

READY, SET, PLAN!?

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE
TO TRAIL PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT



A GUIDE FOR

anyone who wants to better understand trails planning, decision making, and trail project development. If you're a trail enthusiast with big ideas, a trail advocate, a stewardship volunteer, or public agency staff person interfacing with local partners, this guide is for you.



This guide is a project of the Oregon Trails Coalition, a cooperative body of broad-based, statewide trail interests dedicated to supporting, promoting, and advocating for the preservation, development, and stewardship of a statewide network of sustainable, world class trails. The Oregon Trails Coalition strives to ensure that Oregon's trails benefit all of our residents and visitors, and inspire respect for Oregon's natural and cultural resources.

This guide, as with all of our work, is rooted in the following values: Collaboration • Stewardship and Conservation • Individual and Community Health • Honoring a Diversity of Abilities, Personal and Cultural histories, and Contributions • Strong Local Economies • Joy, Curiosity, Education, and Wonder • Access to Outdoor Recreation and Active Transportation for All Oregonians • Transparency, Accountability, and Information Sharing.

Primary Author: Stephanie Noll



Graphic Design by: Ashley Schahfer

Edited by: Anna Soens

Photo credits listed on page 46

"Part of what makes roads, trails and paths so unique as built structures is that they cannot be perceived as a whole all at once by a sedentary onlooker. They unfold in time as one travels along them, just as a story does as one listens or reads. . ."

-Rebecca Solnit



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Trails are routes to remembrance just as they are routes to knowledge.”

- T.P. Lye

We acknowledge that the trails we use crisscross the ancestral homelands of many sovereign tribal nations. Many of those nations are still present today, working to preserve tribal sovereignty, history, culture, and the corresponding health of land, water, and native flora and fauna despite the violence enacted on their communities over generations.

We share our gratitude for the past and current stewards of our lands, waters, and trails.



We are thankful for the financial support for this guide provided by the Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

We are also grateful to the following agencies, organizations, and individuals for their contributions: American Trails, Bureau of Land Management, Central Oregon Trails Alliance, City of Eugene Park and Open Space Division, City of Portland Parks and Recreation Department, Metro, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Equestrian Trails, Oregon Motorcycle Riders Association, Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation, Oregon Mountain Bike Coalition, Oregon Timber Trail Alliance, Northwest Trail Alliance, North Coast Trail Alliance, Pacific Crest Trail Association, Trailkeepers of Oregon, Willamalane Parks and Recreation Department, Steve Kruger, Elaine Keveny, Natalie Ferraro, Guy Hamblin, Josh Durham, Randy Peterson, Karen Vitkay, Jill Van Winkle, Philip Richardson, Fraser MacDonald, Becky Wolf, Bill Taylor, Dani Pavoni, Kevin Rowell, Zach Jarrett, Tyson Cross, Dana Hendricks, Barrett Brown, Kim McCarrel, Matt Weintraub, Juntu Oberg, Woody Keene, Gabriel Tiller, Steven Blakesly, Andy Jansky, Chris Knauf, Dan Davis, David Moore, Kirsten Heins, Nick Weber, Jeanne Klein, Nick McDaniel, Jameson Whitehead, Jodi Bellefeuille, Jody Matz, Mike Law, Ian Caldwell, Cailin O’Brien-Feeney, Robin Wilcox, Matt Davey, Stephen Woodward, Michael Dalby, Ashley Schahfer.




INTRO

The importance of trails cannot always be measured; their value is deep, varied, and individual. Trails allow us to experience places we hold dear or yearn to explore. The diversity of experiences we come to trails for is vast. Some take to trails to seek solace, comfort, peace, rest, or renewal. Others may find community, adventure, excitement, exploration, or discovery. But whether your trail experience is about going fast, slowing down, pushing personal limits, returning to something familiar, traveling to a destination, or taking an opportunity to meander, with so many different reasons to experience trails, we must ensure that our trails also reflect the diversity of human needs of the people who use them. When our network of trails is successful, it connects the full spectrum of community members to the places they want to be and to their preferred modes of recreation, while also protecting the surrounding ecosystems that make each place so uniquely important.

Despite the deep and varied value of trails to the public, there is not always an established trail plan or mandate to a specific agency to develop and maintain these public assets. Trails often compete for limited resources within public agencies who must consider other land and resource management needs and priorities. In urban and suburban areas, trails can fall into poorly defined territory between transportation agency priorities and parks division assets. For trails that cross the jurisdictions of multiple land owners or management authorities, effective trail management requires successful collaboration.

These realities mean that trail development and stewardship partnerships between management agencies, and between land managers and members of the public who care about trails, are critical. **Trails enthusiasts are necessary partners in developing and maintaining a sustainable trails network that ensures access to the outdoors for all.**





CONTENTS

WHY THIS GUIDE? - - - - -	1
WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR? _ _ _ _ _	2
PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDIES = = = = =	3
TOOLS FOR PARTNERING - - - - -	9
WHY PLAN, WHY NOT JUST BUILD? = = = = =	13
PLANNING ON DIFFERENT LEVELS _____	17
CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC PROJECTS // // // // //	23
LIFECYCLE OF A TRAIL PROJECT = = = = =	31
TIMELINE OF A TRAIL PROJECT	35
FUNDING AND MAKING THE CASE _ _ _ _ _	37
GLOSSARY _____	41
APPENDIX A: RESOURCES // // // // //	47
APPENDIX B: WORKBOOK _____	51

"Nature is not a place to visit. It is home."
-Gary Snyder



WHY THIS GUIDE?



We've established the value of trails to the public and the importance of partnerships across agency lines. This guide aims to build further understanding about

- How land managers make decisions about trails,
- What constraints you may face in developing and maintaining trails, and
- The unique value different partners bring to the trail development process.

By furthering this understanding, we hope to reduce frustration between collaborators, and build stronger, more effective trail development and stewardship partnerships. Together, we can realize the vision of a successful, sustainable trails network that equitably meets the diverse needs of the public, while also prioritizing the care of special places for future generations.

This guide aims to acknowledge the complexities that surround balancing trails management with other land resource needs on land where value has many facets; that land managers have the job of balancing multiple land uses alongside a long list of social, economic, and environmental considerations. They must manage a sustainable system that makes sense for all of the communities

they serve. This is why volunteers, trails clubs, and nonprofit partners can bring so much value to the collaborative process. These stakeholders can bring great insight, vision, labor, funding, and positive energy to the trail development process. There can be both deep expertise and much to learn on all sides of the partnership.

This guide aims to create a common understanding and establish a common vocabulary around decision making for trails. It tackles system planning, basic considerations for specific trails, and the lifecycle of a trail project including potential timelines and milestones along the way. If you'd like to delve more deeply into trail design and planning, see our [Resources](#) section for links to several design guides and other valuable information sources.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is for anyone who wants to better understand trails planning, especially trail enthusiasts with big ideas, land managers, and public agency staff.

Trails enthusiasts with big ideas.

The people who care about an area and its trails are critical partners in trail development and stewardship. Seasoned trail advocates and long-time stewardship volunteers are likely familiar with much of the information in this guide. However, we hope that this guide eases the way for newer trail advocates, trail clubs, volunteers, and nonprofit partners. We hope to provide helpful content for trails advocates across recreation types, including but not limited to hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers, trail runners, adaptive equipment users, walkers and bikers, OHV riders, and nordic sports enthusiasts. We aimed

to create a guide that is helpful to people looking at trails as both recreation and transportation corridors, and who care about trails in all settings, ranging from urban communities to the backcountry.

Land managers and public agency staff.

While some public agency staff are professional recreation planners with related degrees and/or years of on-the-job learning and experience, we also know that decision-making about trails can be thrust upon staff with diverse backgrounds and agency roles. In smaller agencies, staff may be asked to wear many hats and perform duties outside of their realm of experience. In larger agencies, local field staff are often the ones who interface with local trail advocates out of practicality, even if it's a duty not strictly in their job description. We hope that this guide is a helpful resource for staff in all situations to navigate the trail development process along with their outside partners.



PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDIES

“If you want to go far, go together.” -African Proverb


It's hard to get very far in this guide without coming back to the words “partner” and “partnership.” We need one another in order to realize the vision of a sustainable trail network that serves a diverse population across the range of recreation and transportation needs and desires. We started this project with the intent of creating a technical guide

to planning. However, the importance of partnerships quickly became evident. The most common theme that arose in our conversations across the land manager and advocate/volunteer spectrum was the direct correlation between the quality of the partnerships and the success of the trail development process.



SHOTGUN OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) AREA

The Shotgun OHV Area, 25 miles northeast of Eugene, has about 31 miles of designated, signed, and rated multiple-use trails developed and managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) along with volunteers from partner organizations, primarily the Emerald Trail Rider Association (ETRA), a local motorcycle club. The area overlaps with BLM public lands managed for timber harvest. Recreation started in the area with user-made trails relying heavily on logging roads and staging platforms built from when the area was harvested in the 1960s and 1970s. The original, user-built trails were not sustainable and tended to be susceptible to heavy erosion. In 2000, the BLM developed a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document that officially designated the area for OHV recreation, and BLM and ETRA worked together to create a sustainable trail network based on the existing network. ETRA members helped with layout and donated labor and even heavy equipment through their members, some of whom operated equipment professionally.



With both ETRA's volunteer work and the work of Lane County Adjudicated Youth Program counting as the required local commitment or "match," BLM has been successful in applying for multiple ATV program grants through Oregon Parks and Recreation Department in order to build out and maintain the area. ETRA continues with their long-term commitment to take care of the trails, putting together volunteer trail maintenance weekends and coming out after timber harvests to help restore trails. Members of the club maintain chainsawyer certifications, which are especially helpful with spring windfall.

CASE STUDY TAKEAWAYS:

- A formal trail development partnership was possible after an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed under the NEPA process that approved OHV recreation use for the area.
- ETRA's commitment of volunteer labor provided the needed match for BLM to apply for the grants needed to develop the trails.



MOLALLA RIVER TRAIL SYSTEM

In the early 1990s, the BLM acquired a new parcel of land in the Molalla River corridor through a land swap. Local equestrian and mountain bike advocates met at public meetings regarding the land swap, and approached BLM staff about developing trails in the area. These advocates worked together to plot out local trails. Once trails had been flagged and approved by BLM staff, the advocates recruited support to help build the trails from formal equestrian and mountain bike groups and other local trails users.

All the trails were planned and built by mountain bikers, equestrians, and hikers working together. The groups also collaborated on fundraising events to further build relationships and raise money for trail building materials and tools. Volunteers from all groups continue to maintain the trails to this day as well as advocate for new trails and routes in the system. They note, however, that the process to get new trails approved is taking longer than it used to.

“This trail system was built by volunteers from three user groups, [equestrians, mountain bikers, and hikers], is maintained by three user groups, and is used by three user groups. There is very little conflict between users, because everyone has ownership.”

- Becky Wolf, Board Member, Molalla River Watch and Oregon Trails Coalition, volunteer with Back Country Horsemen, Pacific Crest Trail Association, etc.

CASE STUDY TAKEAWAYS:

- Local trail advocates showed up to public meetings and participated in broader planning processes where they made sure their priorities were included in agency plans. They also met different types of trail users who turned out to be strong partners.
- BLM approved plans at key milestones, but gave the volunteers a lot of leeway to build out the system, largely because of two factors: the volunteers' commitment to building and maintaining the trails, and the strong partnership between the trail user groups. Not all trails were built sustainably right off the bat, but volunteers have since learned how to build more sustainable trails.





