



LOCAL TRAIL CONNECTIONS PROGRAM



2012 Program Manual

Revised 12/29/2011

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I. PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

This program is intended to accelerate local trail connections to planned and existing state trails and other public facilities, not to create significant new recreation trails. Its primary purpose is to complete connections between where people live (e.g. residential areas within cities, entire communities) and significant public resources (e.g. historical areas, open space, parks and/or other trails).

Grants are awarded for the acquisition and development of connecting trails and for removal of barriers that impede full access to these facilities. Historically, priority has been given to projects that seek to develop residential connections to state and regional facilities and to link existing trail systems.

The Local Trail Connections Program depends on local communities and their local government representatives to provide inspiration, planning and commitment, as well as the local matching financial requirement, to make these trail projects a reality. Local governments complete the acquisition and/or projects and are reimbursed for a portion of the acquisition and/or project actually completed.

The program was first funded in 1993 and has funded 179 trail projects statewide to date.

Contact Information:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Trails
500 Lafayette Road, Box 52
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Andrew Korsberg, Trail Program Coordinator
andrew.korsberg@state.mn.us or (651) 259-5642

Traci Vibo, Grant Coordinator
traci.vibo@state.mn.us or (651) 259-5619

II. IMPORTANT ITEMS YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Funding available for FY 2013 is \$805,000 from “In Lieu Of” lottery proceeds and \$666,666 from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. This funding is divided between the Local Trail Connections Program and the Regional Trail Program.
- All applications must be received at the Department of Natural Resources St. Paul Central Office or postmarked no later than **Friday, March 30, 2012**.
- Grant awards will be announced in the **Summer of 2012**.
- The application is available on the internet at the following web address:
http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_local.html
- All Local units of government (typically cities, counties, and townships) are eligible to apply. Also user groups and/or trail organizations may apply, but only in coordination with a local unit of government.
- The maximum permissible request is \$150,000. The minimum is \$5,000.
- These grants are 75/25 “cash match” reimbursement grants. That means the grantee must complete the project and fully pay for it, produce documentation that shows actual expenditures and then they will receive seventy-five percent of what was spent up to their grant award.
 - Neither this funding source, nor the match can be used for in-house labor services and/or to meet existing payroll.
 - Only contract services, materials, and supplies are reimbursable.
- Other state funds or grants, such as Parks and Trails Legacy Grants, or Metropolitan Council Grants cannot match these grants. However, grants from the Federal Recreational Trail Program are an eligible match.
- All projects awarded through this grant round must be completed by **June 30, 2014** and immediately available for use to the general public.
- If land is purchased with these funds, it is required that a “Perpetual Easement for Recreational Trail Purposes” is attached to the deed. Also the property must be appraised by a state licensed appraiser and in accordance with DNR requirements. The requirements are located on the DNR appraisal management website at http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lands_minerals/appraisal_mgmt.html. The full appraisal does not need to be completed prior to applying for funds, but a reasonable market estimate may be used on the application. Please see land acquisition requirements section of this manual.
- If your project is selected the project will need to be evaluated for applicability of environmental review under Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4410. Mandatory EAW categories are described at Minnesota Rules, 4410.4300. Exemptions from environmental review are described at Minnesota Rules, 4410.4600 located at the following website at <http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/arule/4410/>. Verify if your project is or is not exempt.

- All facilities that are funded through this program also require a commitment from the applicant that the trail will be maintained for no less than twenty years.
- Each proposal must specifically and directly address each requirement and criterion to qualify and receive consideration. If one section is not addressed, the application will not be reviewed for consideration.
- All pages must be 8 1/2 X 11 inches ONLY and can be in color, as long as they are reproducible in black and white.

III. PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligible Projects

Eligible projects may include, but are not necessarily limited to the following examples:

- Land acquisition from willing sellers, where value is established by a licensed and certified appraiser, whose conclusions of value are certified by the State, and only if perpetual easement for recreation trail purposes is conveyed to the state. See the land acquisition requirements section of this manual for more information.
- Construction of trails on public or private lands where a twenty year easement for the purpose of the project can be obtained.
- Development of trail linkages near homes and workplaces.
- Development of permanent trailside improvements and trailhead facilities (e.g., drainage, crossings, stabilization, parking, signage, controls, open-sided shelters, water, and sanitary facilities).
- Provision of features that facilitate access and use of trails by persons with disabilities.
- Restoration of existing trail facilities, such as resurfacing, repair, or rehabilitation of trails or trailhead facilities.
- Contracted maintenance of existing recreational trails.
- Construction or restoration of trail bridges.

