

Outdoor Recreation Planning Assistance (ORPA) Program Guide



2026

Overview

The Outdoor Adventure Commission (OAC) continues to recognize the need for planning support and has given an allocation of **\$2.5 million to Outdoor Recreation Planning Assistance (ORPA)** to fund planning assistance and resource development.

This program is intended to help build capacity and empower Utah residents at the local level through engaging consulting services and utilizing the Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) staff's technical expertise. The goal is to provide applicants with resources to allow for more competitive applications to other DOR grants.

Application Dates	April 6 - May 15, 2026
Funding Amount	Up to \$200,000
Match Requirement	No financial match is required. (*with the exception of detailed Engineering and Construction design.)
Eligible Applicants	Municipalities, counties, non-profits, tribal and federal governments.
Program Contact	Emily Meadows, emeadows@utah.gov Statewide Recreation Planner

Eligible & Ineligible Projects

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

(*All projects/services must be directly related to outdoor recreation.)

- Feasibility/trail alignment studies
- NEPA/environmental assessments
 - Cultural surveys
 - Biological surveys
- Community outreach strategies and execution
- Stakeholder/steering committee facilitation
- Plan development assistance (i.e. master trails plan)
- Conceptual trail & site design
- Visitor use mitigation strategies
- Mapping services
- Field data collection (trail assessments)
- Land-use recommendations and scenarios
- User conflict/trail etiquette strategies
- Wayfinding strategies and/or design
- Assistance scoping the project in preparation for procurement (i.e. request for proposals, request for quotes, etc)
- Engineering services/construction design (*Only 50% of associated costs)

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Transportation planning including Active transportation
- Marketing/promotion resources
- Educational resources or programs
- Land acquisition
- Construction of infrastructure
- Restoration of infrastructure
- Maintenance of recreation infrastructure
- Equipment/Supplies

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- The ORPA program aims to increase capacity for planning in rural areas by leveraging funds to utilize local consultants to assist communities.
- However, it is highly encouraged for projects to be community led and consultant supported.
- Consulting firms are not eligible applicants and must partner with an eligible entity to submit an application. See more on page 6 regarding RFP practices.

Most Common Project Types

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
(NEPA)

RECREATION RELATED
IMPACT FEE STUDY

CONCEPTUAL/SITE
DESIGN

DETAILED ENGINEERING &
CONSTRUCTION DESIGN
*50% of associated costs

COMMUNITY VISIONING &
STAKEHOLDER FACILITATION

RECREATION MASTER PLAN
(Trails, Recreation Area etc)

FEASIBILITY STUDY

TRAIL ALIGNMENT STUDY

RECREATION DATA
GATHERING/ANALYSIS

2025 Highest Scoring Project Examples

Helper All Wheels Park
Conceptual/Site Design
Award: \$27,000

Rich County Trails
Masterplan
Award: \$123,300

Main Street Outdoors:
Mapping Access &
Economic Opportunity
Award: \$192,000

Piute MTB Trails Master
Plan
Award: \$95,000

Brian Head to Cedar Breaks
Connector Trail
Feasibility/NEPA
Award: \$46,000

Hooper City Parks and
Outdoor Recreation Master
Plan
Award: \$70,480

We know that planning encompasses a wide variety of services and processes. Through ORPA we hope to lower financial and capacity limitations as it relates to recreation planning. The examples above are not a comprehensive list, so please reach out to the DOR Recreation Planner so we can provide clarity.

Application Requirements & Evaluation

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

- Application submitted by eligible entity
- 2+ Letters of Support (i.e. County Tourism office, local recreation groups, elected officials, federal land manager, land owners, project partners/involved stakeholders etc.)
- Budget Sheet *It is highly recommended to receive a bid/estimate before applying
- W-9 form
- City Budget (if applicable)

EVALUATION:

ORPA applications are evaluated using the criteria outlined below. The ORPA review committee is comprised of outdoor recreation and planning experts. If you have any questions regarding the evaluation process or required materials please contact the DOR planning coordinator.

Increase Capacity	Community Need/Support	Economic Impact	Improved Access	Recreation Value
Ex: Assisting projects located in counties of the 4th, 5th, and 6th class or is a small community	Ex: Applicant creating recreation related Master Plans for the first time	Ex: The project has specific goals that will provide the opportunity for economic benefit from recreation	Ex: New or increased recreation asset access for underserved regions	Ex: Provides a clear vision, roadmap, or plan to further advance recreation opportunities
Ex: The applicant will benefit from additional capacity and planning support	Ex: There is clear evidence of community support & meets locals needs	Ex: Increase the capacity of gateway communities to plan and manage visitors	Ex: Improve & diversify the recreation opportunities available in the surrounding area	Ex: Supports applicant to be more competitive for future DOR grants
Ex: Assisting applicants with limited resources. i.e. non-profits, federal partners, & rural communities	Ex: Conduct community engagement to minimize user conflict	Ex: Improves the ability for Utahns to achieve mental and physical health benefits from outdoor recreation	Ex: Create key connections to one or more recreation assets	Ex: Increase all Utahn's awareness of the benefits of outdoor recreation

