



Off-Highway Vehicle Grant-in-Aid Program

Program Manual

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Minnesota's Grant-in-Aid System

Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) have captured the interest of Minnesotans for a variety of reasons. For some, they represent an opportunity to connect with the outdoors and experience the landscape from different perspective. Others take a more utilitarian approach by using their OHVs for work or to access opportunities for other outdoor recreation such as hunting or fishing. No matter the motivation, all OHV users benefit from trails, routes, and other riding opportunities that are safe, sustainable and enjoyable.

The Grant-in-Aid (GIA) program allocates funding from OHV registration fees, as well as a portion of proceeds from the gas tax, to develop and maintain OHV trails that meet these standards. OHV clubs, in partnership with local government sponsors, provide a grant match and work directly on approved trail development and maintenance projects funded through the OHV GIA Program.

Though GIA trails are just one type among multiple kinds of OHV trails in Minnesota, they play a pronounced role in Minnesota's overall system by acting as the backbone of local trail networks and making connections between blocks of public land.

OHV Planning

Planning is the foundation of development and management of great trails. Before constructing new trails or changing management of existing trails, careful consideration of the overall vision for OHV use, management objectives, and environmental factors (human, natural and otherwise) leads to better outcomes.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) OHV planning as it relates to GIA takes several forms:

- **Statewide:** The All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV), Off-Highway Motorcycle (OHM) and Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Strategic Master Plans provide guidance for OHV development and management through an analysis of factors like trends in OHV recreation, gaps in the current system, environmental constraints, and insights from stakeholders. These plans help to guide GIA investment in pursuit of the broader vision and objectives for OHV recreation in Minnesota.
- **State Forests:** State Forests support a range of recreational, resource management, and commercial activities. OHV planning focuses on providing quality riding opportunities within the context of other uses, rules governing motorized use forest-wide, and the surrounding human and natural environments. GIA trails often connect to State Forest OHV trails, and in many State Forests, the DNR and local clubs work side by side to maintain trails.
- **GIA Pre-Application Planning:** Much of the work that goes into new GIA trails happens before an application is submitted. Pre-application planning includes developing a vision for a new trail or ensuring that it furthers the vision of the existing GIA network, developing Trail Management Objectives (TMOs), compiling information on the natural and human environments, and assessing route alternatives.

The DNR planning process emphasizes stakeholder input and makes every effort to incorporate up-to-date information on developments in outdoor recreation and resource management.

Early planning prevents unforeseen complications and saves time and money in the long run; therefore, the planning process extends from trail design and construction, all the way to maintenance.

The OHV Trails Assistance Manual

This manual describes the roles and responsibilities of GIA program administrators and participants as well as policies, procedures and guidelines that keep the program running smoothly. All parties must comply with the requirements in this manual and any deviations require written permission from the DNR.

Over time, the DNR may update GIA policies, procedures, and guidelines. The DNR is committed to communicating changes to the GIA program as clearly and expeditiously as possible and engaging with stakeholders as program changes are developed.

Roles and Responsibilities

A shared understanding of roles and responsibilities by program participants and administrators is crucial to the program's success. The following is an overview of the roles of the three primary participants in the GIA program.

Club

Clubs are the driving force behind GIA development projects and subsequent GIA funded maintenance. Roles and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Serve as a primary contact for DNR staff for trail development and maintenance. This is particularly important during the Project Initiation phase when clubs will work with DNR staff to refine the basic elements of the GIA proposal (more on this later in the manual).
- Secure a local government sponsor. The DNR recommends that sponsors and clubs enter into an agreement that enumerates the responsibilities of each party.
- Adhere to GIA program guidelines found in this manual.

Sponsor

The OHV GIA program requires a supportive local government unit to act as the sponsor for each trail. It is ultimately the responsibility of the sponsor to ensure that trail development and maintenance activities meet program requirements. Roles and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Pass a resolution¹ through the entity's governing body codifying the commitment to serve as a sponsor. Unless specified, the default term for a sponsorship resolution will be one year, however, the agreement may be valid for up to five years if specified in the resolution.
- Enter into an agreement with the State to act as the fiscal agent for grant agreements.
- Work with DNR staff to verify that the trail meets GIA program requirements.
- Ensure all permissions for use of the property underlying the trail are in place and necessary permits have been secured and properly documented.
- Ensure that trails are ready and open for use during the period specified in the funding application.

¹ An example of a sponsor resolution can be found in Appendix 1.

In some cases, a local government can serve as both the club and the sponsor on a project. Consult with a staff member from DNR Parks & Trails (PAT) to assess options and identify the best solution.