SMITH ROCK STATE PARK CANYON TRAIL

Smith Rock State Park, located in central Oregon's high desert, features a deep river canyon as well as a number of cliffs and rock formations that are extremely popular with climbers. Among the park enthusiasts who climb at Smith Rock, there are a number of climbers with disabilities, some of whom climb through programming offered by Oregon Adaptive Sports. The park is managed by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) with lots of support from local volunteers. The main organizer of volunteer activities is the nonprofit Smith Rock Group that formalized in the 1990s.

For decades, the Smith Rock Group has coordinated a "Spring Thing" volunteer day that draws hundreds of volunteers to work on a variety of projects including trail maintenance, brushing and clearing, park clean-up, noxious weed pulling, restoration work, and other improvements. Smith Rock Group organizers meet with park staff to suggest projects, discuss park needs, and identify volunteer crew leaders to guide volunteers for each project.

During the 2019 Spring Thing, park staff started working with OPRD's ADA Transition Coordinator and Oregon Adaptive Sports to identify park improvements that could make the park more accessible to visitors with various disabilities. When OPRD hired a contractor to do some major rock work and trail construction in a different part of the park, the contractors were also able to use their mini-excavator to make some smaller crucial accessibility improvements to a trail providing access to a popular climbing area. The contractor broke up rocks eliminating narrow pinch points on the trail and also dug for rock placement that would harden and smooth out the trail, making it easier for visitors who use mobility aids to access the area. Smith Rock Group and Oregon Adaptive Sports volunteers, with and without disabilities, collaborated to make a number of additional improvements to the climbing area, including moving the wooden boundary fence to provide wheelchair access and extending the flat platform at the site to improve climbing access for everyone, including those using wheels.

CASE STUDY TAKEAWAYS:

- Smith Rock Group and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department have a long-established, successful partnership in which Smith Rock Group organizes hundreds of volunteers to address trail maintenance and other priorities determined in cooperation with park staff.
- When park staff and volunteers partnered with trail users with disabilities, they quickly identified barriers to access that could be removed in the short term by a contractor that was already hired and as part of existing volunteer efforts. Working directly with adaptive athletes and implementing their direct input made the process more efficient, because they were able to tell staff and volunteers what to do in real-time and test the work as they went.





TOOLS FOR PARTNERING

While the case studies in the previous chapter focus on partnerships between land managers and stewardship organizations, partnerships come in a lot of shapes and sizes.

◆ — — — — —

Here are two key questions to ask as you ponder the potential partners in your area:

- **Can you hitch your wagon to an existing group with similar goals?** If you have an idea for a mountain bike trail, is there an existing mountain bike club you can get involved with that has already built trust with local land managers? Or is there a local hiking, equestrian, or adaptive sports group that you can reach out to to learn more about their work, advocacy, and contacts? It's possible that if you learn about existing or planned projects of other groups, those projects will be just as compelling as or overlap with your ideas. Or if not, you may find a great group of allies or partners with experience navigating the trail development process. If you're not sure how to identify or connect with local groups, ask your local land manager or try reaching out to statewide trails organizations like the Oregon Trails Coalition, Oregon Mountain Bike Coalition, Oregon Equestrian Trails, Back Country Horsemen of Oregon, Oregon State Snowmobile Association, Oregon Adaptive Sports, etc.
- **Can you build relationships with other groups who may have different goals but who care about the area?** Find out early about possible support or opposition of your project by reaching out to different groups. Trail user groups, conservation groups, adjacent landowners, local businesses, public health initiatives, and tourism partners (Regional Destination Management or Marketing Organizations; RDMO's) all might be potential supporters of a project or might introduce concerns that will need to be addressed for the project to be successful.



Coalition-building: It's true that some projects happen relatively quietly with the energy and advocacy of a few key folks, but taking the time to build a coalition around a project can pay off with a lot of long-term benefits. When a project has broad community support, it's easier to get approval, attract funding, and discover all the potential opportunities for your project to connect with other efforts and be a part of larger goals. The broader and larger the coalition that supports the project, the more perspectives can inform the initial design, the larger voice you'll have to counter any opposition, and the more people the project will ultimately serve.

Working with agency staff: Relationships are key. Understand the role of the agency staffer you work with, what they're responsible for, and what they're empowered to act on. You may find an internal champion or someone who can at least help you understand internal processes, agency structure, constraints, and opportunities. Sometimes staff turnover may occur and you'll need to invest in the relationship-building process again. It's also important to note that while some agencies or local offices have staff dedicated to trails, recreation, bike and pedestrian planning, or to partnerships, others do not. Staff structure and individual positions can vary widely from forest to forest or county to county, and occasionally vacancies may persist for months or even years due to resource constraints. Additionally, agency culture and individual personalities also play roles in the relative ease or challenge of building partnerships. Some public agencies might have specific structures required to formalize partnerships such as federal agencies' use of Challenge Cost Share Agreements (CCSA). State and local agencies may not have a formal partnership model or their models might vary between management units, forests, parks, etc. Regardless of the presence of formal partnership structures and agreements, many of the most effective trail development partnerships involve groups that demonstrate commitment and maintain trust over the long term.

Working with private landowners: Many trail projects run across or adjacent to private property. It is essential to have a working relationship with these private landowners. However, there is even less of a clear formula for these relationships than with public agencies. As with all partnerships, a good place to start is to be curious about their goals, interests, fears, and concerns. Also consider turning to a local land trust to see what guidance or support they might be able to provide.





Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Have colleagues or like-minded advocates already done relationship-building work? Don't jeopardize those relationships by acting in a way inconsistent with the relationship's history or established boundaries.
- Avoid pushing competing proposals to the same land manager with other trail groups. Collaborating with other users on a single proposal may be more efficient and ultimately more successful, both for the user groups as well as the land manager who must review and approve the proposal.
- When possible, to maintain trust, avoid working around an established process or hierarchy. Be sure to do your homework to research what these established processes and pathways are, or if they even exist at all.

PARTNERSHIP TAKEAWAYS:

- Seek out and join established groups/partners.
- Make a long-term commitment and maintain trust.
- Bring together different trail user groups.
- Partner in design, planning, seeking funding, and maintenance.
- Participate in public meetings and planning processes.
- Work with agency staff to understand specific roles, constraints, etc.
- Approach all potential stakeholders with curiosity about their goals, needs, and concerns. Everyone is a potential partner or at least someone who can increase your knowledge about the project context.



WHY PLAN, WHY NOT JUST BUILD?

It's a common story: An individual trail enthusiast has a great idea for a new dirt trail. It seems like an obvious and fun route. Maybe the land manager doesn't need to do anything; the individual has the friends and the muscle and the tools to knock the trail out in a series of weekends. Heck, it would even be fun to build it.

It's true, there are many trails that have been built this way, sometimes without the knowledge of the land manager. So when enthusiastic, willing volunteers approach land managers for approval of a project idea, why can't staff just respond with a green light and lots of

gratitude for the volunteer labor?

Similarly, advocates for paved, multi-use paths or trails, which may require more extensive infrastructure such as bridges and heavy equipment, might not be able to offer to do the work themselves but are still left with questions about why a trail that would provide such clear community value can't just be embraced and developed.

The considerations that may give land managers pause can fall into two general categories: questions about the proposer and questions about the project.





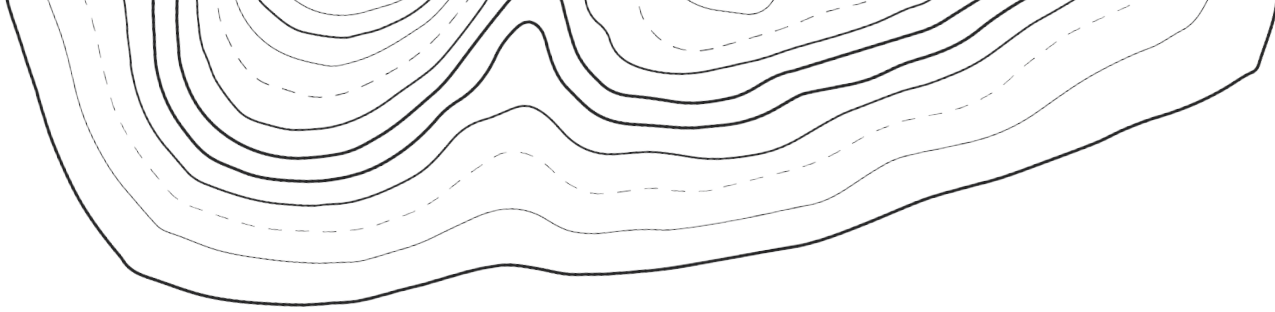
Considerations about the trail proposer/partner:

- What is the **expertise** of the proposer? Do they know how to build a sustainable trail appropriate to the landscape and soil type? Do they know how to build a trail that is safe in the context of its intended use? Do they have the expertise to do the work without getting hurt and do they have a plan for risk management?
- Do they have **insurance** for this activity?
- What is the proposer's long-term **commitment** to the trail? Are they prepared to maintain it and address any safety issues that arise over time?
- Has the proposer gotten **feedback** on the idea from other people who care about the land: other recreational users with different preferred activities, those that might have historic or cultural connection to the place and/or rely on it for what it produces, and those concerned about preserving habitat for native species?



Considerations about the specific trail, alignment, or site:

- What environmental and cultural resource **protections or assessments** are **required** by laws like the Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), or the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)?
- Does the project contribute to **equity** goals to serve a diversity of people and recreation needs?
- Does the agency have the staff **capacity** or funds to contract for the assessment(s) necessary to ensure the project is compliant with the above laws?
- How does the trail fit with other **land uses required** of the agency? Is the land management agency also charged with managing forest/timber harvest, minerals and geology, plants, rangelands, restoration, water, wildlife and fish, wildfire, and/or other land use goals? How does the proposed trail fit with those priorities or designated use zones? Is land use review necessary? Is a conditional use permit required?
- Does the project present challenges to ensuring the **system can be maintained**?
- Does the trail vision work with the **landscape and ecosystem**?
- Is the project part of a **system that makes sense** and provides connections, loops, and trails to destinations?
- Does the project contribute to a system that manages and **prevents conflicts** between different users?
- Does the project require easements or **permissions from property owners**?



While there are a lot of user-built trails out there that didn't go through much of a planning process, trails built without planning and expertise may face the following problems:

- Unnecessary and harmful erosion and degradation of the trail itself and surrounding landscape.
- Hazards either in the original construction or due to degradation.
- Degradation to sensitive plant species or fish and wildlife habitat.
- Trails that don't connect to a larger network, or trails that duplicate similar routes or experiences that might be more thoughtfully placed and aligned.
- Trails that land managers don't have the resources to maintain.
- Physical features that create inaccessible barriers that exclude a variety of users (such as use of uncompacted substrates, side slopes, steps, tree roots, rocks, narrow passage between trees, etc.)