Application Review Process & ORPA Award



All applicants will be notified (awarded or otherwise) by the end of June 2026. Once awarded an ORPA grant, a meeting will be scheduled with the applicant and DOR Recreation Planner to finalize project scope, outline partner responsibilities and expectations, and define desired outcomes. Once finalized, a contract will be sent for signature for all parties.

Selecting a Contractor

While some applicants may already have a consultant selected if awarded an ORPA grant, the DOR encourages all applicants to follow best practices in selecting a contractor or vendor by undergoing a Request for Proposal (RFP), Request for Qualifications (RFQ), or competitive bidding process. This process is especially encouraged for recipients of awards greater or equal to \$100,000. Awards less than \$100,000 are allowed to select from previously acquired bids.

Please contact the DOR Recreation Planner for RFP/Scope of Work (SOW) examples, assistance in navigating the RFP process, or for review of your draft RFP. To see a list of state approved Planning Vendors, [click here](#).

1. Identify your project team/RFP review committee
2. Outline Scope of Work (SOW) & Draft RFP
3. Using SOW, advertise or post RFP to qualified vendors (aim for 3+ proposals)
4. Each review committee member reviews and scores each proposal individually (score 1-5)
5. Review committee meets to discuss final score and select qualified vendor
6. Notify selected vendor and if needed, finalize SOW

Reimbursement & Up-Front Funding

- As with all DOR grants, ORPA operates on a reimbursement basis. Please track all expenses on a ledger and provide receipts, bank statements, or checks as proof of payment when submitting your reimbursement request.
- We recognize that planning efforts differ from construction and often require upfront funding to get started.
- We hope to alleviate this barrier by allowing 50% of the award to be given upfront if needed. Please request a meeting to review up-front funding request procedures.
- Once submitted, please allow 1-2 weeks to receive up-front funding or reimbursement checks in the mail.

Up-Front Funding Request Form		
Outdoor Recreation Planning Assistance (ORPA)		
Before filling this out, please read the information below		
<small>You may receive up to 50% of the ORPA funding awarded to you before finishing the project, in no more than 50% increments. To receive this funding, you need to provide supporting documents such as invoices, bids, quotes, and others. Please explain in this document why your organization needs the funds advanced and provide a timeline of how you plan to spend the funds. It's important to note that the funding must be used within three months, and you need to provide proof of how it was spent by the deadline listed below. Any unused funds must be returned. We require backup documentation that shows payments made (credit card receipts, voided checks, or bank statements), and proof of receiving the purchased items.</small>		
Project Name:		
Contract Number:	Contract Expiration Date:	
Date Request was Made:	12/9/2025	
Deadline Back-up Documents are Due*	6/9/2026	
Grant Recipient (Organization):		
Mailing Address for Check:		
Legal Status of Grant Recipient (select one):	Governmental Agency or Nonprofit Corporation	
Total Grant Amount:		
Total Amount Previously Requested:		
Current Up-Front Request:		
Remaining Contract Balance:		
<small>*Any funds not expended before this deadline must be returned to the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation.</small>		
Why does your organization need funding up-front (non-profit, small budget, etc.)?		
Briefly describe how you plan to use the funding within three months.		
Month 1:		
Month 2:		
Month 3:		
<small>I hereby certify that the associated funding is essential for the successful completion of the project, and I assure that all funds will be utilized in accordance with the specified deadline mentioned above. In the event that the funds are not fully expended within the stipulated timeframe, I agree that my organization shall promptly return any remaining unused funding to the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation. Furthermore, I acknowledge and agree that my organization will furnish all necessary supporting documentation as required prior to the aforementioned deadline. I understand that failure to comply with the established requirements set forth by the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation may result in the forfeiture of the privilege to receive upfront funding not only for the present grant but also for any future grants.</small>		
Signature	Date	Title

Contracts and Progress Reports

- DOR Infrastructure grants operate with 28 month contract periods. As planning typically takes less time, contract periods will be set at 18 months unless more time is anticipated for larger planning projects.
- In order to ensure continued progress and success of your project, coordination meetings and/or progress reports will be scheduled on a regular basis.

Progress reports are typically due every 6 months during the contract period unless otherwise scheduled with the DOR planning coordinator. Visit our [website](#) to complete your progress report.

For more information visit our website at recreation.utah.gov