B. Eligible Reimbursement Costs

- Advertising costs solely for (1) Recruitment of personnel; (2) Solicitation of bids; and (3) Disposal of scrap materials.
- Capital and labor expenditures for facilities, equipment and other capital assets
- Materials and/or supplies.
- Freight transportation expenses.
- Professional services and Project administration costs provided that they do not exceed 20 percent of the total cost of the project.
- Land acquisitions (including permanent easements) whose value a licensed appraiser establishes and whose conclusions of value are certified by the state. See land acquisition requirements section of this manual.
- Any cost not defined as an eligible cost or not included in the approved Application shall not be paid from state funds committed to the project, unless the Department has provided written authorization.

C. Non-eligible Projects

Non-eligible projects include but are not limited to the following:

- Projects within state park boundaries, state recreational areas, on state trails, and elements of the Metropolitan Open Space System.
- Construction of trails within federally designated wilderness areas (with some exceptions).
- Construction of ordinary sidewalks.
- Planning projects that are preliminary to construction of any trail projects.
- Improvements on highways or other roadways, including but not limited to, lighting, striping, on-street routing, and shoulder work.

D. Non-eligible Reimbursement Costs

Including all costs not defined as eligible costs, but not limited to the following:

- Any expenditure that occurs outside of the operating dates established in the contract.
- Fund raising.
- Volunteer or Donated Labor.
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services.
- Insurance, except title insurance.
- Attorney fees.
- Loans, grants, subsidies to persons or entities for development.
- Bad debts, interest or contingency funds.
- Lobbyists or political contributions.
- Land appraisals.
- Condemnation of any kind, including costs associated with, or reimbursement for projects associated with condemnation.

IV. FUNDING PRIORITIES

Priority for trail project funding will be given to projects that provide significant connectivity. Considerations also include trail length, expected amount and type of use, and quality and attractiveness of natural and cultural resources.

Priorities

- Projects that provide connectivity, such as trails connecting where people live (e.g. residential areas within cities, entire communities) and significant public resources (e.g. historical areas, open space, parks and/or other trails).
- Projects that can be expected to have relatively high usage.
- Projects that provide for a unique and interesting connection to the outdoors, such as trails with scenic views, unique natural and cultural features, and wildlife/nature viewing.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Below is a list of evaluation criteria used in ranking trail projects for funding. All applicants will need to address the following in the project application.

- **Site and Project Quality**
 - Demonstrates ability to develop a significant recreational trail connection.
 - Overall quality of trail project.
 - Identifies which important destinations and attractions it will connect to.
 - Provides consideration to the needs of the intended trail user groups.
 - Explains aesthetic quality of the trail location.
 - Appropriateness of the intended or existing uses for the trail.
 - Gives detail of the existing development on the site or corridor.
- **Accessibility (ADA)**
 - Shows that considerations have been given to accessibility for people with disabilities.
 - Facilitates and/or improves access to existing trails or trail related facilities.
 - Provides information detailing how this project will be accessible and what documentation was used to reach this desired outcome.
 - If this section is not applicable, provides reasoning of why.
- **Public Need For and Benefit of Project**
 - Details why this project should be funded.
 - Addresses safety concerns with the project.
 - Shows urgency to move forward and related consequences.
 - Provides information on expected use.
 - Identifies relationship between proposed development/acquisition and emerging land uses and trends in the region.
 - Project benefits in relation to the project costs
- **Community Commitment to Trail Use**
 - Identifies steps that were taken to improve the conditions for trail uses by this proposed trail development.
 - Provides examples of safety education, enforcement, signing, fund raising, comprehensive barrier identification/removal, trail vehicle parking opportunities, etc.
 - Explains how local interests have contributed to the project to date.
 - Identifies how the trail will be integrated into the communities through which it passes.
- **Social and Environmental Impact**
 - *Impact on Adjoining Landowners in the Vicinity of the Project*
 - i. Demonstrates the compatibility of the proposed project with existing adjoining land uses.