"WHY PLAN?" TAKEAWAYS:

While planning processes can sometimes feel like unnecessary red tape, trail planning aims to ensure

- Compliance with existing laws
- Sustainability
- Agency and community capacity to build and maintain the system
- Safety
- Protection of surrounding landscapes, and the plants and animals that rely on quality habitat
- A system that makes sense in terms how its trails connect with each other and with trailhead facilities and destinations
- An equitable system that meets the needs of all users





PLANNING ON DIFFERENT LEVELS

If you have ever heard, “That’s not in the plan,” you may wonder, “Where do these plans come from?” This section will attempt to build a basic understanding of different types of planning processes that exist locally, regionally, statewide, or pertain to federally managed public lands. A trail’s existence in a plan does

not guarantee it will be built. Trails can exist in plans for decades without any action at all, but being able to say that your trail is in a plan or meets a plan’s goals for an area or community can be extremely helpful in applying for funding and building support for a project with agency and elected leaders.

Regardless of the geographic or jurisdictional context of your project, the following guidelines may be helpful:

- 1.** When you have an idea for a trail project, see what existing plans you can find so that you can discover how your project potentially aligns or conflicts with established planning. The more recent and detailed the plans, the more relevant this factor might be.
- 2.** Look for opportunities to participate in broader planning processes. If your ideas are incorporated into long-range plans, it will be easier to get your project built, and you’ll also learn a lot about land manager considerations and other stakeholder perspectives.
- 3.** There can be a huge variation in the level of detail or age of plans that exist locally and in how easy they are to find. Perhaps the most important takeaway from this chapter is to ask local agency leaders the following two questions:
 - **Can you point me to where I can find the current plans that guide your priorities for trail investments?**
 - **Are there any current or upcoming planning or plan revision processes that I can participate in to inform future trail priorities?**



URBAN, SUBURBAN, AND COMMUNITY TRAILS PLANNING:

The level of detail of local plans can vary substantially, often corresponding to the size of the population and therefore the size and capacity of local agencies and departments that they serve. Medium to large cities and more populous counties often have more resources, and more-detailed plans in place. Some of the types of plans described below will apply more to paved (or sometimes hard-packed gravel) multi-use paths that serve as popular recreation and transportation

corridors. Multi-use paths are sometimes referred to as MUPs, “shared use paths,” or “regional trails”. They may exist under the purview of transportation planning departments or may fall under the umbrella of parks departments, both, or sometimes seem to fall between the cracks and are absent from any formal department or planning initiative. Dirt and single track-style trails are much more likely to exist purely under the purview of parks agencies.

Comprehensive plans (sometimes called comp plans) often exist at the city level and cover a broad range of topics and cover a long timeframe. Comprehensive planning is a process that frames community goals and aspirations in terms of community development. The result is called a comprehensive plan, that sets and regulates public policies on transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing.

Park system plans generally look at natural areas and developed park spaces and trails across a city, county, or parks district as a system with both natural resource management and recreation goals. Priorities may range from simply trying to maintain current assets to developing state-of-the-art recreation complexes or setting goals for all residents to live within a certain radius of public green space. Along with natural areas, parks, and trails, these plans often address facilities like swimming pools, public community centers, sports complexes, etc.

Transportation system plans (sometimes referred to as TSPs) are defined by the Oregon Department of Transportation as describing a transportation system and outlining the projects, programs, and policies to meet transportation needs now and in the future based on the community’s aspirations. A transportation plan includes the existing system as well as planned roadways, bridges, MUPs, rail lines, major road and bridge improvements, etc. Cities, counties, regions, and the state all have transportation system plans and may have specific active transportation plans or separate bike and pedestrian plans as part of their larger TSPs that include trails.

A trails plan or trails system plan might be a comprehensive component of a park system plan or transportation system plan, or existing and proposed trails may just exist as individual assets within these larger system plans.



FEDERAL LANDS AND STATE FORESTS:

Federal and state agencies have national, regional (such as by district, National Forest, or other management area), and/or state-level agency policies, priorities, and strategies that guide their decision-making around trails as well as more local plans guiding their work. For example, the U.S. Forest Service has standards and priorities established at the national level that include guidance documents such as the National Strategy for a Sustainable Trails System. They also have forest-level management plans that give more specific guidance about the constraints

and priorities in specific ranger districts, drainages, timber stands, sensitive areas such as riparian conservation areas (RCA) and wildland-urban interfaces (WUI), etc. National documents set specific standards and definitions for trail specifications and maintenance levels (dependent on available funding). The BLM is federally mandated to “maximize opportunities for commercial, recreational, and conservation activities,” and has land-use plans, also known as Resource Management Plans (RMPs), in place to implement this mission.

Forest Plans (State or National Forests) and Resources Management Plans (RMPs) (public lands managed by BLM) exist on the level of a specific national or state forest or other management area (e.g., by district, or may cover multiple forests), and designate overall goals for the defined area. These plans also designate resource protection areas; areas for further recreational development; and overall goals for managing, developing, or decommissioning different types of recreational opportunities or trails to balance supply and demand and keep the inventory at a level that can be maintained by staff and established partners. Forest Plans exist for very long periods of time, sometimes with a process to amend (i.e. update) the current plan rather than releasing an entirely new plan.



Within a larger management area, the following special designations may exist for certain areas that contain clear boundaries for where and what kind of trails might be able to be developed:


- Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA): SRMAs provide specifically for recreational opportunities, such as developing trailhead areas for hikers, mountain bikers, or off-road vehicle users.
- Wilderness Areas: The 1964 Wilderness Act established the first Wilderness Areas as places “where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” Wilderness areas do not permit motors, vehicles, or machinery, which includes bicycles, OHVs, or anything mechanized. They also prohibit the use of trail building equipment beyond basic hand tools, (including chainsaws).
- Wilderness Study Areas (WSA): The 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) directs federal land managers to review the roadless areas they manage to determine if they meet certain standards for wilderness. WSAs then must be managed as to preserve their suitability for the U.S. Congress to designate them as wilderness. Since the FLPMA was passed, Congress has reviewed some of these areas and designated some as wilderness while releasing others for non-wilderness uses.
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): ACEC designations highlight areas where special management attention is needed to protect important historical, cultural, and scenic values, or fish and wildlife or other natural resources. ACECs can also be designated to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. ACECs can only be designated during the land-use planning process.

STATE PARK MASTER PLANS:

Similar to Forest Plans, State Park Master Plans are written for new and existing parks and present a balance of recreation opportunities with resource protection. Once adopted by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission and approved by the local land use authority (usually a city or county), a park master plan guides future park development.



PLANNING ON DIFFERENT LEVELS TAKEAWAYS:

- Regardless of the type of trail you'd like to see developed or the authority it falls under, it can be helpful to know what existing relevant plans say about the goals and constraints of the managing agency. If your trail vision crosses jurisdictional boundaries, there may be multiple planning processes to consult.
 - A future trail's existence in a plan does not necessarily guarantee it will be built. Trails can exist in plans for decades without any action at all, but being able to say that your trail is in a plan or meets a plan's goals for an area or community can be extremely helpful in applying for funding and building support for a project with agency and elected leaders.
 - Participating in larger planning efforts can help ensure that your priorities are reflected in future plans. It can also help you better understand an agency's decision-making processes, get to know other potential community allies, and build productive relationships with other stakeholders whose priorities differ from your own.
- 





CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC PROJECTS

This chapter is filled with questions rather than answers. Not all of these questions may be priority factors for every land manager or every trail project. However, moving any trail project from an idea to a built trail, will require the ability to work with partners to find answers to many of these questions.

See which of these questions you can answer now, which ones you can research answers to on your own, and which questions you'll need to collaborate with partners for assistance to answer.

Note: You can find these questions in workbook form in [Appendix B](#) at the end of this guide, and as a Google Doc [here](#).

First, use these questions to describe your project:

Where is the project located? Have you identified the relevant land manager(s)? Does the project fall within a specific district, management zone, neighborhood development area, etc.? Is the proposed trail a permitted land use in its desired location? For example, an OHV trail would be prohibited in an area designated as wilderness. Is the trail, or a portion of, on private land?

What are the key elements of the project? Are you proposing a new trail or trail system? A new connector? A new trailhead? American with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades? Reroute or relocation of an existing trail? Does the proposal include bridges or other major constructed features? What is the total mileage of the trail or trail system you're proposing?

Who are the intended trail users? Hikers and pedestrians, equestrians, road or gravel bikers, mountain bikers, adaptive sports athletes, multiple-use non-motorized, OHVs (specific ATV class(es) or multiple-use motorized), mobility aid users, nordic skiers, beginners, or technical users?



Second, consider these questions about your project's larger context:

Does the trail vision meet system goals? Check existing plans for trail system goals. System goals may include serving a diversity of users, helping build a connected system, increasing accessibility, creating connections to specific destinations, increasing safety, increasing specific kinds of experiences, encouraging responsible recreation and limiting negative impacts on habitat, increasing access to nature, creating a welcoming environment for underserved communities, etc.

Does the trail work with the landscape in the desired spot? Different landscapes, elevation profiles, soil and rock types, climates, stormwater patterns, and other factors all affect how different kinds of trail construction can work sustainably.

Does the trail create conflicts with other land uses? Is your trail vision in an area where a timber harvest is planned in the future? Does your rail-to-trail vision conflict with existing or proposed rail lines or livestock ranging?

Does the trail provide access to a destination or landscape that people want to visit? Does the trail provide access to natural beauty or a special view? To a swimming hole? Does it provide a connector from a neighborhood to a park, school, business district, or transit center? Will the trail provide a satisfying loop or connection to other existing trails?

Does the trail provide access to an activity for which access is lacking in the region? Do people currently have to travel a long way to mountain bike, park a horse trailer, or ride their OHVs in the area? Does the trail provide a relief valve for other, overcrowded trail experiences in the region? Does your proposal include decommissioning an existing and inferior trail to offset additional maintenance costs? What would it take to make the destination wheelchair or handcycle accessible?

Is the trail likely to increase or decrease user conflicts? Are you envisioning a multi-use path that provides a safe alternative to a high traffic volume road? Are you plotting a mountain bike experience in a popular equestrian area with thick forest and poor sightlines? Or does your trail vision optimize a mountain bike experience in a way that can draw bikers out of high-conflict zones? Who are the likely users of the trail you have in mind, and will your design be able to accommodate them in a safe way?



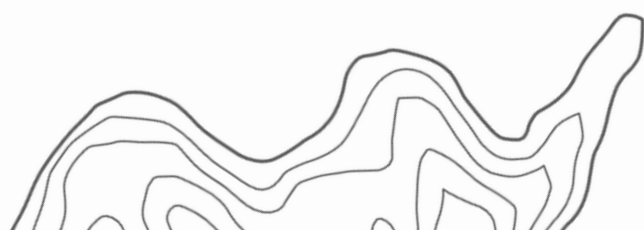
Does the trail increase equity for communities lacking access to green space and active recreation? Is the trail located in a low-income neighborhood? Can it be reached by public transit? Will it be easily accessible to a local senior center, school, or youth organization? Does the trail address needs expressed by communities of color? Is your trail advocacy in line with community health, safety, and recreation goals?

Is the trail inclusive of various backgrounds and identities? How welcoming is the trail to people who are underrepresented in outdoor recreation settings? Have you sought and received input from indigenous communities, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ community groups, etc.? What are the features that make people feel unsafe or unwelcome, and how can you adapt or avoid them? How might signage, for example, make people feel safe and welcome?

