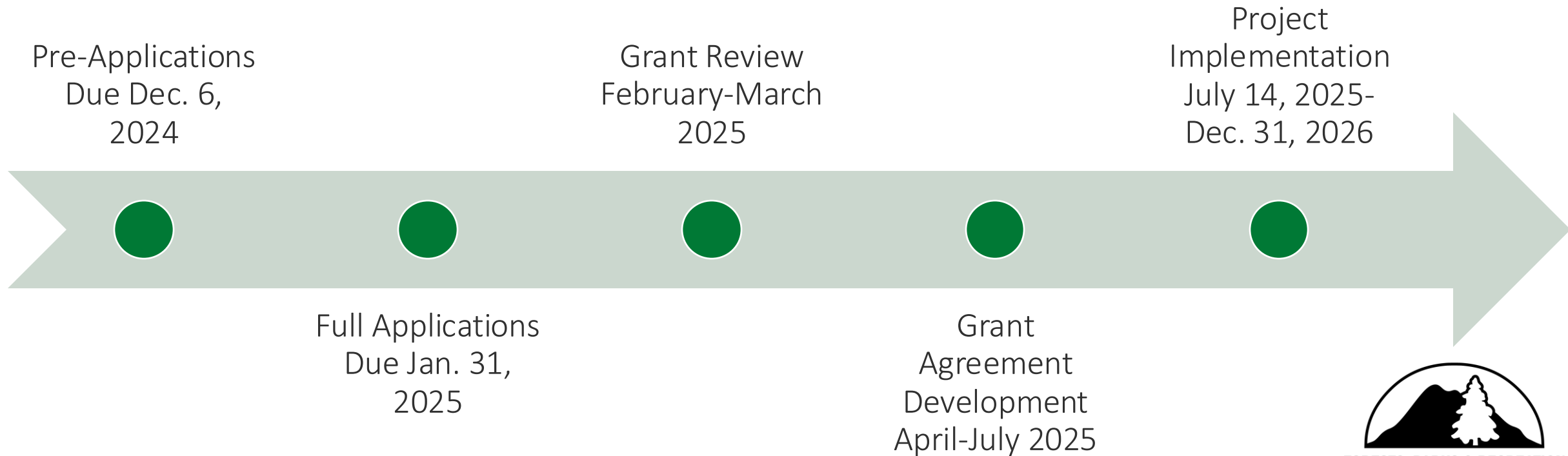
- Strengthen the quality, extent, and resilience of existing outdoor recreation resources.
- Create and support trails that welcome all who live and visit Vermont and allow them to heal, learn, grow, and live their lives fully.
- Promote stewardship of outdoor recreation resources and enhance both trail user experiences and environmental quality.
- Encourage all trail enthusiasts to work together to provide a wide variety of recreational trail opportunities that fulfill community needs.