State (DNR PAT Division)

Minnesota DNR administers the GIA program under the authority granted by the Minnesota Legislature. The DNR is responsible for upholding the fiscal integrity of the program, reviewing and approving maintenance plans and new trail proposals, and maximizing the impact of public resources allocated through GIA. Roles and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Provide clubs and sponsors with assistance and guidance on planning, development, and maintenance of GIA trails.
- Respond to applications and, if the project meets program requirements and funds are available, enter into a grant agreement with the sponsor.
- Disburse funds for development and maintenance as appropriate.
- Conduct grant reviews and, if needed, assist clubs and sponsors with grant compliance and implementation of best practices.

GIA Project Priorities

GIA program priorities are ranked as follows:

- 1) Maintenance of existing approved trails and trail systems
- 2) Improvements to existing trails and facilities
- 3) Development of substantially new trails, trail systems, riding areas or support facilities for OHV trail users
- 4) Addition of new visitor facilities (picnic tables, shelters, etc)

The GIA 7-Step Process

The steps outlined in this section follow a typical proposal for a new trail from its inception to its construction. The seven steps² are as follows. Each step is described in detail below.

- Step 0: Project Initiation
- Step 1: DNR Parks & Trails Review
- Step 2: DNR Interdisciplinary Review
- Step 3: DNR Regional Review
- Step 4: Public Review & Environmental Review
- Step 5: Project Approval and Release of Funds
- Step 6: Project Permitting & Construction
- Step 7: Maintenance

Step 0: Project Initiation

Much of the critical work that goes into a successful GIA project happens before an application for a new trail is even submitted to the DNR. During Project Initiation, clubs and sponsors will work with the DNR and other stakeholders to develop a vision, refine project fundamentals, and work through challenges.

In practice, Project Initiation is a time and labor-intensive process. The fundamental elements of a project are often interrelated and may evolve as more information is gathered. This is expected and is the reason so much emphasis is placed on Project Initiation.

Clubs Approach DNR Parks & Trails Staff

After a club has identified a potential new riding opportunity, a representative from the club should reach out to local DNR PAT staff (referred to as Area Staff) to discuss the idea. Staff will provide initial feedback, relevant history of the trail system, and help to identify potential issues and information gaps. DNR staff will provide the club and sponsor with resources and guidance as needed throughout the GIA process.

Identify Fundamental Elements of Project Proposal

At the initial meeting, DNR staff and the club will discuss the fundamental elements of the proposal. Clubs should, to the best of their ability, come to the initial meeting prepared to discuss the following topics:

- What would a future rider experience while on the trail? How difficult is the trail? What challenges or obstacles would be on the trail? What opportunities would this trail create? Does it fill a need that other local trails are not?
- Who is the target user? How experienced are they? Are they riding long distances or seeking a

² A quick reference graphic showing the 7-Step process can be found in Appendix 2.

technical challenge?

- How much and what kind of maintenance is anticipated? Who would do the work? Are there any areas or segments that may require intensive or specialized maintenance?
- How is the surrounding land managed? Does the proposed OHV use align with management goals? Will private lands need to be considered?
- What route might the trail take? Are there multiple routes that would accomplish the same goals? Would it connect to other OHV trails? Does the route currently allow OHV traffic? Would substantially new trail need to be constructed, or would the trail utilize an existing footprint?
- How would the terrain along the route best be described? Is it flat, rolling, or steep? A mix? Are there segments that are low and wet?
- Who owns or manages the land underlying the trail route? Are they willing and able to enter into an agreement to host the trail?
- What is known about natural resources along the route? What additional information needs to be gathered? Would the route require wetland crossings, stream crossings, or tree clearing?

Many of these topics have direct correlation to development of trail management objectives³ and the new project application that clubs and sponsors must complete. If the club cannot answer all these questions when first approaching the DNR, PAT staff can assist in answering questions to make your application as complete as possible. Gathering as much information as possible will make the review process more efficient.

Club Identifies Sponsor

Clubs are often in communication with potential sponsors from a project's inception. If this isn't the case, clubs should secure a commitment from a local government sponsor as soon as possible. Prior to submitting a GIA application, the sponsor's governing body must pass a resolution committing to serve as the sponsor for the trail.

The DNR strongly urges sponsors to enter into agreements with their clubs to define clear roles and responsibilities for both parties. Clubs that receive GIA funds are also required to register with the State as a nonprofit organization.

Prepare Landowner Agreements

The club and sponsor are responsible for securing permissions for all lands and roads that the trail will cross.