What would accessibility beyond meeting minimum ADA requirements look like on the trail? (See Accessibility, Universal Design, and Inclusive Information box on page 28.) Will an adaptive mountain bike or handcycle fit on the track? Does the accessible trail or network provide appropriate and safe challenge for a progression of users (e.g., signage can denote more advanced trails that host more grueling hills, banked curves, small obstacles, etc.), or is it completely flat and devoid of interest? How can accessibility of a trail be easily improved without a lengthy and expensive ADA project?

Do the resources, including funding, exist to conduct necessary environmental reviews, design, and trail building? Do the resources exist to maintain it? What is the agency's capacity? What is your organization or individual capacity and/or community capacity? Capacity can include funding, time, expertise, equipment, labor, relationships, etc.

Are there sensitive areas that must be considered in building the trail? Does the trail pass through wetlands or riparian zones that will require special (and expensive) measures like boardwalks and bridges? Is the area prone to landslides, flooding, or big shifts in waterways? Is the trail in a place of significance to indigenous communities, and are those indigenous communities engaged in the trail vision? (Also see NEPA box on page 27.)





Does the trail negatively impact threatened or endangered species or cultural resource protection? Are there threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, or plant species in the area? Archeological sites? You might be able to get some initial answers to this question fairly easily based on existing mapping of resources, but final answers might require a NEPA analysis. (See NEPA box on page 27.)

Do you anticipate that other visitors or adjacent landowners may have concerns with your trail proposal, or that there will be broad support? Even better, have you already reached out to other user groups, clubs, local landowners, and/or elected officials to learn about their potential concerns or support for the project?

Are there likely to be any safety concerns associated with the proposal? Either from the environment (e.g., rock fall, avalanche prone areas, old burn areas, etc.) or based on the type of experience you're proposing (high speed, drops, etc.)

Finally, consider these questions about your capacity to support:

How can your organization help? Can you raise or help apply for funds? Can you help build the trail? Do your members have tools, licenses to operate heavy equipment, saw certifications, etc.? Are members in your organization professional designers, planners, or engineers that are willing to provide pro bono services? Can you make a long-term commitment to maintaining the trail?





NEPA = National Environmental Policy Act

Projects that are on federal lands or that receive federal funding are subject to the National Environmental Policy Act. NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of proposed major federal actions prior to making decisions.

These environmental analyses may take the form of Environmental Impact Statements, Environmental Assessments, or Categorical Exclusions.

Large projects, or projects more likely to have an environmental impact, may require an **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**. An EIS analyzes the impacts of an action that “will have a significant effect on the environment.” An EIS outlines the purpose and need for a proposed action, describes the affected environment, discusses alternatives to a proposed action, and analyzes environmental impacts and ways to mitigate them. EISs are comprehensive and time consuming. They also offer opportunities for public comment.

Like an EIS, an **Environmental Assessment (EA)** also identifies environmental effects of a proposed action, determines their significance, and outlines ways to mitigate them. EAs, however, are reserved for proposed actions unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment. An EA takes less time and is less comprehensive than an EIS. If the EA shows that the proposed action does not have a significant effect on the environment, it will issue a **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**.

Federal land management agencies may be able to streamline the NEPA processes for some trail projects through the development of documents such as **Categorical Exclusions (CE)** or **Determinations of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)**. These types of streamlined NEPA documents can only be used in specific circumstances, and do not relieve the federal agencies from ensuring that proposed trail projects conform to other natural and cultural resource protection laws, such as the Endangered Species and National Historic Preservation Acts.

EAs and EISs typically require the coordination of an interdisciplinary team of experts such as biologists, geologists, archaeologists, etc. The capacity to conduct EAs or EISs can be a major bottleneck for many trail projects as there may be events like scheduled timber sales already in the queue for study.



Accessibility, Universal Design, and Inclusive Information

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in 1991 to make public spaces more accessible to people with disabilities. Since then, land managers have become very familiar with the requirements of ADA compliance.

Federal agencies' outdoor developments are required to meet the the 1968 **Architectural Barriers Act (ABA)** Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas. (See Resource list in [Appendix A](#).)

While ADA compliance in bathrooms, parking lots, and paved, multi-use path settings is extremely important, it is only the tip of the iceberg in ensuring that people with disabilities can pursue the full range of trail-based activities they want to participate in.

Taking into account the needs of trail users who may be using adaptive equipment can ensure more of your community members will access and enjoy your trail. Considerations may include ensuring a mountain bike trail has the appropriate width and cross-slope to accommodate three-wheeled adaptive mountain bikes or ensuring the signage for a non-motorized trail indicates that folks using electric-assist mobility devices are welcome.

Common physical barriers listed in the [Willamette Partnership's Accessibility Toolkit for Land Managers](#) that you can try to avoid in your design include: narrow trails around gates, loose-packed ground cover, bollards and boulders, inaccessible or incomplete signage, roots and rocks on a trail, railings at eye-level, steps and lack of curb cuts, drop offs, lack of transportation, busy streets, trail and surface degradation, and inaccessible bathrooms.

Folks with disabilities, and many non-disabled community members, often share that a lack of information about a trail and its conditions is one of the biggest barriers to access they face. As trails are built, consider how you can also ensure that all the information users might need to plan their trail-based adventure is easily accessible on websites, maps, and trail head signs. Inform people with various disabilities about trail length, conditions, user groups, difficulty level, and restroom availability, so that they feel equipped to make informed decisions.

Moving beyond ADA compliance to a **universal Design** and **inclusive information** approach won't just serve individuals that identify as having a disability, but will make trails friendlier to the full community.

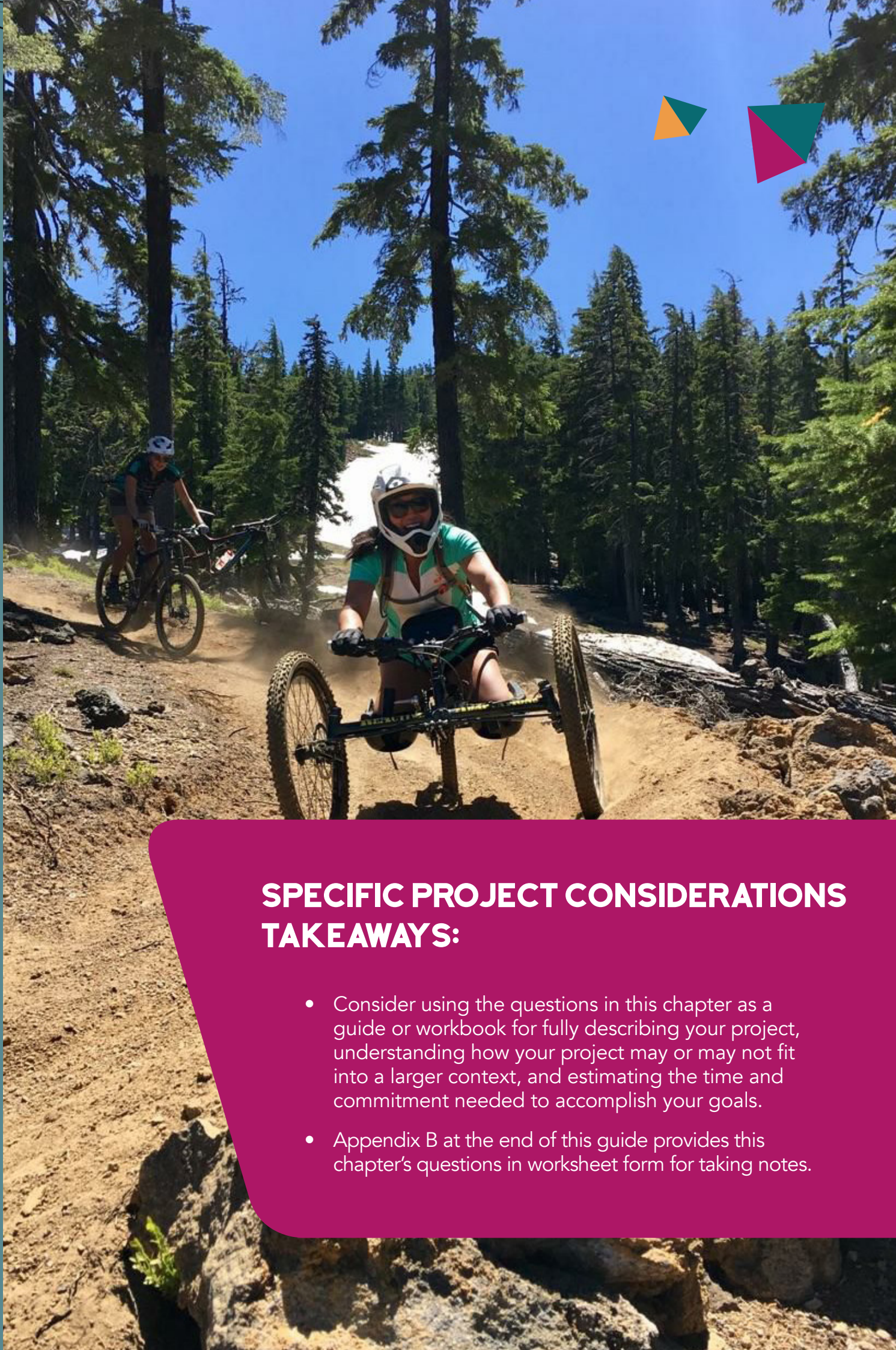
There are a number of resources regarding trail accessibility, universal design, and inclusive information in the [Resources](#) section, and there is great value in consulting with local trail users with disabilities about the barriers they face.



TIME TO PAUSE

As you begin to answer the questions in this chapter, **pause**. Do you want to keep advocating for your project? Is there another project that would meet your goals that better aligns with system and partner goals?

Reminder: You can find the questions in this chapter in workbook form in [Appendix B](#) to this guide, and as a Google doc [here](#).



