



**VIRGINIA OUTDOORS**  
FOUNDATION

**Get Outdoors Fund**

FY24 Grant Program Manual

# Get Outdoors Fund

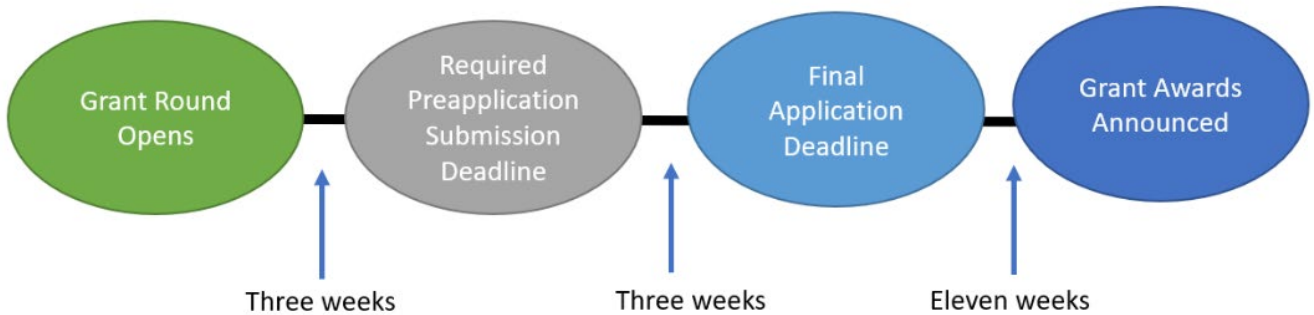
## Grant Program Manual

### Overview

Established in 2020, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation’s Get Outdoors (GO) Fund provides grants for projects that increase access to safe open space in Virginia’s communities, especially those that are underserved. Some examples of project types 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.

### Calendar

Two grant rounds are held annually, with requests for proposals announced in January and June or July each year, and grant awards made in June and October or November. Grant agreements have a two-year lifespan. The grant project period starts one month after approval date regardless of grant agreement status.



Visit the Virginia Outdoors Foundation’s website at <https://www.vof.org/protect/grants/go> or the online application portal at <https://vaoutdoors.webgrantscloud.com> for calendar updates.

### 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 Fund grants of more than \$5,000 must complete the approved project before submitting additional proposals. Other VOF grant awards do not impact GO Fund eligibility.

## **Funding Available**

The amount of funding available for each grant round is determined annually and announced in June or July. Funding requests are capped at \$25,000. Projects with budgets that greatly exceed \$25,000 are not usually appropriate for the program unless the GO Fund award is meeting the final need to bring the project to fruition, or the proposal is focused on a specific stand-alone component of a larger project. Inversely, projects with a scope of work that could be completely funded and implemented through a GO Fund grant exclusively are competitive.

Funding will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis as progress is made. A one-time advance not exceeding \$1,000 may be considered on a case-by-case basis and for good cause shown. Signed contracts or other binding documentation of future expenses may result in fund disbursement. No funds will be paid directly to a vendor. 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**

Applications are accepted through the online grant portal which can be accessed at <https://vaoutdoors.webgrantscloud.com>. Applicants must register to use the online portal. Grants staff is available to assist with the online application process, and alternative arrangements may be made if the online process is an impediment.

The GO Fund requires the submission of a short pre-application. Pre-applications most aligned with program parameters will be invited to submit a final application. Invitations to apply for the GO Fund will be sent within one week of receipt of a successful pre-application. The responses provided in the pre-application will be incorporated in and elaborated on in the final application.

PDF reference versions of the pre-application questionnaire and the final application are available on the VOF website and the online grant portal.

Neither unfunded pre-applications nor final applications will be included for consideration in the following grant round. All applicants must revise and submit a new pre-application. A resubmitted pre-application or final application without significant revision will not be considered. Regardless of revision status, applicants may not submit the same concept more than twice.

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

1. [Star City Cycling, Star City Kids Outdoors](#) \*
2. [Friends of Fonticello Park, The Native Meadow Project](#)
3. [James River Outdoor Coalition, River Safety](#) \*
4. [Autism Sanctuary, Inc., Weekly Respite at Autism Sanctuary](#)
5. [DuPont Elementary, Heart of Hopewell Wellness Loop](#)\*

\*Application submitted prior to use of pre-application questionnaire and grant portal. Formatting differs from current grant round, but the responses and material are excellent examples.