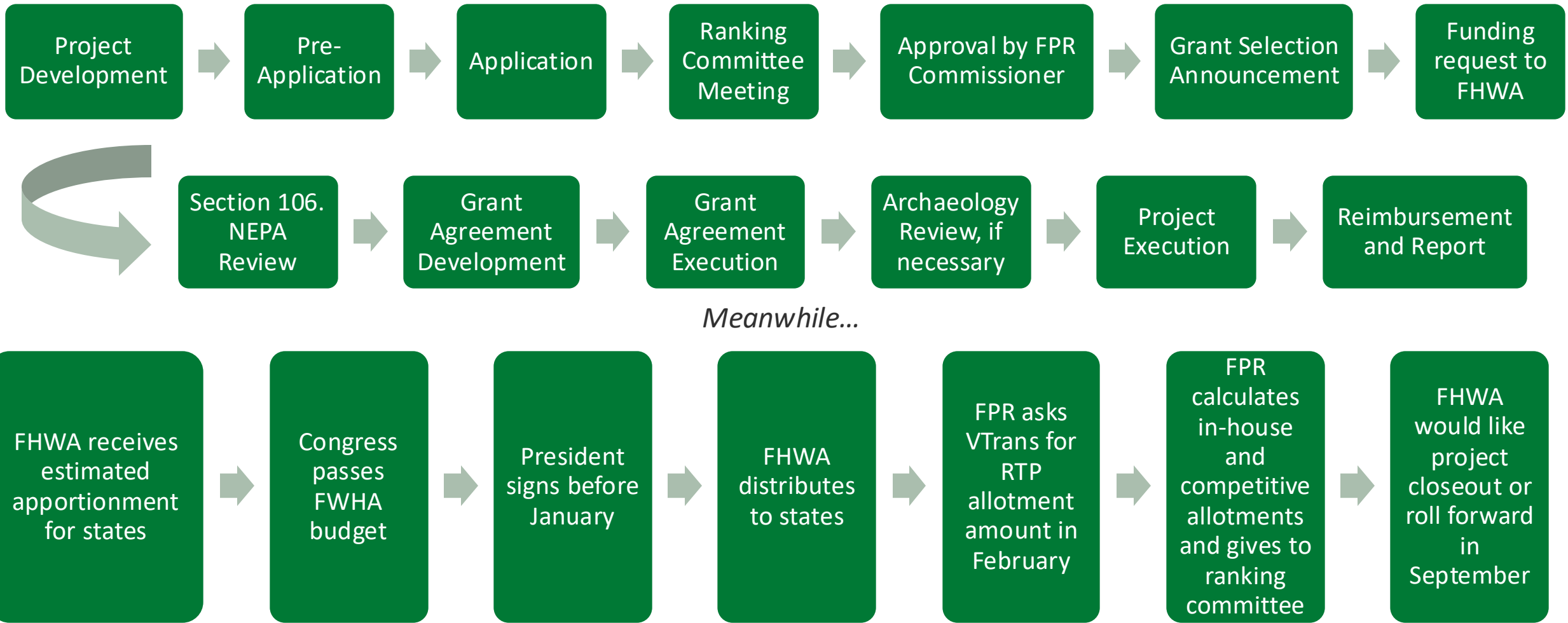
*Photo Credit: North Branch Nature Center, 2022 RTP*