SPECIFIC PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS TAKEAWAYS:

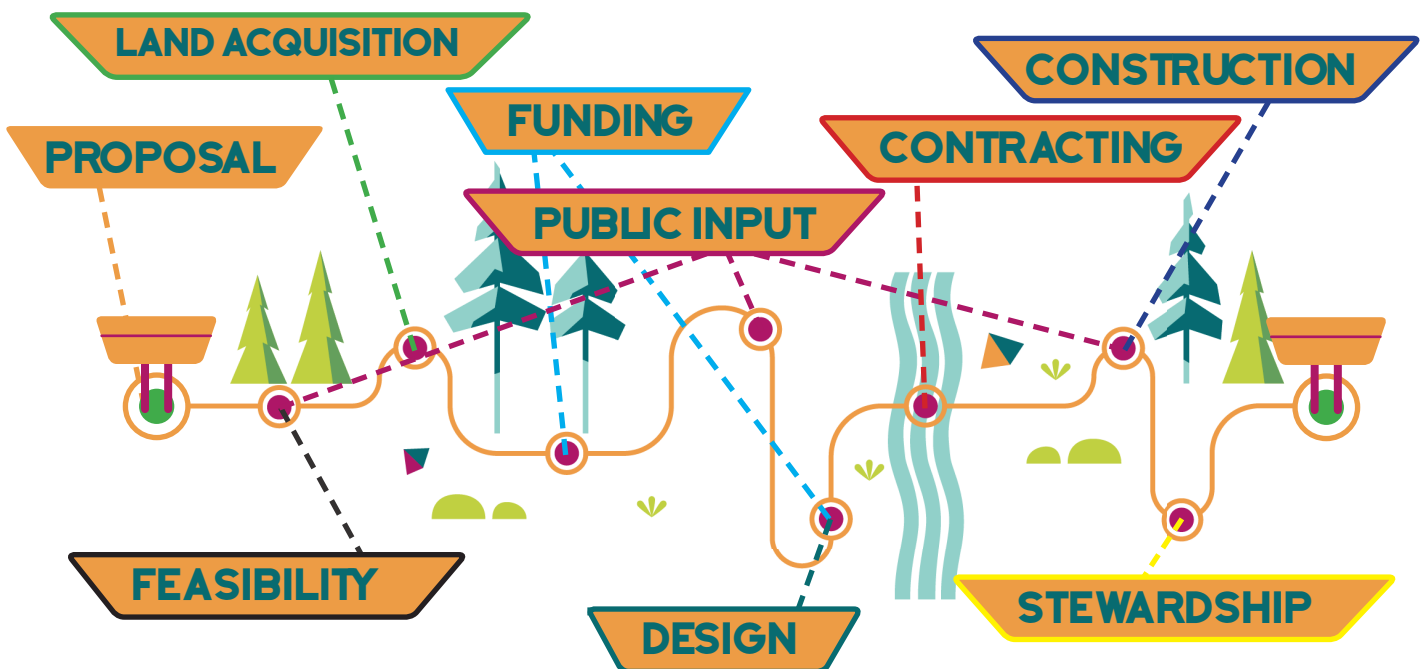
- Consider using the questions in this chapter as a guide or workbook for fully describing your project, understanding how your project may or may not fit into a larger context, and estimating the time and commitment needed to accomplish your goals.
- Appendix B at the end of this guide provides this chapter's questions in worksheet form for taking notes.

LIFECYCLE OF A TRAIL PROJECT

Processes and timelines can vary widely depending on the project size, context, complexity, available funding, and jurisdiction. For enthusiastic trail advocates, the following process points can seem like bottlenecks in achieving a trail vision:

- Identifying funding for project development, feasibility, design, and engineering.
- Agency personnel capacity to begin regulatory review processes, if needed.
- Partner agency staff or organization staff and volunteer turnover.
- Providing adequate time for stakeholder engagement and public comment.

Project Lifecycle: Each phase has the potential to occur concurrently, or some might need to be repeated throughout, such as identifying funding for different phases, finding contractors for different phases, or seeking public comment at different milestones.





KEY

Proposal: It will take some research and likely many conversations with various staff and partners to move a great idea into a clear proposal.

Feasibility (and interdisciplinary team review): If the project requires NEPA, that process can often take 6-18 months. Getting into the pipeline for a NEPA process can take even longer (years!) depending on agency mandate and priorities. Tip: Find out if the land manager would allow your organization to provide funding for an external, approved contractor to assemble the necessary NEPA documents.

Land Acquisition: Does the trail require any land purchases or easements? Even between public partners, the process around land transfers can take months or years.

Identifying funding: What funding might be necessary for feasibility studies, land acquisition, planning and design, public engagement, and construction/implementation? Many grant proposal processes can take 3-18 months from proposal to award, and not every recurring grant program is available annually. Getting a project into an agency budget might require advocacy for the next fiscal year's budget or future public funding measures.

Public Input: A public comment period may be required or advised at different project stages, including initial adoption of project proposal into existing plans and/or later in development when there are design and alignment options up for consideration. Be prepared for a longer process if there is opposition from important stakeholders. There may be statutory requirements for points at which public input has to be received including a set number of days for public comments.

Design: This usually entails, at a minimum, identifying a more specific alignment for the trail beyond the general corridor. Depending on the size and complexity of the project, it may also include trailhead and parking lot design planning, wayfinding signage, designing and engineering any required structures (like bridges, raised walkways, or barriers such as boulders or fences to encourage users to stay on-trail), and identifying and sourcing any materials that need to be brought in.

Contracting: Will the land manager be able to accomplish this project with staff and/or volunteers, or is this a project that needs to be put out to bid? Does it require someone with landscape architecture expertise? Transportation engineering expertise? Civil engineering expertise? Construction and/or heavy equipment operation expertise? Add two months to a year to your timeline if contracting is needed.


Construction: Timelines vary depending on funding availability, the size and complexity of the project, and seasonal constraints which may include the terrain being too muddy, too dry, wildfire season work restrictions, seasonal work restrictions due to sensitive wildlife habitat, etc.

Stewardship: What is the long-term plan to maintain and care for the trail, keep it clear from encroaching brush, and repair damage done by trail users, major weather events, or wildfires?



LIFECYCLE OF A TRAIL PROJECT TAKEAWAYS:

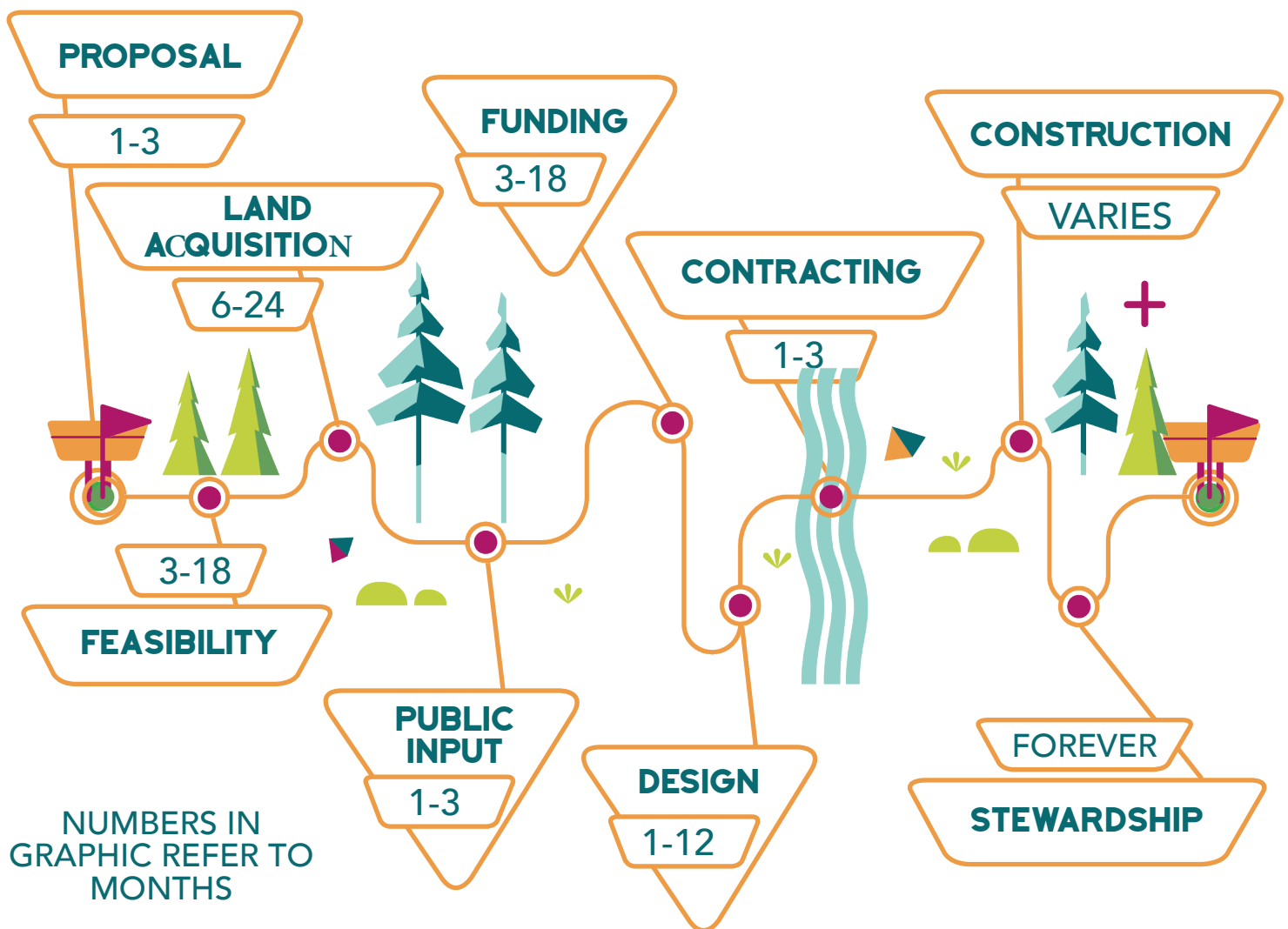
While project complexity and timelines vary significantly, all trail projects require a number of different steps to manifest from idea to completion. For each of the steps identified in this chapter, the following questions may be helpful.

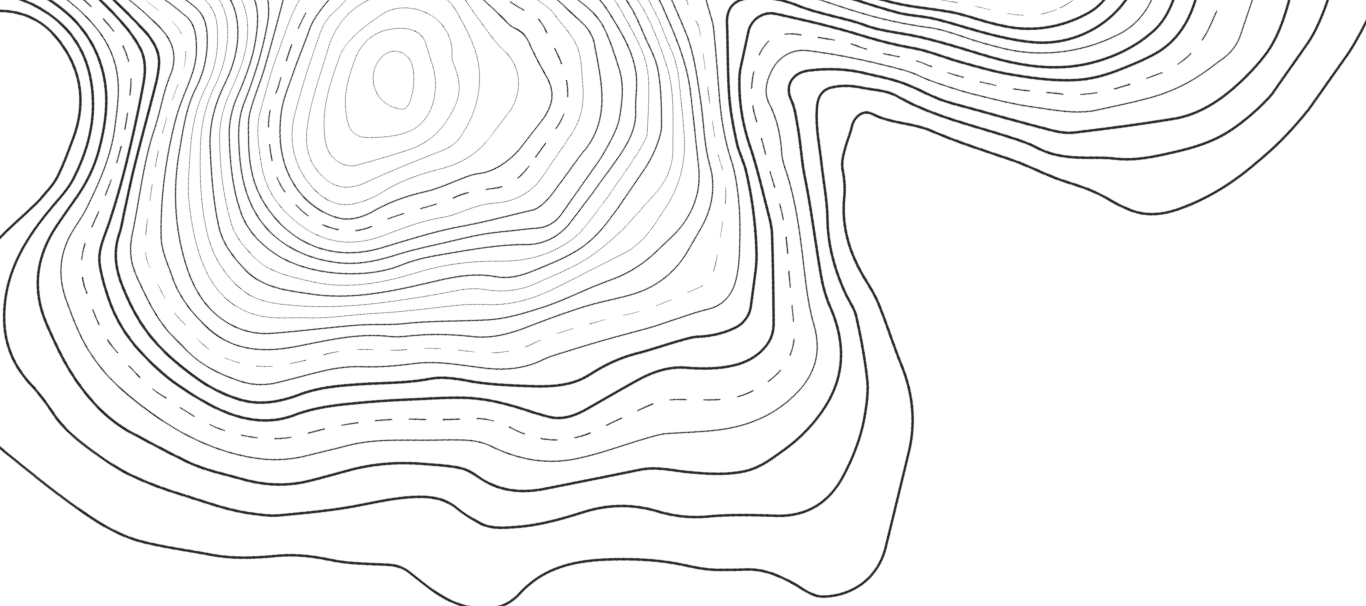
- Is this step required for my project?
 - What expertise is required for this step?
 - Does the agency have the needed capacity, expertise, resources, and time for this step?
 - Does my organization have the capacity, expertise, resources, and time to accomplish or help with this step?
 - Do I have the information needed about a step (like cost) to help line up resources for it ahead of time?
 - Does the step have an established timeline? (Such as a required period for public comment, a grant process schedule, or specific season for construction.)
- 



TIMELINE OF A TRAIL PROJECT

Most trail projects take multiple years to go from initial vision to construction. The following month estimations are intended to be used as starting guideposts and are not minimum to maximum ranges. Many projects will have complicating factors that require more time at various stages or are often delayed when land managers have other priorities requiring their attention.