- ii. Identifies adverse impacts that might be realized as a result of completing the project.
 - iii. Addresses how the project design attempts to mitigate adverse impacts.
 - iv. Shows how the project improves conditions for adjacent landowners.
 - v. Identifies mitigation steps taken to successfully overcome possible/probable objections to this project.
- *Attention to the Potential Environmental Impact of the Project and Efforts to Avoid or Mitigate Adverse Effects*
 - i. Identifies possible areas of consideration including but not limited to: noise, odors, dust, surface erosion, fish and wildlife populations, damage to wetlands or other ecologically sensitive natural resources, and historical/archeological sites.
 - ii. Shows what opportunities this project will provide to enhance the natural or other resource values in the immediate area.
 - iii. Addresses how this project will comply with the requirement that all landscaping or plantings that are done in the project area must be native to Minnesota and preferably of the local ecotype.
- **Project Readiness and Timeline**
 - Identifies the ability of the project to be completed within the time frame of funding availability.
 - Has secured enough funding to complete the project.
 - Has secured minimum 25 percent match funding or has exceeded the minimum match.
- **Connectivity**
 - Identifies if a project helps establish trail connectivity, either between trail systems or connecting communities to existing trails.
 - Completes needed connection to make trail system whole.
 - Connects to schools, historical areas, open space, parks, and/or other trails.

VI. HOW THIS PROGRAM WORKS WITH TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS

This program can provide a portion of the local match for Transportation Enhancement Projects that are awarded by Mn/DOT with Federal Highway Administration funding. However; this program provides reimbursement up to 75 percent, while Enhancements provide up to 80 percent. The grantee must ensure that there is never more than 100 percent reimbursed.

This program can reimburse engineering and design costs associated with these projects, which cannot be reimbursed under the Enhancement program. Engineering and design costs can only be reimbursed up to 75 percent and can only account for up to 20 percent of the total cost of the project. (i.e. for a \$100,000 project, the maximum a grantee may request reimbursement for engineering and design costs would be fifty percent of \$20,000).

Typically, only projects that are programmed for funding in the current or upcoming federal fiscal year are eligible to receive funding through the current years' solicitation.

VII. TRAIL DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

With regards to bicycle trails, applicants will be required to conform with recommendations contained within the “*Minnesota Bikeway Facility Design Manual*” developed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

- See <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/designmanual.html>

For other uses, applicants must follow the “*Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines*” developed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Trails and Waterways Division.

- The guidelines are available at the Minnesota’s Bookstore www.minnesotasbookstore.com or 1-800-657-3757 for \$19.95.

Applicants are also encouraged to follow recommendations made in “*Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access, Part II of II: Best Practices Design Guide*” produced by the Federal Highway Administration.

- See http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rt_pubs.htm

When developing natural surface trails, applicants are encouraged to follow principles outlined in “*Trail Solutions: IMBA’s Guide to Building Sweet Single Track*”.

- See http://www.imba.com/resources/trail_building/trail_solutions.html

Applicants are required to address the American with Disabilities Act under the Evaluation Criteria Section of the application. The *ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas*, and the *ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities* can be found on the Federal Access Board website. Successful applicants are required to design and construct their trail to meet ADA standards.

- See www.access-board.gov

VIII. LAND ACQUISITION REQUIREMENTS

When applying for a grant for land acquisition, the application requires a reasonable market value estimate. **A full appraisal is not required to apply for a grant.** If your application is approved to purchase land, a full appraisal will then be required and must meet DNR and state standards.

Prior to contacting and hiring a licensed appraiser to conduct an appraisal of the property, you **must** contact the DNR Division of Lands and Minerals, Cindy Nathan, Real Estate Specialist at 218-855-5126, or cindy.nathan@dnr.state.mn.us to make sure your appraisal will be properly completed to meet DNR and state appraisal standards and the DNR **must** be named as an intended user of the report. A State Certified General Real Property Appraiser approved to appraise property to state standards must conduct the appraisal. DNR Lands and Minerals can provide you a list of qualified appraisers. The requirements are also located on the DNR appraisal management website at http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lands_minerals/appraisal_mgmt.html.

Once you have completed a land appraisal by a recommended appraiser, it must be submitted to the DNR for appraisal review and approval **before** the land can be purchased with grant funds. The costs associated with a full land appraisal are **not** eligible for reimbursement through the grant program. Therefore, it is important that the land appraisal be done correctly and with a qualified appraiser, to avoid the additional charges that would result if the appraisal was not certified by the DNR. The DNR review of land appraisals are done at no cost to the grantee. Once the DNR has approved the appraisal, grant funds can be reimbursed towards the cost of the land purchased.

Property acquired in a trail acquisition project requires a perpetual easement for recreational purposes.