- Private Lands: Private landowners may grant permission for trail crossings verbally or in writing. Verbal permission must be documented by recording and submitting the landowner's name, the date, and the time that permission was granted. Written permission can be documented in the form of a letter or agreement signed by the landowner.

³ Worksheet 2 – TMO Development will help clubs develop trail management objectives, which can help outline the vision for a trail and are an important part of trail management. Resources from the Minnesota DNR and the US Forest Service are also available to help develop these ideas and can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

- **Non-DNR Public Lands:** Managers typically require a permit to cross the lands in their jurisdiction. Examples include National Forests, county forests, municipal lands, and local roads.
- **DNR-Managed Public Lands:** DNR approval to cross state lands is granted by the execution of the GIA grant. A no-cost GIA permit will be issued to the club and sponsor formalizing permission to have the trail on DNR-managed land. Area Staff can facilitate early conversations with other DNR divisions.
- **Public Roads:** Permission must be granted from the local road authority in order to utilize the road as part of a trail, even if the road already allows OHV use. Different procedures may be required by different road authorities to allow road use and sponsors may be a valuable resource in navigating this process.

In special circumstances, fee title land purchases, easements, or leases may be required. For more information, check with DNR staff. It is highly recommended that formal permission is granted before the new project application is submitted. Permission must be granted before a GIA proposal goes out for public review (Step 4).

Trail Design and Layout

Sustainable OHV trails are designed to match the intended use, difficulty, and physical environment in the project area. Factors like slope, soil type, soil moisture and vegetation must be accounted for. DNR staff will provide trail design guidance⁴ as needed.

Draft and Submit Project Proposal

Once the fundamental elements of the project have been established, the club will submit application materials to the project sponsor. Upon the sponsor's approval, they will submit a final application⁵ to the Area Supervisor.

New project applications must be complete and detailed before submission. The required information below directly correlates to the new project application.

- **Sponsor Information:** Contact information for the project sponsor and the primary employee contact for this project
- **Trail Location and Land Ownership:** Physical location and land use permissions
- **Trail Surface Type:** Current and proposed uses as well as the type of trail corridor
- **Project Description:** A description of the trail including vision, Trail Management Objectives, natural resource impacts and avoidance measures
- **Projected Costs:** Estimated costs for administration, acquisition & development, facilities, liability insurance, maintenance, new trail construction, trail system maps, toilets, and winter maintenance (if applicable)

⁴ Trail design resources, as well as resources for statewide user advocacy groups who may be of assistance, can be found in Appendices 5 and 6.

⁵ An example of Form 2 – New Project Application, as well as a guide for use of other forms and a GIA program timeline, can be found in Appendices 7-9.

- **Supplemental Information:** Maps, sponsor resolution, worksheets, etc

DNR Assistance

Each DNR region has OHV Acquisition & Development Specialists and Area Staff⁶ to assist clubs and local government sponsors. These specialists can assist with creating maps⁷, connecting the club to potential sponsors and landowners, guiding clubs and sponsors through securing landowner permissions, providing trail layout and design recommendations, and answering technical questions. The DNR can also offer options and resources to assist with trail maintenance and rehabilitation⁸.

Step 1: DNR Parks & Trails Review

Upon receiving the application from the sponsor, PAT staff will review the application and request additional information if needed.

Step 2: DNR Interdisciplinary Review

PAT staff will provide a copy of the application to staff from the Fish and Wildlife, Forestry, Ecological and Water Resources, Enforcement, and Lands and Minerals divisions for comment. The purpose of interdisciplinary review is to solicit feedback from a variety of disciplines. At this point, comments may need to be addressed or the project application modified to accommodate unforeseen considerations before proceeding.

Step 3: DNR Regional Review

PAT staff will review the proposal with the Regional Management Team (RMT), which is comprised of managers and leaders from across divisions. At this point, comments may need to be addressed or the project application modified to accommodate unforeseen considerations before proceeding.

Step 4: Environmental Review, Tribal Notification, and Public Review

Environmental Review

To begin this process, PAT staff will submit an overview of the project to the Environmental Review unit in the DNR Ecological and Water Resources (EWR) Division. Their staff will determine whether formal Environmental Review⁹ in the form of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required. This is called an Environmental Review Needs Determination.

Projects do not always require an EAW, however if it is required, this process can take up to 12 months to complete. The most common project characteristics that trigger EAW are:

- **Length:** the project proposes construction of 25 miles or more of new trail over forested or

⁶ Contact information for these staff can be found in Appendix 10.

⁷ The DNR can also provide resources to help clubs learn how to produce their own maps. See more resources in Appendices 11 and 12.