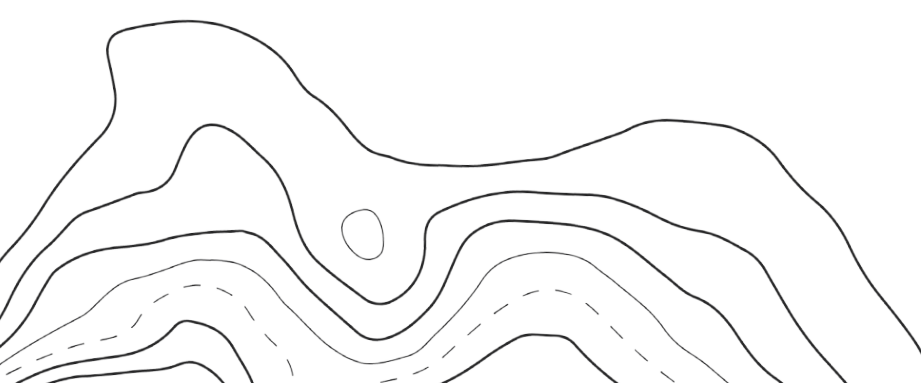


FAST-TRACK PROJECTS

Not all projects are complex or involve a long timeline. If the following factors are all in place, a partner organization may have significant leeway in designing and constructing trails with minimal oversight and in much shorter timelines.

Fast-Track Project Factors:

- Trust has been built between land manager and partner organization(s).
- Trail construction will take place in an area that has been approved “wholesale” for trail development, and in an area that doesn’t contain sensitive habitats or other environmental or cultural concerns.
- There isn’t significant opposition to the project by other stakeholders.
- The trail project doesn’t require complex structures like major bridges or raised boardwalks.
- The partner organization has access to the expertise and resources (labor, materials, tools, funding, etc) to complete the project.





FUNDING AND MAKING THE CASE

The paths to funding different trail projects are almost as varied as the trails themselves. Small projects may be most easily community funded, or may fit easily within the constraints of an agency's current budget. Larger projects may require competitive grants, fundraising campaigns, inclusion in new funding measures, support from a large private donor, and/or specially earmarked public funding.

Sometimes initial feasibility and basic design for a project must be funded before being able to even estimate what the final cost of construction might be. Unfortunately, the early stages of trail

development can be the most difficult to fund. Many competitive grant programs don't fund earlier stages of project development, restricting their funding to final design and construction phases. It can also be difficult to raise community support for the early stages of project development when you can't promise a finished trail on a specific timeline. See the funding resources section at the end of this guide for a list of some existing competitive funding programs that can support different aspects of trail development in different contexts. If you're hoping to develop trails on privately-owned land, you may find grant opportunities particularly limited.

SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT FUNDING:

- Which stages of the trail project life cycle have costs associated with them?
- What fits within the land manager's or partner agency's budget?
- Is there a strategy for funding the feasibility, design, public engagement, and ongoing maintenance phases of the project?
- What can be provided in-kind?
- What can be crowd-, community-, or privately-funded?
- What competitive grant funding opportunities are available? Also, who can apply? For many public grants, a public agency will need to be the grantee. For many private grants, a nonprofit partner may need to be the applicant. Does the grant program require matching funds, and what kind of investments and labor can qualify as a match? (Note: see [Appendix A](#) at the end of this guide for a list of some grant funding resources.)

MAKING THE CASE

Unless your organization has all the resources needed to fund a project and maintain it over time, you will likely need to make the case for the need of the proposed trail and the benefits it will provide to the community. A trail project doesn't need to have all of the benefits listed below to be successful. However, identifying the project's clearest benefits will likely lead you to the funding models or funding opportunities that may hold the most potential for success.

- **Community desire:** The trail meets a need identified by a local user group with a lot of enthusiasm for the project.
- **Public health benefits:** Is the trail particularly well-situated to serve a target population like youth, seniors, people with disabilities, low-income community members, and/or those most likely to experience health disparities based on race or ethnicity?
- **Economic benefits:** Does the trail project create jobs in construction or tourism, or bring other community economic development benefits?
- **Accessibility:** Does the trail address a need for more ADA access to the outdoors?
- **Transportation safety benefits:** Does the trail provide valuable off-street connections to transit, residential neighborhoods, business districts, schools, parks, community centers, employment centers, etc.? Does it provide a safer alternative to people walking and biking on a high-traffic roadway?
- **Equity and inclusion:** Does the trail project have a focus on inclusive partnering and development? Is equity in race, disability, gender, sexuality, and identity central to the goals of the project?
- **Access to nature:** Does the trail project provide public access to green space, water, or crucial local habitat, especially where access is currently lacking?
- **Stewardship education:** Does the project offer environmental education opportunities?

See [Appendix A](#) for links to resources, data, and trail fact sheets that may help you make the case for your project.





FUNDING & MAKING THE CASE TAKEAWAYS:

- Consider costs of each stage of a trail project's life cycle when pursuing funding.
- Many trail projects will require a variety of funding sources and/or in-kind contributions.
- Identifying the diversity of community benefits a trail will provide will both help make the case for the trail as well as guide your way in identifying the most appropriate funding sources for the project.







GLOSSARY

AASHTO: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, pronounced “ash-toe.” AASHTO publishes specifications, test protocols, and guidelines that are used in highway, street, and shared use path design and construction throughout the United States.

ABA: Architectural Barriers Act, enacted by Congress in 1968, requires accessibility in all Federal Government owned and leased buildings and facilities, and also buildings and facilities constructed, altered, or leased with certain Federal grants and loans. Chapter 10 provides Recreation Facilities guidelines for trails and outdoor recreation facilities.

Accessible: Sometimes used to indicate compliance with ADA and/or ABA. Disability advocates encourage a more holistic approach to identifying what barriers can be removed to allow individuals with disabilities to recreate in all the ways they wish. See Accessibility box on page 28.

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act, signed into law in 1990. The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. Titles II and III set standards for construction, alterations, program accessibility, and barrier removal.

ACEC: Area of Critical Environmental Concern, highlights an area where special management attention is needed to protect important historical, cultural, and scenic values, or fish and wildlife or other natural resources. ACECs can also be designated to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. ACECs can only be designated during the land-use planning process.

ATV: All-terrain vehicle. According to Oregon law, an ATV is any motorized off-road vehicle, except for a snowmobile. (Also, see OHV.) ATVs are divided into four classes:

Class I ATVs are known as four-wheelers, quads, or 3-wheelers.

Class II ATVs include pickup trucks, SUVs, Jeeps, rock crawl vehicles, and sand rails. They may be street legal or for off-highway use only.

Class III ATVs are 2-wheeled motorcycles. This includes dual sport (street legal) motorcycles that are used on trails.

Class IV ATVs are commonly known as side-by-sides. In broad terms, side-by-sides are vehicles with a steering wheel, non-straddle seat, and roll cage.

BLM: Bureau of Land Management, an agency within the United States Department of the Interior responsible for administering federal lands. They are charged with sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands they manage to meet the needs of present and future generations. BLM has a specific region that covers Oregon and Washington.

CCSA: Challenge Cost Share Agreement, a written agreement between an (often federal) agency and a partner in which there is an equal partnership between the agency and the partner that produces or provides a tangible product that mutually benefits agency objectives and the public. Sometimes a required structure for formalizing trail stewardship and development partnerships with land managers.

CE: Categorical Exclusions (see NEPA box, page 27) Categorical Exclusions are a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment, as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act.

Comp Plan: Short for Comprehensive Plan (see the “Planning on Different Levels” section)

Conditional Use Permit: A zoning exception that allows a property to be used in non-conforming ways.

DLCD: Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development is a small state agency that works in partnership with local governments, and state and federal agencies, to address the land use needs of the public, communities, regions, and the state. The Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) provides policy direction for the land use planning program and oversees DLCD operations.

DNA: Determinations of NEPA Adequacy: (See the NEPA box, page 27)

EA: Environmental Assessment (see the NEPA box, page 27)

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement (see the NEPA box, page 27)

ESA: Endangered Species Act of 1973 provides a framework to conserve and protect endangered and threatened species and their habitats from the consequences of “economic growth and development untempered by adequate concern and conservation.”

FHWA: Federal Highway Administration.

FLAP: Federal Lands Access Program (see funding resources in [Appendix A](#)) In regards to FLAP funding, Oregon is covered by the Western Federal Lands office.

FLPMA: Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 is a federal law that governs the way in which the public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management are managed.

FONSI: Finding of No Significant Impact (see the NEPA box, page 27) (often pronounced “fahnzee”)

GAOA: The Great American Outdoors Act, federal legislation passed in 2020 that establishes a new National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund and guarantees the permanent and full funding of the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The act will help complete infrastructure projects, expand recreational opportunities, support local economies, and help ensure parks are protected and preserved for the enjoyment of current and future generations. Federal agencies like USFS and BLM have GAOA project lists on the regional office level. Funding for local and state agencies is available through LWCF grants administered by OPRD.

Inclusive Information: An approach to sharing information on websites, maps, and trailhead signs that lets trail users know about trail conditions, amenities, potential barriers, and generally what to expect.

In-Kind: consisting of something (such as goods or labor) other than money. In-kind contributions for trails could include labor (for feasibility study, design, construction, etc), materials, equipment, mapping, etc.

Jurisdictional Boundaries: The places where ownership, management, and decision-making about the land begins or ends for an agency. A jurisdictional boundary could exist between a city and county, local government and state land, or even between two different state or two different federal agencies.


LWCF: Land and Water Conservation Fund (see funding resources [Appendix A](#))

Match: Certain funding mechanisms like grants often require an additional investment or “match” for a project so that their grant or funding source isn’t providing 100% of the funding for the project. Match requirements commonly vary in the 10%-50% range but can be higher or lower as well. Different funding sources have different rules for what they will accept as match. In some cases, cash investment from an additional source is required. Other grantors will allow applicants to count land value, staff time, in-kind materials donations, and/or volunteer time on a project as match.

MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a federally mandated and federally funded transportation policy-making organization in the United States that is made up of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities. They were created to ensure regional cooperation in transportation planning for any urbanized area (UZA) with a population greater than 50,000.

MUP: Multi-use path, also called shared use path or regional path, defined in the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan as “a path physically separate from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier and either within a highway right-of-way or within an independent right-of-way used by bicyclists, pedestrians, joggers, skaters, and other non-motorized travelers.” MUPs are generally (but not always) paved and wide enough to safely accommodate two-way traffic. Modern MUPs are required to be ADA accessible.