IX. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Before you begin:

- Carefully review the entire application and contact DNR staff if there are ANY questions.
- Make sure you carefully review the Project Eligibility section of this manual, and understand the different requirements and eligible expenditures.
- DO NOT modify the original application format. Complete the application by filling in the boxes next to the application questions. The application must be completed electronically. **Handwritten applications will not be accepted.**
- Complete the Required Certifications form, and include as attachment “A” with original signatures.
- Make sure to provide all required attachments as outlined in the Attachment Checklist.
- Please do not provide a cover sheet for your application.
- DO NOT SPIRAL BIND OR STAPLE the submitted application packet. Paperclip, rubber band or binder clip the application together, because the application will need to be copied.
- All pages and attached maps must be **8 1/2 X 11 inches ONLY** and can be in color, as long as they are reproducible in black and white.

B. Completing the Application:

General Contact Information Section

- Numbers 1-21 should be self-explanatory. If a club or trail association is completing an application in participation with a local unit of government, the club or association must complete the Trail Organization Project Partner section.

General Project Information Section

22. Please give the project a name if it does not already have one.
23. Total Project Amount refers to the expected total cost of the project.
24. Amount Requested is the amount you are asking for.
25. Local Match refers to any local (city, county, private) funds that will be expended in conjunction with the proposed project. This amount does not include other grant funds.
26. The source of local match refers to where the funds are coming from. Are they City funds, County, locally raised, private donations, etc.
27. Please indicate whether or not these funds have been budgeted for this project.
28. Please answer yes or no. If yes, please give amount.

29. Other non-local funds include money raised through other grant programs or foundations. Please indicate the source.
30. Please indicate whether or not these funds have been budgeted for this project.
31. If this project is scheduled to receive Federal SAFETEA-LU Transportation Enhancement funds, then your local MnDOT district should have notified you in some manner. Please attach this notification as Attachment “G” and fill in the year in which you are scheduled to receive the funding.
32. If the proposed project is to develop new trail, please indicate here, either in feet or miles, how long the new development will be.
33. Place a check next to the uses your project will accommodate. Make a distinction between the primary and secondary recreational uses. For example, if a trail is technically authorized for both snowmobiling and cross-country skiing but is groomed and used for snowmobiling, snowmobiling is the primary use and cross-country skiing is a secondary use. Do not place a check next to a use if the facility will “maybe” accommodate them. Only defined uses should be checked.

Qualifying Requirements Section – The application must address each bullet under each section, but the applicant should feel free to elaborate further and/or provide additional information if applicable. Please keep answers as brief and concise as possible.

34. Project Description
 - Provide a description sufficient enough to understand the project.
 - Indicate prominently whether this is primarily a maintenance request, an enhancement to an existing facility, new development, acquisition, etc.
 - Also include how this project will be immediately available for use by the general public.
35. Costs Associated with the Project
 - Provide a list with estimated costs to provide justification for the total project cost and grant request.
 - Include materials, landscaping, design/ engineering services, contractor services, signage, etc.
 - Explain current status of matching funds that will be used for this project.
 - Provide a five year operations and maintenance cost estimate, and the projected source of these funds.
36. Project Timeline
 - Show a detailed timeline that highlights the chain of events that will lead to a fully developed facility.
 - Include events such as when acquisition will occur (if applicable), design will begin/start, engineering, construction, landscaping, etc.
37. Project Readiness

- Delineate the current project status and detail major activities that must still be accomplished.
 - At a minimum, please reference land acquisition requirements, status of detail design, and relevant permits and approvals that have/have not been obtained for the project.
38. Year Round Trail Use
- Will this project provide year round trail use?
 - If it is planned to provide year round use, outline which users will benefit and how the facility will be maintained for those uses.

Evaluation Criteria Section

39. Site and Project Quality
- What consideration has been given to the needs of the intended trail user group(s) that was identified under the General Project Information Section?
 - Are the intended or existing uses for the trail appropriate?
 - Detail existing development (if any) on site or within the corridor.
 - Describe what attractive features exist on the site or within view.
40. Accessibility
- All facilities that are developed, or portions thereof, using these funds must be accessible for persons with disabilities.
 - What considerations have been given to accessibility for people with disabilities?
 - How does this project facilitate and/or improve access to existing trails or trail related facilities?
 - Provide information detailing how this project will be accessible and what documentation was used to reach this desired outcome.
 - If this section is not applicable, provide reasoning on why.
 - American with Disabilities Act (ADA) has developed guidelines for outdoor developed areas, buildings and facilities. Whether the project is to develop new trail or rehabilitate an existing trail, these guidelines need to be taken into consideration when answering this question. The Federal Access Board has these guidelines available at www.access-board.gov.
41. Public Need For and Benefit of Project for Specified Users
- Why should this project be funded?
 - What safety concerns will be addressed with this project?
 - Is there urgency to move ahead with this project now, and what consequences are looming?
 - Justify all trail uses indicated from question 34.
42. Community Commitment to Trail Use