⁸ The DNR employs a team of equipment operators that only work on off-highway vehicle trails. This team can be requested to execute or assist in execution of projects on GIA trails. More information can be found in Appendix 13.

⁹ An overview of Minnesota's formal Environmental Review process and policies can be found in Appendix 14.

vegetated land

- **New Motorized Use:** the project proposes OHV use where it currently isn't allowed on 25 miles or more of existing trail
- **Wetlands:** trail construction resulting in public waters wetland impacts in excess of 1 acre

The need for an EAW should not discourage a club and sponsor from completing a trail project. Clubs should also not try to avoid an EAW by adjusting the length of their trail or routing it through an unfavorable area. Doing so may make future trail development or maintenance difficult. Work with DNR staff to identify the appropriate action to take.

If formal Environmental Review is not required, the project can move on to Step 5 once the public comment requirement is satisfied.

Tribal Notification

Advanced notification of new GIA projects may be beneficial to some Tribal governments. Internally, PAT staff coordinate with the Tribal Relations Team to identify projects that may be of interest to local Tribes and consult with the appropriate Tribal governments.

Public Review

Either the DNR or the sponsor must provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the project. If the DNR is managing the public review, the review will consist of a 30-day comment period announced through a news release. Comments will be received by local PAT staff who will then organize the comments and work with the club and sponsor to address any concerns raised. No public meetings or hearings are required for GIA projects, but a club or sponsor may elect to complete one if they feel it would benefit the project.

If they so choose, sponsors may complete Public Review prior to Step 4. Sponsors should discuss program requirements with DNR staff prior to soliciting comments.

Step 5: Project Approval and Release of Funds

If the sponsor completed the public review, results may already have been reviewed by RMT and therefore this step may be optional. If the DNR completed the public review, the project and all comments will be reviewed one last time by the RMT (similar to Step 3). Upon final approval, grant agreements will be provided to the sponsor for signature and execution. Funds will then be made available for distribution and construction may commence.

Step 6: Project Permitting and Construction

All federal, state, and local permits must be in place prior to construction. It is the sponsor's responsibility to ensure permitting requirements are met. The DNR recommends coordinating with permitting agencies well in advance of construction to avoid delays.

Permits and approvals¹⁰ that are commonly required include:

¹⁰ More information on each of these permits and best practices can be found in Appendix 15.

- **Wetlands and Federal Public Waterways:** Federal US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) permits for wetlands and impacts to public waterways; State wetland permits required by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). These permits share an application and are reviewed simultaneously.
- **State Public Waters:** Minnesota DNR Public Waters Work Permits to construct crossings over public waters
- **Minnesota Stormwater:** Water quality permits required by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCS) Storm Water Management Program to move earth materials or install culvert crossings.
- **Non-DNR Land Use:** Permits to cross lands not managed by the DNR. Road right-of-way limited use permission from the appropriate state, county or local road authority.

Permit documentation, including a record of emails, phone calls, and other communications, must be part of the sponsor’s records. DNR PAT staff are available to provide guidance on permitting processes. Ultimately, the sponsor and club are responsible for securing permits.

Additionally, grantees must follow Operational Order 113¹¹, which establishes policy and procedures to prevent or limit the introduction, establishment, and spread of invasive species and implement site-level management to limit the spread and impact of invasive species.

Step 7: Maintenance

After the initial construction is complete, the club and sponsor will apply for maintenance grants annually. Established trails also need to apply for maintenance grants¹² annually.

Applications must be submitted to Area Staff by **November 30** or as stated on the [DNR OHV GIA web page](#). DNR staff will then determine the appropriate allocation for your trail and provide grant agreements to the sponsor for signature no later than **March 31**. Reimbursable maintenance activities may begin once the grant is approved, however, requests for reimbursement cannot be submitted until a final copy of the grant agreement is signed and executed by both the sponsor and Area Staff. This should happen no later than April 30.

Maintenance grants are valid from the time they are executed until the close of the following fiscal year. The DNR operates on a fiscal year of July 1 - June 30, so funding awarded in the spring can be spent through the following summer. For example, grants awarded in the spring of 2023 are valid until June 30, 2024 as long as funds remain in the grant. If there are funds remaining in the grant at the end of the following fiscal year, those funds will be forfeited.

¹¹ More information about invasive species best practices can be found in Appendix 16.

¹² Form 1 – Maintenance Application will be used to communicate work expected to be performed and anticipated costs for next season. An example of this application can be found in Appendix 17.