NEPA: The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (commonly pronounced “nee-pah”) is a foundational environmental statute that requires that federal agencies conduct environmental reviews prior to undertaking major federal actions (such as constructing a highway) that significantly affect the environment. (see NEPA highlight on page 27).



NHPA: The National Historic Preservation Act was signed into law in 1966 with the intent to preserve historic and archaeological sites in the United States of America. The act created the National Register of Historic Places, the list of National Historic Landmarks, and the State Historic Preservation Offices.

ODF: Oregon Department of Forestry has the mission to serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability.

ODFW: The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has the mission to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

ODOT: Oregon Department of Transportation (frequently pronounced "oh-dot") has a mission to provide a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects people and helps Oregon's communities and economy thrive.

OHV: Off-highway vehicle, a type of vehicle designed specifically for off-road use (also see ATV).

OPRD: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Its mission is to provide and protect outstanding natural, scenic, cultural, historic, and recreational sites for the enjoyment and education of present and future generations.

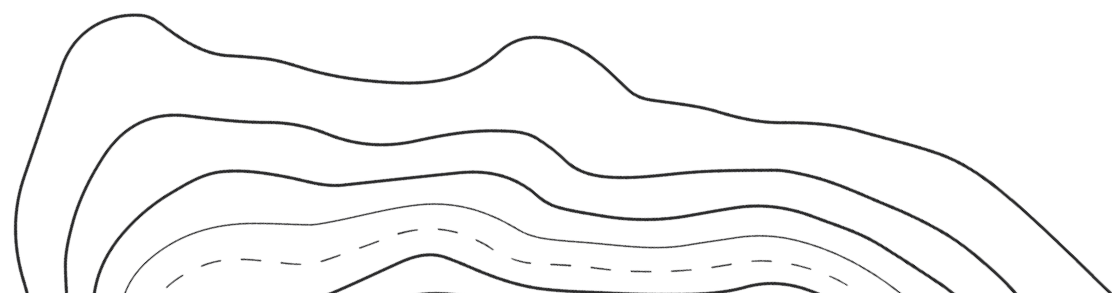
RCA: Riparian Conservation Areas are land allocations (e.g., USFS) that include traditional riparian corridors, wetlands, intermittent streams, and other areas that are managed to maintain or restore the structure and function of aquatic, riparian, and meadow ecosystems.

RDMO: Regional Destination Management (or Marketing) Organization. Oregon is divided into seven tourism regions that each have a designated RDMO. RDMOs can serve as partners in marketing, developing, and creating local strategies around recreation and tourism assets such as trails.

Risk Management: The process of identifying any potential threats that may occur during a process and doing anything possible to mitigate or eliminate those dangers.

RMP: Resource Management Plan (See "Planning on Different Levels" chapter.)

RTP: Recreational Trails Program, a federally funded grant program administered in Oregon by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. "RTP" is also sometimes used as an acronym for "Regional Transportation Plan," a type of transportation system plan covering the cities and counties represented by an MPO.



SCORP: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, often pronounced "skorp." Each state must prepare a SCORP every five years to remain qualified to receive funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). In Oregon, the plan functions not only to guide the LWCF program, but also provides guidance for other OPRD administered grant programs including the Local Government Grant, County Opportunity Grant, Recreational Trails, and All-Terrain Vehicle Programs. The SCORP also provides guidance to federal, state, and local units of government, as well as the private sector, in delivering quality outdoor recreational opportunities.

Shared Use Path: see (MUP) Multi-Use Path. Shared Use Path is the preferred terminology in federal guidelines.

SHPO: State Historic Preservation Office, often pronounced "shippo," housed within the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Archaeologists provide education on cultural heritage issues; explain current state cultural resource laws and regulations; and help resolve potential conflicts involving development, scientific research, and the respectful treatment of cultural resources.

SRMA: Special Recreation Management Area, generally on federal lands, provides specifically for recreational opportunities, such as developing trailhead areas for hikers, mountain bikers, or off-road vehicle users.

Single-track: A type of trail that is approximately the width of one bike, hiker, or horse. It contrasts with double-track trails and forest roads that are wide enough for four-wheeled off-road vehicles.

Travel Oregon is the name of the Oregon Tourism Commission, a semi-independent agency that serves as the state's Destination Management Organization (DMO). Travel Oregon promotes travel to Oregon by striving to improve the visitor experience in smart and sustainable ways, enhancing and protecting our state's assets.

TSP: Transportation System Plan (See the "Planning on Different Levels" chapter.)

Universal Design: The concept of designing the built environment to be usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or status in life.

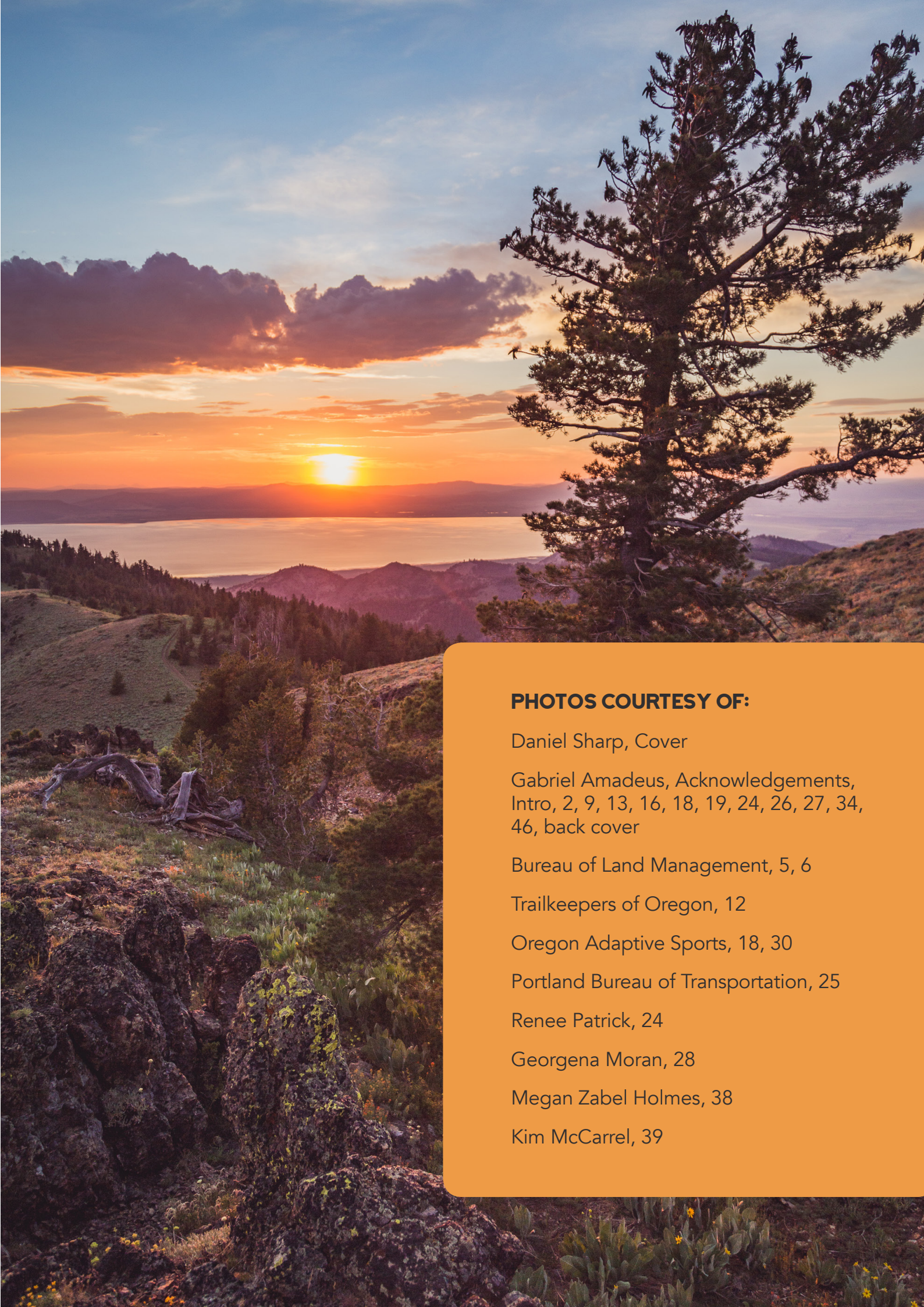
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

USFS: The United States Forest Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that administers the nation's 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands with a mission to "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." Oregon (along with Washington) is part of the Pacific Northwest Region or Region 6 of the USFS.

WSA: Wilderness Study Areas are roadless areas managed by the BLM in a manner that will not impair their suitability for the U.S. Congress to designate them as Wilderness Areas under the Wilderness Act.

WUI: Wildland Urban Interface is the zone where natural areas and development meet.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF:

Daniel Sharp, Cover

Gabriel Amadeus, Acknowledgements,
Intro, 2, 9, 13, 16, 18, 19, 24, 26, 27, 34,
46, back cover

Bureau of Land Management, 5, 6

Trailkeepers of Oregon, 12

Oregon Adaptive Sports, 18, 30

Portland Bureau of Transportation, 25

Renee Patrick, 24

Georgena Moran, 28

Megan Zabel Holmes, 38

Kim McCarrel, 39



APPENDIX A: RESOURCES

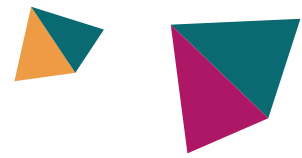
The below resource list was up to date as of Spring 2021. We will maintain an updated list

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SC160f0dqyWn0dsNfq3rRDyEvlHozjAlk_PHtbsPq7o/edit?usp=sharing

Trails Standards, Assessment, Planning, and Design Resources

- [The National Park Service - Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance](#): A national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals that partners with community groups, nonprofit organizations, tribes, and state and local governments to design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create recreation opportunities.
- [NPS Rivers, Rivers Trails, and Conservation Assistance Trails Planning Toolkit](#)
- [USFS Standard Trail Plans and Specifications](#)
- [USFS National Strategy for a Sustainable Trails System](#)
- [Bureau of Land Management Planning 101](#)
- [Trail Solutions: IMBA's Guide to Building Sweet Single Track](#)
- [Managing Mountain Biking: IMBA's Guide to Providing Great Riding](#)
- [Guidelines for a Quality Trail Experience](#)
- [National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council Great Trails Guidebook](#)
- [Pacific Crest Trails Association Trails Skills College Project Management Curriculum](#)
- [Pacific Crest Trails Association Trails Skills College Basic Trails Design Curriculum](#)
- [Trailkeepers of Oregon Trailkeepers University](#)
- [Trails Handbook: Planning, Design, Construction, Maintenance, CA State Parks](#)
- [Oregon Trails Coalition Webinar Archive](#)
- [Oregon Recreation and Parks Association Resources](#)





- [American Trails Accessibility Resources page](#)
- [Willamette Partnership's Accessibility Toolkit for Land Managers](#)
- [Empowering Access, Disability Inclusion Consulting](#)
- [Access Recreation's Guidelines for Providing Trail Information to People with Disabilities](#)
- [The Unpavement: Adaptive mountain bike trail assessing](#)
- [Information on Trail Access Information \(TAI\) for trailheads](#)
- [Intertwine Regional Trail Signage Guidelines](#)
- [Non-Motorized Trail Cost Estimator](#)

Policy, Advocacy, and Resources for Making the Case for Trails

[American Trails Resource Library](#) Resources related to advocacy, funding, planning and design, construction and maintenance, and management.