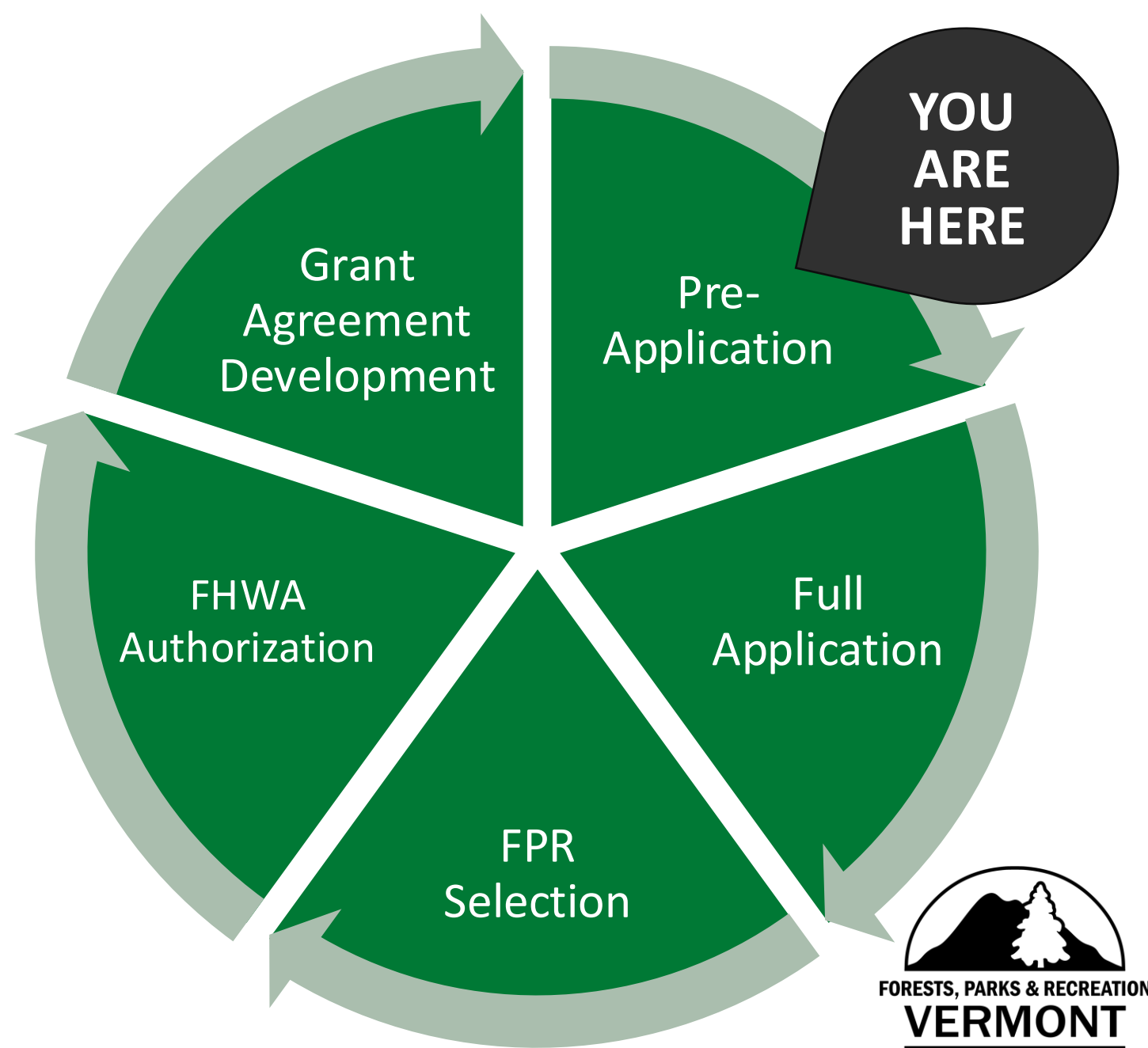
# 2025 RTP Timeline



# RTP Process



# Application Process



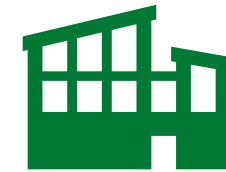
# Applicant Eligibility



Municipalities



Non-Profits

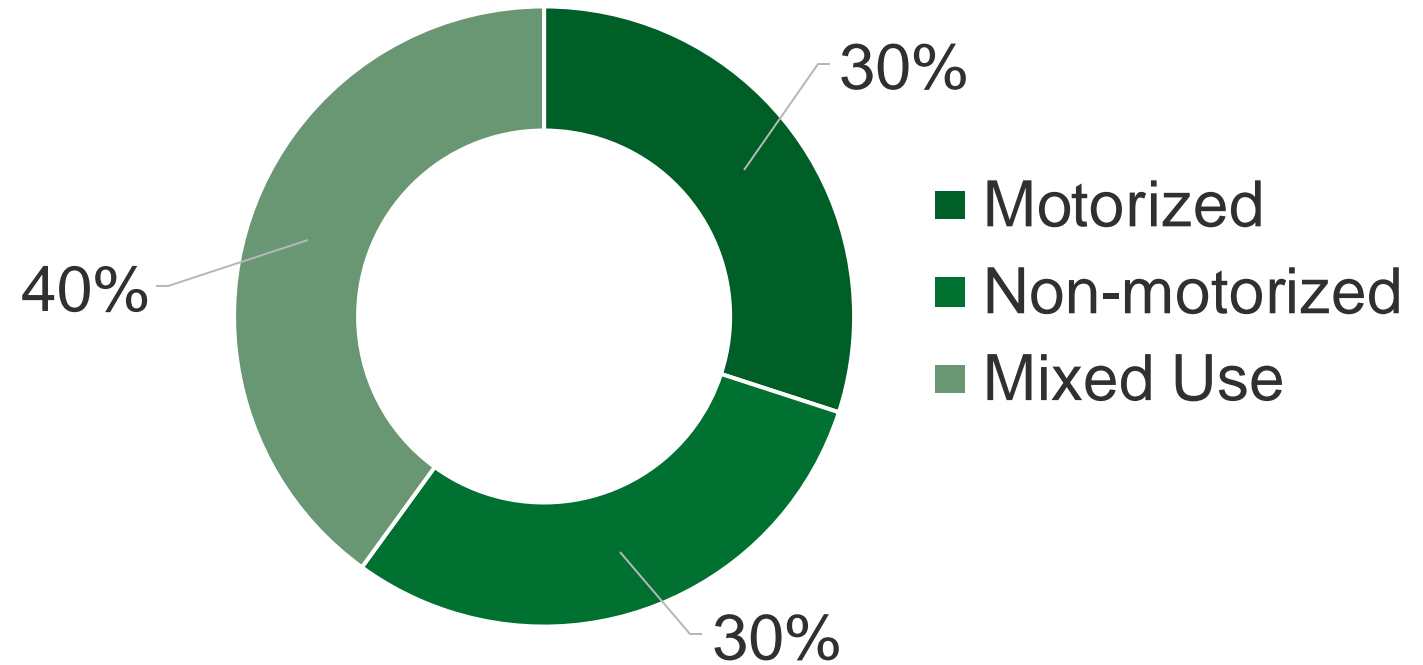


Governmental  
Entities



# Use Eligibility

## 40-30-30 Allocation



The maximum allowed request is \$50,000 for non-motorized projects. There is no maximum request for motorized projects.





Photo Credit:  
Town of Johnson, 2020 RTP



Photo Credit:  
East Montpelier  
Trails, 2021 RTP



Photo Credit:  
VT Huts, 2021 RTP

# Project Eligibility

- Maintenance/restoration of existing trails
- Construction of new trails, with certain limitations for projects on federal lands
- Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead amenities, facilities, parking areas
- Land Acquisitions: Acquisition of trail easements or fee simple title to property with trails or recreational trail corridors
- Educational projects







Photo Credit: Killington,  
2022 VCGP



Photo Credit:  
Newbury, 2022 RTP



Photo Credit:  
Newbury, 2022 RTP

# Trail Type Eligibility

- Mountain biking
- Running
- Paddling (with portage trails)
- Cross-country and back-country skiing
- Skating and skateboarding trails
- Nature-based interpretive use
- Multi-use trails
- Equestrian
- Snowmobiling
- ATV
- Other off-road recreational uses

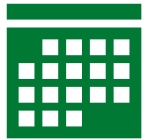