- Identify steps that your community has taken to improve the conditions for trail users accommodated by this proposed trail development or enhancement project.
 - Examples would include safety education, enforcement, signing, fund raising, comprehensive barrier identification/removal, trail vehicle parking opportunities, etc.
43. Impact on Adjoining Landowners in the Vicinity of the Project
- Demonstrate the compatibility of the proposed project with existing adjoining land uses.
 - Identify adverse impacts that might be realized as a result of completing the project.
 - How might the project improve conditions for adjacent landowners?
 - Identify mitigation steps that will be taken to successfully overcome possible/probable objections to this project.
44. Attention to the Potential Environmental Impact of the Project and Efforts to Avoid or Mitigate Adverse Effects
- Possible areas of consideration include but are not limited to: noise, odors, dust, surface erosion, fish and wildlife populations, damage to wetlands or other ecologically sensitive natural resources, and historical/archeological sites.
 - What opportunity would this project provide to enhance the natural or other resource values in the immediate area?
 - It is a condition of accepting the grant that all landscaping or plantings that are done in the project area must be native to Minnesota and preferably of the local ecotype. Address this issue and layout how this project will comply with this requirement.
45. Connectivity
- Please describe the connection that your project is making.
 - For example, explain how your trail may connect where people live (e.g. residential areas within cities, entire communities) with significant public resources (e.g. historical areas, open space, parks and/or other trails).

Attachment Checklist Section – Attachments A through E are mandatory and must be provided in order for the application to be considered valid. Attachment F is project specific and is not needed if it does not relate to your project.

A – Required Certifications – This form is provided for you. The first signature block is to be signed by the proper authority for the grant applicant. The specific manager of the facility that is being rehabilitated, enhanced or developed should sign the second section. If the proposed project will utilize public land that is not under the jurisdiction of the

applicant, the proper authority must sign the final section in order to assure that they are both aware and supportive of the project.

B – Resolution Supporting Application – The application must be accompanied by either a copy of a resolution, council minutes or some other official documentation that demonstrates that the local unit of government supports the proposed project and the consequent application. The resolution does not need to have a specific form or specific language, as long as it satisfies what was outlined in the previous sentence. A sample resolution has been included in Appendix A. The sample resolution is a combination type resolution example. It shows support of the grant application (as required above), and if the project is awarded, it includes language to support accepting the grant award, names the fiscal agent, and states that the facility, trail or equipment will be maintained for no less than twenty years. This combination resolution helps eliminate the need for an additional resolution for this project in the future, if awarded a grant.

C – Letters of Support – Letters of support are an important factor for reviewers when selecting projects. There should be an effort to solicit letters from specific groups that will derive a direct benefit from the project. The applicant is also welcome to provide letters of support from all other sources as well. There is no limit on how many letters may be submitted, and diversity is favorable.

D – Project Location Map – It is important for reviewers to have an idea of where in the state and/or your region the project being proposed is located. This map is to be 8 ½ X 11 in size ONLY, may be in color but must be easily reproducible in black and white, and able to show where the project is generally located within the state or region. So typically the scale of this map is very large.

E – Site Level Map – It is also important for the reviewers to be able to see where the project is located within the context of a city, county, park, etc. This map is to also be 8 ½ X 11 in size ONLY, may be in color but must be easily reproducible in black and white, and should be effective at showing how the project fits within its specific context. The scale of this map is usually small.

F – Transportation Enhancement Award Letter – If the proposed project is also receiving funding from the SAFETEA-LU Enhancements program; typically the recipients are notified by the MnDOT district with some sort of correspondence. Some districts do NOT typically provide the recipients with any formal award letter. In this instance, please ask the contact person from MnDOT to provide you a letter and include as attachment G.

If you have any questions or concerns about this application or the process, please contact Andrew Korsberg at (651) 259-5642 or Traci Vibo at (651) 259-5619.