[Rails to Trails Conservancy \(RTC\) Resource Library](#) Fact sheets and other resources on benefits of trails, planning, development, management, etc.

[Oregon's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#) Survey data on recreation activities and desires of Oregonians as well as health and economic data.

[Oregon Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact Study.](#)

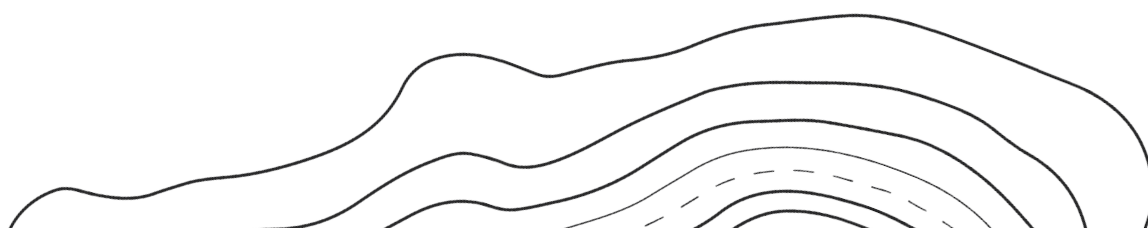
[Governor's Task Force on the Outdoors: 2020 Framework for Action](#)

[2016-2025 Oregon Statewide Recreation Trails Plan](#)

[Oregon Vision for Signature Trails](#)

Trails Funding Resources

[Recreational Trails Program:](#) The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a federally-funded grant program administered by OPRD. Eligible applicants include local, state, federal, tribal, and other governments. Nonprofit organizations registered with the Oregon Secretary of State for at least three years prior to application may also be eligible to apply. Eligible projects include construction of new trails, major rehabilitation of existing trails, development or improvement of trailhead or other support facilities, acquisition of land or easements for the purpose of trail development, and safety and education projects. Eligible trail types include





motorized (OHV, snowmobile), non-motorized (hiker, biker, equestrian), and water trails.

[Local Government Grant Program:](#) The Local Government Grant Program (LGGP) is a state lottery-funded grant program administered by OPRD. Eligible applicants include local government agencies that are obligated by state law to provide public recreation facilities. LGGP grants are available to either acquire land for public outdoor recreation or to develop and rehabilitate outdoor recreation facilities, including trails. Small community park and master planning is also eligible (visit the link for population limits). <https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/gra/pages/gra-lggp.aspx>

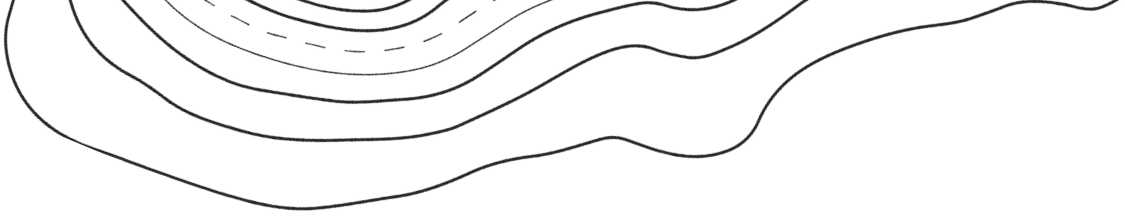
[Land and Water Conservation Fund:](#) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal program that supports the protection of federal public lands and waters, including national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas. It also secures public access, improved recreational opportunities, and preserved ecosystem benefits for local communities through a state grant program. Oregon's LWCF grant program is administered by OPRD. Eligible applicants include local government agencies, certain state agencies, and tribes. LWCF grants are available to either acquire land for public outdoor recreation or to develop or rehabilitate outdoor recreation facilities, including trails. Any site that has been acquired, developed, or improved, no matter how small the improvement, with funds from the LWCF grant program, must be open to the public and maintained in perpetuity for public outdoor recreation.

[Oregon Community Paths Program:](#) This program is administered by ODOT using monies from the Multimodal Active Transportation fund and federal Transportation Alternatives Program. The program is dedicated to helping communities create and maintain connections through multi-use paths. Eligible applicants include local, state, or federal agencies, tribes, transit agencies, and nonprofit organizations responsible for administration of a local transportation safety program. Eligible projects include development, construction, reconstruction, major resurfacing, or other capital improvements of multi-use paths; bicycle paths and footpaths; and planning, design and engineering expenses, including consultant services, associated with developing eligible infrastructure projects.

[Federal Lands Access Program:](#) The Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) is administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to improve transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within federal lands. Eligible applicants include public agencies working in close partnership with federal land managers. Eligible projects are public highways, roads, bridges, trails, or transit systems located on, adjacent to, or that provide access to federal lands. Eligible projects include capital improvements, enhancements, surface preservation, safety, transit, planning, and research. (Minimum grant is \$100,000.)

[Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund:](#) This program is administered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to enhance the species and habitats identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy and to create new opportunities for wildlife watching,





urban conservation, community science, and other wildlife-associated recreation. Eligible applicants include public agencies and nonprofit organizations. Eligible projects include enhancement or restoration of trails and access to waterways in a way that preserves or enhances sensitive habitat; research or planning that supports responsible recreational opportunities; and educational materials and opportunities related to responsible recreation, ecology, and wildlife conservation for kids and adults in multiple languages.

[Travel Oregon Grants \(and local RDMO funding\)](#) Travel Oregon administers grants for tourism-related projects that support Travel Oregon’s mission of “a better life for all Oregonians through strong, sustainable local communities that welcome a diversity of explorers.” Eligible applicants include government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses. A broad range of projects are eligible including strategic planning, feasibility studies, research studies, master plans, visitor access improvement, mapping, wayfinding signage design or construction, visitor amenities, or infrastructure development. Before applying for Travel Oregon grants, potential applicants should connect with their Regional Destination Management Organization (RDMO), who may also have resources available to support local trail development. [RDMOs](#)

[USDA Rural Development Funding:](#) The United States Rural Development Program supports a wide range of investments in rural communities. Trail projects potentially could be eligible for Community Facilities Grants or Economic Impact Initiative Grants. Eligible applicants include rural public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribes. [Contact the Oregon state office to learn more](#)

[Transportation Growth Management \(TGM\) Planning Grants:](#) Jointly administered by the ODOT and the Department of Land Conservation and Development, TGM grants support transportation systems and land use planning. Eligible applicants include cities, counties, councils of government, tribal governments, transportation districts, metropolitan planning organizations, ports, mass transit districts, parks and recreation districts, and metropolitan service districts. Eligible projects include system-level planning efforts related to transportation and land use including trail system plans.

Local Transportation, Public Health, or Parks and Nature Funding: Talk to local public works, transportation, public health, or parks and recreation agency staff to learn what funding might be available at the local level on the city, county, park district, or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) levels. Eligible applicants and projects will vary for different funding programs.

Private Grants: Private funding may come from family foundations, community foundations, and private companies. Many larger outdoor gear manufacturers and retailers have grant programs supporting conservation and/or outdoor recreation access projects. Eligibility varies, but generally nonprofit organizations are eligible applicants. Eligible projects also vary widely, but many will have a community engagement requirement.

APPENDIX B: WORKBOOK

Use this worksheet to address key questions about your project, and bring with you to conversations with partners. Reference Basic Considerations for Specific Projects chapter, pages 23-30 for more context for each of the questions here.

Link to fillable form: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qfjDWrQgICBjad3om3bjmiixlmlmoRIRKemak6i-7l4/edit?usp=sharing>

Proposer contact information:

Describe Your Project

Where is the project located?

Which of the following actions are involved with your proposal:

New Trail

- New trail construction (not associated with reroute/relocation) ___ miles
- New trail construction to serve as a connector trail ___ miles
- Construction of one or more trailheads ___ trailheads
- Bridges of other major constructed features (e.g. raised walkways) ___ features
- Miles of proposal using active or old roadbeds ___ miles

Existing Trail

- Reroute/relocation of an existing trail ___ miles
- Maintenance and/or repair of an existing trail ___ miles
- Expansion or improvements at one or more existing trailheads ___ trailheads

Decommissioning/Obliteration

- Trail (not associated with a relocation) _____ miles
- Trail associated with relocation _____ miles
- Trailheads _____ trailheads

Who are the intended trail users?

- Hiker/pedestrian
- Mountain bicycle
- Adaptive Equipment Users
- ADA Accessible
- Multiple Use motorized
- Equestrian
- Road bicycle
- Nordic Skier
- Motorized (ATV, 4WD, etc)

Describe the proposed trail experience.

Questions about the larger context:

How does the proposed trail meet system goals?

How does the trail work with the landscape in the desired spot?



Does the trail create conflicts with other land uses? How can any impact be mitigated?

Does the trail provide access to a destination or landscape people want to visit? Describe.

Does the trail provide access to an activity for which access is lacking in the region? Describe.

Is the trail likely to increase or decrease user conflicts? Describe.

Does the trail increase equity for communities lacking access to green space and active recreation? Describe.

How will the trail design and planning process include stakeholders of various backgrounds and identities?

What would accessibility beyond meeting minimum ADA requirements look like on the trail?

Do the resources, including funding, exist to conduct necessary environmental reviews, design, and trail building? Do the resources exist to maintain it?

Are there sensitive areas that must be considered in building the trail (consider natural and cultural resources)? How can any impact be mitigated?

Are there known concerns or conflicts with other visitors or adjacent landowners? How can you work with them to offset or mitigate their concerns?

Is there broad support for the project from other stakeholders? What groups?

Are there likely to be any safety concerns associated with the proposal? Describe.

Describe your capacity to support project implementation and/or long-term maintenance and operation:

Checklist of Potential Relevant Information to Collect

(These items might not all exist or be relevant to your project, but use this as a guide for what info you might want or need to collect.)

Project and Agency Planning

- Project proposal
- Appropriate agency and partner contact information
- Recreation map (show existing trails, trailheads, and other recreation facilities along with proposed changes.)
- Local trail system plan
- Local park system, transportation system, or forest plan
- Any recreation or trail planning documents, directives, or goals applicable to area
- Previous NEPA documents
- Know heritage assets in area
- Known threatened or endangered species in area
- Watershed condition class
- Soils map
- Planned management activities in area
- Current issues with unmanaged recreation or illegal use
- Any visitor use, trail counts, or visitor satisfaction data

Financial

- Agency success for obtaining grant funding; projections for future
- Any existing priority system for agency requesting grants
- Agency budget/work plans as relevant to the project
- Cost estimates for project
- Deferred maintenance needs on existing trail system
- Percentage of current trails meeting standard
- Demonstrated track record of financial support from partner group

Partner and Community

- Demonstrated record of volunteer/partner programs in trail development, maintenance, and/or management
- Accurate and up-to-date formal partnership agreements
- Demonstration of community support
- Documentation of known opposition
- Knowledge of historical and cultural significance of area, including indigenous communities

Notes:



READY, SET, PLAN!

This guide made possible with support from:

