



VIRGINIA OUTDOORS
FOUNDATION

Get Outdoors (GO) Fund

Grant Program Manual

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Overview

Established in 2020, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Get Outdoors (GO) Fund provides grants for projects that increase equitable access to safe open space in Virginia's communities. Some examples of costs that can be covered include planning, capacity building, programming, and infrastructure, although priority will be given to shovel-ready projects with tangible, measurable results. The intent of the program is to serve as a flexible, adaptable tool to be used to address communities' needs.

Current Opportunity

VOF is seeking proposals for projects that increase equitable access to safe open space in Virginia's communities, especially those that are underserved. The fall Fiscal Year 2023 grant round opens on July 11, 2022.

There is a new pre-application process in place, which requires interested applicants to submit no more than one page of text in response to several basic questions about the project. Pre-applications most aligned with program parameters will be invited to submit a full application. The pre-application has a recommended submission deadline of July 27, 2022, and a required deadline of August 10, 2022. Invitations to apply for the GO Fund will be sent within one week of receipt of a successful pre-application. Should a pre-applicant be invited to submit a full application, there is a deadline of August 22, 2022, for the final application. The responses provided in the pre-application will be incorporated in and elaborated on in the full application. Grant awards will be announced at the October 11, 2022 meeting of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's board of trustees.

Applicant Eligibility

GO grants may be awarded to state, local, regional, or tribal government entities; educational institutions; or non-profit organizations registered as tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Service code, <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/exempt-organization-types>. Federal governmental entities, for-profit entities, and individuals are not eligible at this time.

Applicants who have received past GO grants of more than \$5,000 must complete the approved project before submitting additional requests.

Funding Available

There is \$200,000 available for the first grant round of Fiscal Year with consideration of funding requests up to \$25,000 per project. Partial funding is a possibility.

Project Eligibility

VOF may provide funding for studies, planning, concept development, capacity building, programming, and infrastructure to enable safe use of or access to public open space, as well as for land acquisition. Priority will be given to shovel-ready projects with tangible, measurable results. Projects that seek to acquire or convey an interest in real estate (such as land acquisition, easement protection, lease agreement, or a right of way) should consider applying for a grant from VOF's [Preservation Trust Fund](#) program.

Application Process

VOF requires a pre-application to be submitted for review before a full application for funding may be submitted. The recommended deadline to submit pre-applications is 5:00 p.m. on July 27, 2022, with the required deadline being August 10, 2022. The invited, final application submission deadline is 5:00pm on August 22, 2022.

There will not be an automatic resubmission for pre-applications of full applications that were not approved previously. All applicants must revise and submit a new pre-application. A resubmitted pre-application without significant revision will not be considered. Regardless of revision status, applicants may not apply more than twice with the same concept.

While application requirements vary annually, examples of successful full applications can be found here:

1. [Richmond Cycling Corps, MTB Program](#)
2. [Groundwork RVA, Hillside Court MicroFarm and Outdoor Lab](#)
3. [James River Outdoor Coalition, River Safety](#)
4. [Pulaski County High School, Sensory Trail](#)
5. [DuPont Elementary, Heart of Hopewell Wellness Loop](#)

Please contact VOF grant program staff at grants@vof.org with any questions about the application process or project eligibility.

Grant Proposal Review

There is a multi-level review process undertaken by VOF staff and completed by the VOF Board of Trustees, who have the final approval authority for all grant awards. Grant proposals will be reviewed for alignment with program criteria such as:

- Serving an underserved community.
- Aligning with goals of the program, which are to:
 - Create new or enhance existing outdoor space.
 - Increase safety in outdoor space.
 - Increase access to outdoor space and community resources.
- Meeting a specific need and/or providing a unique resource.
- Benefitting a large portion of the community or is very significant to a smaller portion of the community.
- Involving the community in the development and implementation of the project.
- Demonstrating clear and feasible outcomes.

In addition, data from several different computer models will be used to assess recreational access needs, new areas of work for VOF, the return on investment, and the environmental justice impact of a project, which is determined through the Mapping for Environmental Justice tool.

[Mapping for Environmental Justice](#) combines demographics with environmental factors to provide a statewide rating based on census tracts.

Final consideration will be given to overall diversity in geographic location, project type and applicant type.

Grant Award Timeline & Contract Information

Grant awards will be announced at the October 11, 2022 meeting of the VOF board of trustees meeting. All applicants will be notified of their status regardless of approval. Notice of grant award letters will be distributed through email, with grant agreements to follow within two weeks of award announcement. Grant agreements must be signed and returned to VOF within 45 days of receipt, though extensions may be considered upon request.

GO Fund grant agreements have a two-year lifespan, with a project period starting one month after approval. There is no penalty for early completion. Extensions to the grant agreement project period may be considered upon request.

Reporting Requirements

Progress reports are required every six months throughout the lifespan of the grant using a standardized reporting process. In addition, reports should be submitted at the time that funding/reimbursement is requested. Photographs should be included if appropriate. Sample reporting forms are available for review.

A final report will be requested within 90 days of the final disbursement of funds or notification of project completion. The purpose of the final report is to assess and analyze the process, the success of the project, the impact on the community, and to provide feedback on how to improve the grant program and its administration. A final reporting form will be provided for completion.

Disbursement Policy & Procedures

A budget is a required component of the grant agreement. The budget serves as a guide for expenditure. Funds from any item category may be reallocated toward other deliverables in the grant agreement **if there is no impact to the scope of work**. Grant recipients should inform VOF regarding line-item changes that exceed 10% of the total award, or changes that would alter the deliverables listed in the grant agreement.

Grant funds distributed shall not exceed eligible documented costs incurred, not to exceed the total grant amount. Verification of expenses is required. Materials to be submitted to support expense reports may include settlement statements, bills of sale, copies of invoices, contracts, cancelled checks, etc.

In the case of a successful grant application, funds may be requested at any time during the lifespan of the project following the signing of the grant agreement. A current Commonwealth of Virginia W-9 form must be on file before any funds are disbursed. For the most part, funds will be disbursed through a reimbursement process, though \$5,000 in starter funds is available for all approved projects. Funds may also be advanced upon the provision and approval of invoices, signed contracts, or other binding documentation of estimated expenses. VOF will only issue payment to the grant recipient; no funds will be paid directly to a vendor.

For those grant awards of \$5,000 or less, the entire award amount is available upon the full execution of the grant agreement.

Funding requests are usually processed and fulfilled within two weeks of receipt. In most cases, funds will be distributed via paper check through the United States Postal Service to the remittance address provided on the W-9. In the case of real estate transactions, VOF may wire funds to closing if all required due diligence items have been reviewed and approved.

If there is funding available, award increases up to 10% may be considered and approved administratively if the following criteria have been met:

- The increase request has been reviewed by VOF's Deputy Directors and been found justified, supported with appropriate documentation; and,
- VOF's Administrative Director has reviewed availability of funds and budget status and has approved the increase.

Media and Publicity

The grant recipient will release information to the media informing the community of the grant award to the project and acknowledging that it has received funding from VOF.

All press releases and other printed materials and publications, audiovisuals, and signs pertaining to the project should reference the Virginia Outdoors Foundation or include the VOF logo. VOF staff can assist with drafting and distributing press releases by request. Please contact Jason McGarvey at jmgarvey@vof.org to coordinate.

VOF requests that each project site be marked with a VOF sign, to be provided at no cost.

All material submitted as support or documentation of project progress, such as photographs, may be used by VOF to promote the grant program. Any VOF publication will cite the source of the reprinted material. These records will also be deemed public records and subject to Virginia's Freedom of Information Act.

Contract Termination

VOF reserves the right to reclaim grant funds or to nullify the grant agreement if the recipient fails to meet deadlines, provide required documentation, or produce listed deliverables.