# What's NOT Eligible

- Condemnation of property
- Motorized use on non-motorized trails
- Trail construction in prohibited land or without landowner permission
- Sidewalks and road improvements
- Transportation-focused improvements (ex: bike lanes)
- Picnic tables, front-country campgrounds, and play equipment
- Free-standing recreation or park resources
- Feasibility studies or stand-alone planning
- Promotion, marketing, advertising
- Law enforcement
- General land acquisition
- Fundraising
- Lodging and food

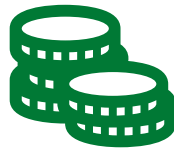
# New: Flood Recovery for Trails Track

## *\$74,000 to award in 2025*



### Timing

Projects completed  
July 10, 2024 to  
January 31, 2025



### Budget

Anticipating funding  
4-5 projects with  
average of  
\$15,000. Minimum  
\$7,500



### Eligibility

Must meet all the  
same RTP project  
eligibility  
requirements



### Compliance

Landowner and Permit  
Documentation  
Required



*Photo Credit: North Branch  
Nature Center, 2022 RTP*

# To Submit a Pre-Application

**Before 11:59 pm on December 6, 2024,  
Email the following documents:**

- 2025 RTP Pre-Application Form
- 2025 RTP Workplan
- 2025 RTP Budget
- Climate Resilience Risk Form
- Completed Permit Navigator/Project Review Sheet results

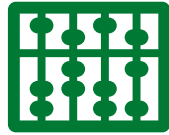


# Pre-Application Review Criteria



## Eligibility

Do the applicant and project meet the requirements?



