

The Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation Trails Maintenance Program

Maintenance grants are awarded to help ensure that developed trails and greenways provide the service that connects people and communities throughout the region. All grants are made on a competitive basis. Government agencies, municipalities and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply.

What is the purpose of a Wilson Trails Maintenance Grant?

Generally speaking, trails and greenways require two kinds of maintenance—the annual obligation to keep the lawn mowed, the trees trimmed and the trail free from debris; and those extraordinary circumstances where a component of a trail or greenway requires some form of restoration or intervention to ensure that the constructed greenway continues to function effectively, providing its users with the recreation experience and the community connectivity that was envisioned when the trail was developed.

This grant program supports that second kind of maintenance. A bridge becomes unsafe; a segment of a trail is washed out in a flood; a trail outlives its useful life and requires major resurfacing; a tree falls on a trail and does serious damage to the trail infrastructure. Those and many more are the kinds of maintenance issues supported by this grant program—extraordinary maintenance needs that were not anticipated at the time of trail construction.

What institutions are eligible to apply for Wilson Trails Maintenance Grants?

Any 501(c)(3) public charity is eligible to apply, as well as any governmental agency, municipality or governmental unit (including school systems). In addition, innovative, collaborative combinations of the above, such as trail commissions, are eligible. Applicant organizations or entities must be located in, or serve, the seven counties of southeast Michigan. Any of the seven county governments within southeast Michigan may apply, as well as minor civil divisions, such as villages, towns, cities and townships.

In order to qualify for a grant, a project must be a part of or directly connected to one of the named primary regional trail corridors. They currently include:

- The Joe Louis Greenway
- Iron Belle Trail, inclusive of the Detroit Riverfront and connections to and through West Riverfront Park
- Great Lake to Lake Trail
- Bridge to Bay Trail
- Downriver Linked Greenway
- I-275 Trail
- Belle Isle Loop Trail on Belle Isle

What is the size of a Wilson Trails Maintenance Grant?

Trails Maintenance Grants can range between \$50,000 and \$400,000, though it is expected that only a few grants at the upper end of the range will be awarded. As always, potential grant applicants are encouraged to call the Community Foundation at any time to discuss their ideas; this is particularly true for those anticipating a request of the larger amounts.

What do the Wilson Trails Maintenance Grants support?

Trails Maintenance Grants can be used for construction, restoration or rehabilitation of existing trails and greenways. Primarily, these grants can be used for construction costs. Other costs that may be covered include restoration of habitat, planting of native species, waterfront restoration, and reinstatement of natural values, for trails that have been constructed. In addition, Maintenance Grants may also be used to support trail amenities, such as lighting, benches, educational and interpretive kiosks, and other amenities that may have been affected by the reason for the need for the grant, if those amenities are an essential part of the trail restoration project.

What do Wilson Trails Maintenance Grants not support?

Trails Maintenance Grants do not support the construction of new trails (unless it is to replace an adversely affected trail), land acquisition, pocket parks, golf courses, ballparks, or historical sites. If one of the above excluded sites is linked to a larger greenway network, it could be included in a larger greenway maintenance strategy. Trails Maintenance Grants also do not support the annual, day-to-day maintenance of trails. And Trails Maintenance Grants cannot be used for hazardous waste cleanup projects or for debt service.

Can a Wilson Trails Maintenance Grant fully fund a project?

No. One of the primary goals of the Trails Maintenance Grant program is to help local greenways projects leverage state, federal and/or private resources. All Trails Maintenance Grants require a minimum 1:1 funding match (\$1 of Trails Maintenance Grant money for every \$1 from other sources). The matching funds can come from public sources, such as state or federal funds; from the coffers of the applicant agency or unit of government; or from private funds from other donors. The greater the match, the more competitive the proposal. The application must indicate the status of other funding requests and commitments, including sources and amounts.

What are the Selection Criteria?

Trails Maintenance Grants are awarded on a competitive basis. Applicants need to make the case that such a grant would make a significant impact on the applicant's ability to restore, rebuild or otherwise revitalize a greenway. The issues considered for all grants include:

- Indication of public support for the project

- The importance of the project in the restoration of that component of the regional greenways system
- Its connectivity to the regional system
- Status of land control of the proposed project
- The availability of matching funds, at a minimum of \$1 of outside funds for every \$1 of Trails Maintenance Grant dollars
- Evidence that the project will be on noncontaminated land, or on land that can be utilized by the public without any health concerns
- The timetable for the funded project and the likelihood of its completion in the next few years (projects must be completed within 36 months)
- A plan for, and the necessary commitment to, long-term maintenance of the project once completed
- The ability of the partners to successfully complete the project
- Appropriate public access to the proposed project
- Evidence that a Trails Maintenance Grant would play an important role in the success of the project.

Where must projects be located to qualify for a Wilson Trails Maintenance Grant?

Trails Maintenance Grants support the restoration or rehabilitation of greenways in the seven (7) counties of southeast Michigan. Projects may cross village, town, city, county and other governmental lines, and they may continue into neighboring counties. If a proposed project is on a greenway located partially in the seven-county region and partially outside the region, a Trails Maintenance Grant can be used to support only that portion of the greenway located within the seven counties of southeast Michigan.

How are the grant decisions made?

Applications for Trails Maintenance Grants are reviewed by an advisory committee made up of community leaders from throughout the region. Recommendations from the advisory committee are then submitted to the Community Foundation Board of Trustees for consideration and final determination.

Are the grants awarded with any conditions?

Yes. The Trails Maintenance Grants require the applicant and its collaborating partners to use the grant to leverage state, federal, local and/or private funds for the project. In addition, construction may require permits or a wetlands analysis, depending on state law or local ordinances. Typically, grant funds are not paid until the conditions outlined in the Terms of Grant Agreement are met.

Is any recognition required?

Yes. All projects funded through a Trails Maintenance Grant should:

- Display a "RCWJRF Parks and Trails" logo on mile and confidence markers and signage
- Be represented, marketed or promoted as part of a Southeast Michigan Regional Trail System on maps and/or signage.

How do organizations need to account for the grant funds they receive?

A final report is required for each Trail Maintenance Grant, indicating how the grant was used and to what degree the original goals of the project were met. The final report should also indicate how and where the recognition markers mentioned above have been placed.

Can an organization or entity receive more than one grant?

Organizations that have received Trails Maintenance Grants may not reapply until their grant period is complete and a final report is submitted. Generally speaking, although there is no prohibition against a second grant for a project, second grants are not common.

If declined, can an organization or entity reapply?

If a request for a Maintenance Grant is declined, the applicant may reapply six months after the initial declination. In such cases, it is recommended that the applicant consult with Community Foundation staff before submitting its application.

Can a Maintenance Grant provide support if a project is not far enough along for construction?

No. The purpose of the fund is to restore or revitalize a trail or greenway that has extraordinary maintenance needs. By virtue of the application, the applicant has indicated that those maintenance needs will be addressed with the support of a Trails Maintenance Grant. If that is not the case, the application will not be eligible for a Trails Maintenance Grant.

What is the first step we should take once we decide to apply?

The Community Foundation strongly encourages potential applicants to call or email the Foundation prior to submitting a proposal. The staff is available to discuss your ideas, answer any questions you may have about the program, or explain other grantmaking programs that might be of interest. Whether or not you decide to proceed with an application, the Community Foundation welcomes the opportunity to learn more from you about the issues, challenges and opportunities in our region.