Send 6 copies of the application to the following address:

Traci Vibo, Grant Coordinator
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Trails
500 Lafayette Road, Box 52
St. Paul, MN 55155-4052

X. SAMPLE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Sunnybrook supports the grant application made to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for the Local Trail Connections Program. The application is to construct five (5) miles of paved trail for the Sunnybrook Recreational Trail System. The trail system is located within 30 acres of Sunnybrook Park, and

WHEREAS, the City of Sunnybrook recognizes the twenty-five (25) percent match requirement for the Local Trail Connections Program, and has secured the matching funds

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, if the City of Sunnybrook is awarded a grant by the Minnesota Department of Natural resources, the City of Sunnybrook agrees to accept the grant award, and may enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota for the above referenced project. The City of Sunnybrook will comply with all applicable laws, environmental requirements and regulations as stated in the grant agreement, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City Council of the City of Sunnybrook names the fiscal agent for the City of Sunnybrook for this project as:

Jane Doe
Director of Finance/Treasurer
City of Sunnybrook
1111 Happy Trails Avenue
Sunnybrook, MN 59985

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Sunnybrook hereby assures the Sunnybrook Recreational Trail will be maintained for a period of no less than 20 years.

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNNYBROOK THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2012.

JOHN DOE - MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARY DOE - CITY CLERK

XI. MINNESOTA STATUTE 85.019

85.019 LOCAL RECREATION GRANTS.

Subdivision 1. **Definition.** For purposes of this section, "unit of government" means a county, statutory or home rule charter city, or town.

Subd. 2. **Parks and outdoor recreation areas.** (a) The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government for up to 50 percent of the costs of acquisition and betterment of public land and improvements needed for parks and other outdoor recreation areas and facilities, including costs to create veterans memorial gardens and parks.

(b) For units of government outside the metropolitan area as defined in section 473.121, subdivision 2, the local match required for a grant to acquire or better a regional park or regional outdoor recreation area is \$2 of nonstate money for each \$3 of state money.

Subd. 3. [Repealed by amendment, 1995 c 220 s 68]

Subd. 4. [Repealed by amendment, 1995 c 220 s 68]

Subd. 4a. **Natural and scenic areas.** The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government and school districts for the acquisition and betterment of natural and scenic areas such as blufflands, prairies, shorelands, wetlands, and wooded areas. A grant may not exceed 50 percent or \$500,000, whichever is less, of the costs of acquisition and betterment of land acquired under this subdivision. The commissioner shall make payment to a unit of government upon receiving documentation of reimbursable expenditures.

Subd. 4b. **Regional trails.** The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government for acquisition and betterment of public land and improvements needed for trails outside the metropolitan area deemed to be of regional significance according to criteria published by the commissioner. Recipients must provide a nonstate cash match of at least 25 percent of total eligible project costs. If land used for the trails is not in full public ownership, then the recipients must prove it is dedicated to the purposes of the grants for at least 20 years. The commissioner shall make payment to a unit of government upon receiving documentation of reimbursable expenditures. A unit of government may enter into a lease or management agreement for the trail, subject to section 16A.695.

Subd. 4c. **Trail connections.** The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government for acquisition and betterment of public land and improvements needed for trails that connect communities, trails, and parks and thereby increase the effective length of trail experiences. Recipients must provide a nonstate cash match of at least 25 percent of total eligible project costs. If land used for the trails is not in full public ownership, then the recipients must prove it is dedicated to the purposes of the grants for at least 20 years. The commissioner shall make payment to a unit of government upon receiving documentation of reimbursable expenditures. A unit of government may enter into a lease or management agreement for the trail, subject to section 16A.695.

Subd. 5. **Powers; rules.** The commissioner has all powers necessary and convenient to implement this section, including the authority to adopt rules for the program under chapter 14.

XII. OTHER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A. Grants and Public Information

Under [MN Statute 13.599](#), responses to a request for proposal are nonpublic until the application deadline is reached. At that time, the name and address of the grantee, and the amount requested becomes public.

After the application evaluation process is completed, data (except trade secret data) becomes public. Data created during the evaluation process is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee(s) is completed.

[MN Statute 13.44](#) categorizes estimated or appraised value of real property prior to purchase and sale as confidential data on individuals or protected nonpublic data. See also Minnesota Government Data Privacy Act for more information. This information, along with corresponding budget information, will be redacted from the applications before making them public.

B. Reporting Requirements

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to monitor progress on state grants by requiring grantees to submit written progress reports at least annually until all grant funds have been expended and all of the terms in the grant agreement have been met. A progress report form will be provided by program staff. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless program staff have given the grantee a written extension.

C. Monitoring Requirements

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to conduct at least one monitoring visit per grant period on all state grants of over \$50,000 and to conduct at least annual monitoring visits on grants of over \$250,000.