## Feasibility

Is the project realistic? Is there a high probability of success?



## Readiness

Is the plan complete? Will permits and landowner permission be in place?



## Compliance

Does it meet federal RTP requirements?

# How does RTP consider feasibility?

- The plan must be achievable within the project period and available funding amounts.
  - Is the budget realistic and appropriate to the scope?
  - For larger projects, consider segmenting your project into phases. *Future funding is not guaranteed!*
- Project is permissible. The outdoor recreation benefit outweighs any negative environmental impact.



# How does RTP consider readiness?

- You must have a clear plan in place before applying.
  - Covers both project implementation and maintenance
  - Have landowner permission already or a strong plan to secure it.
  - Address climate resilience risks.
  - Include steps related to the permit requirements for your specific project.
- You've gotten all necessary input from professionals to inform your project plan.
- You have public support for the project – there's a documented need!





# Planning for RTP

Easier

Harder



# Climate Resilience Risk Form

- **Purpose:**
  - Provide FPR staff and the grant ranking committee the information needed to assess the resilience of the project.
  - Help guide the grant applicant to develop more resilient projects.
- **For the Pre-application:**
  - Assessing readiness
  - Flagging areas where further information may be needed in the full application



## Important Note

Just because a project has higher potential climate resilience risks does not necessarily mean it won't be selected.

It just means your design and stewardship plan should clearly account for these risks!



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# Tips and Tricks

## Budget

- Be thorough, detailed, and accurate. Your budget should be your best estimate of the costs for the project.
- Plan for inflation.
- Staff v. contractor considerations

## Match

- **20% of total project cost required**
- Can be a cash or in-kind match



# Budget Expenses

## Eligible

- Engineering and design, environmental permitting, archeological assessments (ARAs)
- Project administration
- Construction design, surveying, and engineering
- Labor
- Tools, materials/supplies, equipment rentals
- Publication research and design fees
- Acquisition costs

## Ineligible

- Any costs related to ineligible activities
- Lodging and food
- Any expenses made prior to signing the grant agreement (except ARAs)
- Any expenses that don't meet procurement requirements
- Any expenses that go beyond the scope of work in the agreement

## Working with Contractors

- Reach out for estimates for accurate budget planning.
  - Best practice: three estimates- but if you can't get this, OK to base your budgeting on *current* active projects, recommendations from professional organizations, etc.

**Do NOT sign a contract until AFTER you have a signed grant agreement.\***

See FPR's [Procurement Guidance for Grantees](#).

*\*Exception: Flood Recovery track (completed projects)*



# Tips and Tricks

## Landowner Permission

- Needed for any projects where the applicant doesn't own 100% of the land in full
  - 1 year for projects solely to groom snow
  - 5 years for general maintenance activities, adding kiosks, signage, or other minor assets, minor trail drainage and treadway improvements, re-routes less than 50 feet, flood recovery work.
  - 10 years for new trail construction; construction of major trail infrastructure, large-scale trail reconstruction and treadway improvement, and for reroutes longer than 50 feet
  - 25 years for permanent facilities or structures (engineered bridges, pavilions, bathrooms, etc.)
- Documentation of landowner permission will be required for the full application, so get started now!





# Tips and Tricks

## Permitting

- You will need to submit a PDF of the Permit Navigator Results or Project Review Sheet for your project.
  - Even if you own the land or are working in an existing footprint, this is REQUIRED.
  - Detailed directions are available in the Pre-Application Guidance document.