Accounting and Auditing

The sponsor, acting as the fiscal agent for their grants, is responsible for ensuring that relevant financial information is recorded accurately and maintained in accordance with DNR policy and other applicable rules and regulations. This includes:

- Maintaining records, documents, and other evidence relevant to the grant
- Using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles¹³ (GAAP)
- Retaining records for six years after each grant ends

The State, its representative, or the legislative auditor have the right to examine this evidence at all reasonable times during the record retention period. Records must be sufficient, as defined in this manual, to reflect costs incurred and volunteer donation of time, equipment, and/or materials in execution of this grant.

Program Reviews

DNR PAT staff may conduct random grant reviews at any time. This review may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Assessment of routine trail monitoring or maintenance activities
- Complaint management and follow-up

The DNR will work with the sponsor and club to identify solutions to issues that may arise during an audit. The sponsor is responsible for implementation of any stipulations or mutually agreed-upon changes that result from this process.

Fiscal Reviews

DNR PAT staff may conduct random fiscal reviews assessing club and sponsor performance at any time. This review may include, but is not limited to the following areas:

- Contract administration
- Record keeping
- Expenditures

The sponsor is responsible for implementation of any stipulations or agreed-upon changes that result from this process.

¹³ GAAP Resources can be found in Appendix 18.

Cost Sharing

The GIA program operates on a cost-sharing basis. This means that clubs and sponsors must provide a match to the funding provided by the state, whether that is in cash or in-kind labor. The state reimburses specific activities, detailed later in this manual, at 65%, 75%, or 90%.

Therefore, the club and sponsor must provide a 35%, 25%, or 10% match for those activities. For example, if the total cost of a project is estimated to be \$10,000 and only involves activities reimbursed at 90%, the state will fund up to \$9,000 of that project and the club and sponsor must provide either \$1,000 in funding or \$1,000 worth of labor. In practice, most clubs utilize both options.

Some clubs find the cost sharing to be difficult, especially for activities reimbursed at the 65% and 75% rates. The DNR can provide resources to aid in solutions for this dilemma¹⁴.

Reimbursement Process

In order to be reimbursed for any goods purchased, any services paid for, or any labor performed, clubs and sponsors must submit a request for reimbursement (RFR). The club and sponsor must submit this form, at minimum, every 90 days after purchasing of goods and services begins, or after eligible expenses reach \$5,000, whichever comes first. For purchases of goods and services exceeding \$100, the sponsor must submit original receipts. Reimbursement can be requested for all eligible expenses incurred up to the amount of the grant award.

Expenses eligible for reimbursement and their corresponding reimbursement rates are detailed in the following sections.

While purchasing goods and services, it is important to note that any form of rewards programs, like store rewards accounts or funds acquired back via rebate, are not allowed and cannot be used when servicing GIA trails.

Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses are grouped into categories that are reimbursed at a specific rate. These categories are utilized when requesting reimbursement for expenses incurred in the pursuit of the following activities.

Administration

This category includes, but is not limited to bookkeeping, preparation of GIA applications and forms, travel to and from project area, travel to purchase or transport materials and supplies, soliciting bids for contractors or equipment rental, and attendance of necessary meetings. This category also includes purchase of postage and office supplies, such as paper, ink and copying charges, as well as telephone charges. Additionally, costs associated with preparing, printing, and/or duplicating maps required by the DNR for GIA forms and applications, obtaining permits, or gaining landowner permission fall under this category.

No more than four (4) individuals may receive reimbursement for a trail committee meeting, and no more than two (2) individuals may be reimbursed for attending a governmental meeting. Rental of office space

¹⁴ Resources for grants and other funding opportunities can be found in Appendix 19.

or meeting rooms is not an allowable or reimbursable expense.

Administrative costs are reimbursed up to 65%, however this activity may not exceed 15% of the total grant amount, unless agreed upon in advanced by the DNR, club, and sponsor.

Acquisition & Development

This category includes, but is not limited to determining trail alignments, checking land ownership records, contacting landowners, lease fees, and payment for easement or land acquisition.

Landowner permissions for most GIA projects are secured via a permit from a public land manager, written permission from a private landowner, or documented verbal permission from a private landowner. However, in certain circumstances, the sponsor may acquire interest in land that the trail will cross in the form of a lease, easement, or fee title acquisition. Check with DNR staff for more details about leasing or acquiring fee interest in property as it is a complicated process and often not an ideal solution. Acquisition & Development costs are reimbursed up to 65%.

Facilities

This category includes construction and maintenance of support structures such as trail shelters, picnic areas, parking lots, and trail heads. This category also includes construction of permanent, ADA-compliant¹⁵ restrooms, but does not include cleaning and maintenance of portable or permanent toilets, which are reimbursed at a higher rate. This category can also include mowing, if the primary function on the trip is to mow around facilities on the trail. Facilities are reimbursed up to 65%.