# Which Tool Do I Use?

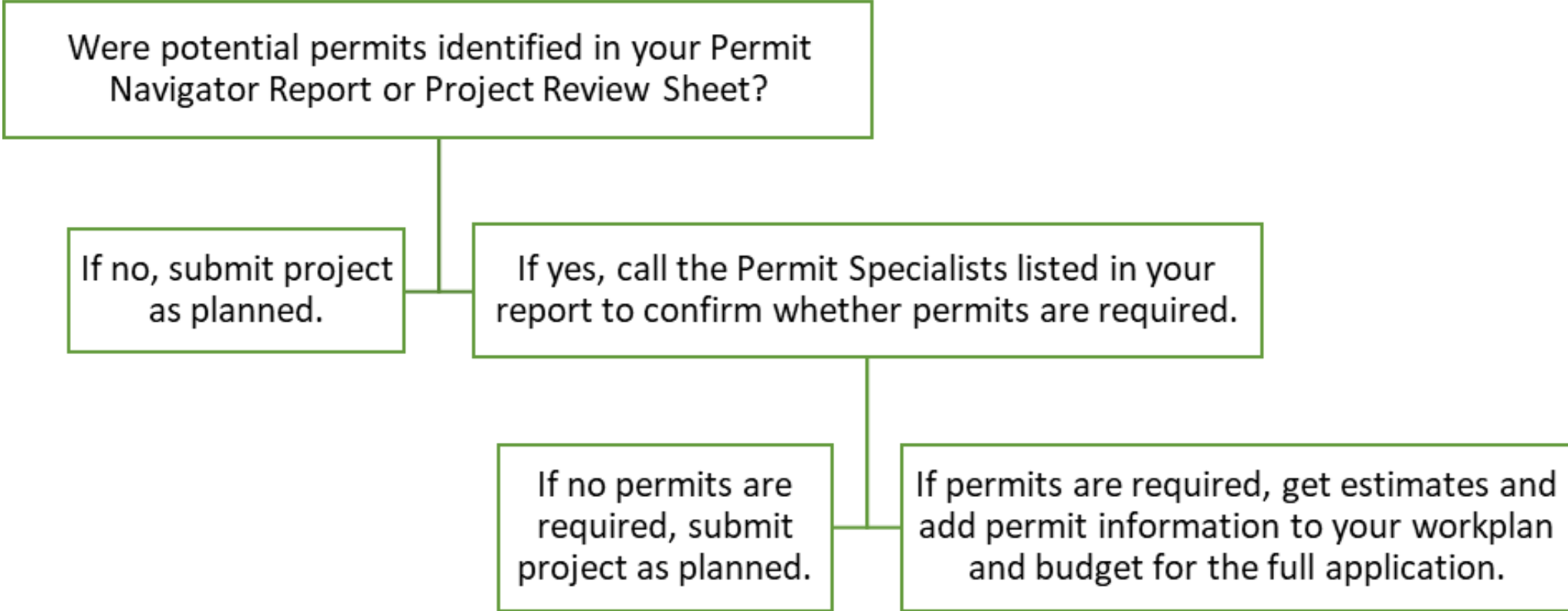
## Permit Navigator

- For projects that take place at one site or location
- Online tool that can be completed at any time.
- Answer as many questions as possible!

## Project Review Sheet

- For linear projects or large projects that span multiple parcels.
- Form submitted to DEC staff for expert review.
- Start this at least one month before the deadline!

# How Does Permitting Work?





# Compliance Requirements



## Fiscal

Certificate of Good Standing, Risk Assessment, Insurance, W-9, Procurement



## Environmental

National Environmental Protection Act, State Permits, Northern Long-Eared Bat Impacts



## Universal Accessibility

Required – unless you meet one of the exceptions



## Historical Preservation

Section 106, ARA



# Additional Support

## Guidance Document

Available at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreational-trails-program>

## Next Webinar: Pre-Application Materials

Thursday, Nov. 7 at 3:00PM

## Office Hours

Thursday, Nov. 21 at 2:00 PM

Tuesday, Dec. 3 at 11 AM

## Email

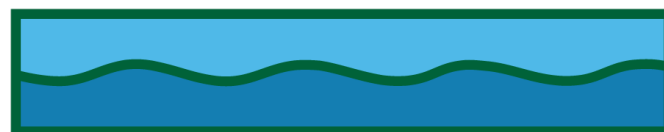
ANR.FPRrecreationGrants@vermont.gov





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# Questions and Answers