Insurance

The State requires clubs to obtain and carry \$1 million of liability insurance coverage. Project sponsors may request additional policies or protections. Obtaining appropriate insurance protects the interests of the club as well as the sponsor. Comprehensive and/or collision insurance on equipment used on the trail is not an allowable expense. Insurance is reimbursed up to 90% with a maximum of \$1,500.

The State limits liability for person injuries or property loss involving the use or operation of a recreational motor vehicle or for a loss arising from the construction, operation, maintenance, or administration of GIA trails, except for conduct that would entitle a trespasser to damages against a private person.

Maintenance

This category includes labor, materials, and equipment for routine trail inspection¹⁶ and maintenance. This includes reimbursement for miles traveled on trail in the pursuit of maintenance, as well as equipment rental¹⁷ or use of club-owned equipment, and payment to contractors performing contracted services. Examples of maintenance include, but are not limited to trail surface repairs, minor trail infrastructure repairs, addressing erosion or persistently wet conditions, invasive species management (mowing, spraying, etc) brushing, bridge repair, maintaining appropriate signage¹⁸, and storm clean up. This category can also include mowing, if the primary function of the trip is to mow the trail itself.

¹⁵ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance guidelines can be found in Appendix 20.

¹⁶ Trail inspection guidelines can be found in Appendix 21.

¹⁷ Use of heavy equipment and power equipment is a reimbursable expense. Reimbursement rates for specific pieces of equipment are specified in "Reimbursement Rates". If equipment rental or contracting expenses fall above the reimbursement rates, bids must be solicited. The Competitive Bid Process, found in Appendix 22, must be followed during the bid solicitation process.

¹⁸ A signage guide can be found in Appendix 23.

To receive full reimbursement for this category, this trail must be open to the public for the majority of the summer riding season (Memorial Day through Labor Day) unless there are extenuating circumstances. If the trail will not be open for the majority of the season, talk to Area Staff as soon as possible to discuss options. Maintenance is reimbursed up to 90%.

New Trail Construction

This category includes, but is not limited to labor, materials, and equipment for initial construction of trails and major reroute projects (>1 mile), or contracting a third party¹⁹ for the above activities. This also includes reimbursement for miles traveled on trail while construction is occurring. New trail construction is reimbursed up to 75%.

Toilets

This category includes costs associated with the procurement, cleaning, and maintenance of ADA compliant portable toilets as well as cleaning and maintenance of ADA compliant permanent restrooms. Toilets are reimbursed up to 90%.

Trail System Maps

This category includes costs associated with preparing, printing, and producing maps for public distribution. Maps²⁰ must be available to the public free of charge and must meet [DNR accessibility standards](#) to qualify for full reimbursement.

DNR PAT staff or the project sponsor may be able to assist with trail mapping needs. You must contact Area Staff prior to developing, purchasing, or printing maps in order to receive reimbursement. The DNR provides print and electronic trail maps and web information for OHV trails at no charge. Trail system maps are reimbursed up to 65%.

Winter Maintenance

This category includes costs associated with winter trail maintenance and trail conditioning, including grooming or surface modification. Winter maintenance is reimbursed up to 90%.

Allocation of Funds

GIA funds are separated into “pools” to provide adequate resources for trail maintenance and new trail development. If appropriation amounts change, the funding pool amounts will change based on the current ratio. PAT staff will review the pools after each biennium and make adjustments as needed. The table below represents funding amounts for FY 2024.

¹⁹ Outsourcing projects to a contractor is a reimbursable expense. Reimbursement rates for specific pieces of equipment are specified in “Reimbursement Rates”. If equipment rental or contracting expenses fall above the reimbursement rates, bids must be solicited. The Competitive Bid Process, found in Appendix 22, must be followed during the bid solicitation process.

²⁰ Maps developed with GIA funds must state “Funded through the Minnesota Trails Assistance Program”. If advertising sales were used to raise matching funds, the map must prominently state “This publication is partially funded through advertising revenue. The State of Minnesota and the Department of Natural resources can neither endorse the products or services advertised nor accept any liability arising from the use of these products or services.”

Pool	ATV	OHM	ORV
Total Allocation	\$1,960,000	\$150,000	\$325,000
Maintenance	\$1,085,000 (55%)	\$90,000 (60%)	\$30,000 (9%)
New Trail Construction	\$200,000 (10%)	\$25,000 (16%)	\$196,000 (60%)
Capital Improvement	\$300,000 (15%)	\$10,000 (7%)	\$10,000 (3%)
Step 0 Funding	\$100,000 (5%)	\$5,000 (3%)	\$75,000 (23%)
Emergency Amendments	\$100,000 (5%)	\$10,000 (7%)	\$10,000 (3%)
Winter Maintenance	\$100,000 (5%)	\$0	\$0
School Trust Payments and Signs	\$75,000 (5%)	\$10,000 (7%)	\$4,000 (1%)

Eligible Expenses by Allocation Pool

Maintenance

This table represents the maintenance allocation pool and corresponds with the following eligible expense categories as described in the "Eligible Expenses" section. This funding must be applied for using Form 1 – Maintenance Application.

Eligible Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
Administration	65% (up to 15% of total grant)
Facilities	65%
Insurance	90%
Maintenance	90%
Toilets	90%
Trail System Maps	65%

Spring Trail Opening

Each spring, clubs will receive an initial payment to prepare their trails for the upcoming season. The amount is determined by standard, per-mile rates for different trail types, detailed below. Rates will be reviewed after each 2-year funding cycle to reflect cost increases due to inflation and other factors. This payment will be made automatically as soon as the project sponsor executes the grant agreement. It does not require a request for reimbursement to receive funds, however, clubs and sponsors must verify that the trail is open by the agreed upon date. This funding comes from the maintenance pool and will be included in the calculations on the maintenance application. To receive this funding, trail administrators and sponsors must complete Worksheet 4 – Trail Maintenance Performance Benchmark.

Trail Type	Rate (per mile)
Natural surface trail ¹	\$50
Railroad bed	\$45
Shared MMR ²	\$45
Shared SFR ³	\$30
Shared local road	\$30
Road ditch/ROW ⁴	\$30

¹ Single purpose or shared use ATV/OHM/ORV trails, ² Minimum maintenance road, ³ State forest road, ⁴ Right of way

Regular Seasonal Maintenance

Once Spring trail opening has occurred, clubs and sponsors must submit requests for reimbursement²¹ for eligible expenses in order to be reimbursed.

New Trail Construction

This table represents the new trail construction allocation pool and corresponds with the following eligible expense categories as described in the "Eligible Expenses" section. This funding must be applied for using Form 2 – New Project Application.

Applicable Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
Administration	65% (up to 15% of total grant)
Acquisition	65%
Facilities	65%
Insurance	90%
New Trail Construction	75%
Toilets	90%
Trail System Maps	65%

²¹ An example of Worksheet 1 – Worklog/RFR can be found in Appendix 24.

Capital Improvement

This table represents the capital improvement allocation pool and corresponds with the following eligible expense categories as described in the "Eligible Expenses" section. This funding must be applied for using Form 3 – Capital Improvement Application.

Capital improvement requests are requests for larger rehab projects that are far above and beyond normal maintenance. Capital projects may take multiple years to complete but should be “one off” projects and should be used to enhance the trail. Some capital projects may require review through the 7-Step process (e.g. reroutes) or require permits prior to construction. Examples of capital improvement projects include:

- Bridge/boardwalk replacement
- Major trail resurfacing
- Raising trail treadway
- Trail reroutes in excess of one mile
- Wash station design and installation

Applicable Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
Administration	65% (up to 15% of total grant)
Acquisition & Development	65%
Insurance	90%
New Trail Construction	100%
Toilets	90%
Trail System Maps	65%

Step 0 Funding

This table represents the Step 0 funding allocation pool and corresponds with the following eligible expense categories as described in the "Eligible Expenses" section. This funding must be applied for using Form 4 – Step 0 Funding Application.

Many new clubs and sponsors have a difficult time finding funding to properly layout their trail and complete the necessary paperwork, leases, and agreements that are necessary before applying for a new project grant and officially entering the 7-Step process. This small amount would assist clubs early in their trail planning process. Examples of eligible expenses include:

- Identify potential trail route.
- Work with DNR Area Staff to conduct a high-level review of trail route and find potential alternative routes, if needed.
- Time spent working with property owners to obtain permission.
- Working on leases/agreements.

- Upfront costs associated with leases/agreements.

It is important to note that receiving Step 0 Funding does not approve a full project. This funding is intended to make project planning easier for a new club or sponsor who may incur expenses prior to receiving funding via the 7-Step process. All projects must subsequently undergo the normal 7-Step process, including the new project application, and may be subject to disapproval at any point in that process.

Applicable Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
Administration	65% (up to 15% of total grant)
Acquisition & Development	65%

Emergency Amendments

This table represents the emergency amendments allocation pool and corresponds with the following eligible expense categories as described in the "Eligible Expenses" section. This funding must be applied for using Form 5 – Emergency Amendment Application.

Emergency amendments are used when an unexpected event occurs that was not planned for during the grant application period. Examples of amendment requests include:

- Severe weather events (flooding, windstorms, tornadoes)
- Fire
- Unexpected expenses due to substantial increase in costs or supply issues

Clubs must begin planning and preparing for an emergency amendment prior to their grant balance reaching zero, otherwise an emergency amendment cannot be utilized. Clubs and sponsors **must** contact the DNR prior to expending any additional funds if they wish to be reimbursed, as the DNR cannot reimburse any and all expenses that did not receive prior approval. This category cannot be utilized in the event of poor financial planning.

Applicable Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
Administration	65% (up to 15% of total grant)
Facilities	65%
Maintenance	90%
Toilets	90%

Winter Maintenance

This table represents the winter maintenance allocation pool and corresponds with the following eligible expense categories as described in the "Eligible Expenses" section. This funding must be applied for using Form 6 – Winter Maintenance Application.

Applicable Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
Administration	65% (up to 15% of total grant)
Facilities	65%
Insurance	90%
Toilets	90%
Trail System Maps	65%
Winter Maintenance	90%

School Trust Payments and Signs

Funding to lease school trust lands and purchase new signs comes from motorized dedicated accounts. The DNR pays for these items directly and therefore these items do not require an application, nor are they reimbursed. However, they do incur an expense and therefore they still must be budgeted for and have a specific allocation pool.

The DNR will solicit sign orders once per year (typically in the fall). If signage is needed outside of this timeframe, Area Staff may have some signs on hand to provide to clubs.

End of Biennium Funds

GIA funds are available on a two-year cycle, referred to as the biennium. An appropriation is disbursed each year of the cycle. There may be funding that is not used in the first year, funding held by the DNR to fund new projects, or lack of emergency amendments needed. Money left over from the first year is still available the second year. In the second year, the pools will be adjusted proportionately to include any left- over funds. In March of the second year, PAT staff will know how much money is left over after funding new projects and maintenance grants. The division will then accept applications for supplemental projects with priority going to those that were not awarded their full amount during the normal grant cycle. End of biennium funds can be used to accomplish any project which did not receive any funding or only received partial funding during the course of the summer grant cycle, or projects that would be nice to accomplish but are not necessary for the safety and sustainability of the trail (i.e. selfie stations or picnic areas). This funding must be applied for using Form 7 – End of Biennium Funds Application.

Applicable Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
Administration	65% (up to 15% of total grant)
Acquisition & Development	65%
Facilities	65%
Insurance	90%
Maintenance	90%

Applicable Expense Category	Reimbursement Rate
New Trail Construction	75%
Toilets	90%
Trail System Maps	65%
Winter Maintenance	90%

Reimbursement Rates

Volunteer time

- Per hour volunteered: \$25

Vehicles

Vehicle	Rate (per mile)
Car, pickup, ATV, OHM, ORV	IRS standard mileage rate for business
1-2 ton truck	IRS rate x 1.5
2 ½-10 ton truck	IRS rate x 2
10 + tons truck (including semis and dump trucks)	IRS rate x 4
Trailer: single axle	25 ¢
Trailer: tandem axle	35 ¢
Trailer: triple axle	45 ¢

Equipment

The rates below represent standard reimbursement rates. If local equipment rental rates fall outside of these parameters, clubs may follow the Competitive Bid Process Guidelines to source equipment rental at an increased cost.

Equipment	Rate (per hour)
Small equipment (pole pruner saw, loppers, push/riding/pull behind mowers, etc)	\$5.00
Handheld electric equipment (chainsaw, weed whip, trimmers, etc)	\$5.00
Handheld gas-powered equipment (chainsaw, weed whip, trimmers, etc)	\$7.20
Small generator (≤3,000 watts)	\$6.20
Large generator (>3,000 watts)	\$8.80
Non-powered attachments	\$18.75
Power take-off or hydraulic attachments	\$24.00

Equipment	Rate (per hour)
Other equipment 25 HP or less	\$25.00
Other equipment 26-50 HP	\$43.75
Other equipment 51-80 HP	\$62.50
Other equipment 81-105 HP	\$81.25
Other equipment 106-157 HP	\$100.00
Other equipment 158-205 HP	\$112.50
Other equipment 206-250 HP	\$125.00
Other equipment over 250 HP	\$150.00

Dump boxes on trucks/trailers

Dump Box Size	Rate (per mile or hour)
3 cubic yards or less	\$6.30
4-8 cubic yards	\$7.50
9-12 cubic yards	\$10.05
13+ cubic yards	\$12.56