Please contact VOF grant program staff at [grants@vof.org](mailto: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, which has the final approval authority for all grant awards. Grant proposals will be reviewed for alignment with program criteria such as:

- The project must serve an underserved community.
- The project must align with the goals of the Get Outdoors grant program with priority to given to new and creative proposals that:
  - Create new or enhance existing outdoor space.
  - Increase safety in outdoor space.
  - Increase access to outdoor space and community resources.
- The project must meet a specific need or provide a unique resource.
- The project must benefit a large portion of the community or be very significant to a smaller portion of the community.
- The project must include community involvement. This means that:
  - The community has been engaged in the development of the project.
  - The community has demonstrated support for the project.
  - The community will be part of the project implementation.
- The project outcomes must be clear and feasible.

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 and/or the Virginia Institute of Marine Science Social Vulnerability Model.

Mapping for Environmental Justice, found at <https://mappingforej.berkeley.edu/virginia/>, and the VIMS Social Vulnerability Model, found at [https://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul\\_SS.html](https://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul_SS.html), both combine 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.

### Feedback Process

Immediately following grant notification, unfunded applicants may request written feedback and schedule discussion sessions with grants staff via a video conferencing call. Material may be provided, and meetings may be hosted beginning one month after the notification date.

Feedback will be formatted to give an overview of how the proposal aligned with or diverged from program criteria. Suggestions for reapplication may be included.

### Reapplication Process

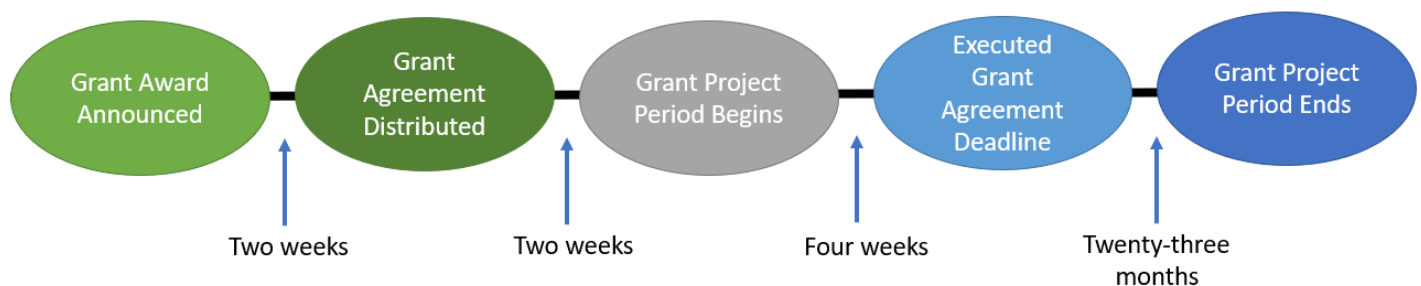
Applicants may submit the same concept proposal only twice. In order to be considered for review a second grant round, the proposal should include significant revisions. Reapplication begins with the pre-application questionnaire regardless of past grant round results.

### Grant Award Timeline & Contract Information

Grant awards will be announced at the final VOF Board of Trustees meeting of each calendar and fiscal year, usually October or November and June. 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.



In alignment with state requirements, should a grant award be made to a non-profit, the recipient must certify the project will be implemented in accordance with the non-professional services terms and conditions outlined in the GO Fund Request for Proposals. These terms and conditions will be contained in the grant agreement.

## **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.

A final report is due 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. Sample reporting forms are available for review.

A GO Fund grant is not considered complete, and will not be closed out, until a final report has been received.

## **Disbursement Policy & Procedures**

A budget is a required component of the grant agreement. The budget serves as a guide for expenditure. Items and quantities included in the budget are specified at the time of application; therefore, alternative or substitute materials may be used without prior approval from VOF if the use and/or purpose is unchanged.

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 appraisals, settlement statements, copies of invoices, bills of sale, contracts, cancelled checks (both sides), survey fees, appraisal fees, legal fees including title reports and insurance, and recordation fees, 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. Funding will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis as progress is made. A one-time advance not exceeding \$1,000 may be considered on a case-by-case basis and for good cause shown. No funds will be paid directly to a vendor. Partial funding is possible.

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 \$2,500 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 is available to assist with drafting and distributing press releases by request. Please contact Jason McGarvey, communications manager, at [jmcgarvey@vof.org](mailto:jmcgarvey@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 publications will cite the source of the reprinted material when possible. These records will also be deemed public records and subject to Virginia's Freedom of Information Act; however, copyright holders will retain their copyrights.

## **Contract Termination**

VOF reserves the right to reclaim grant funds or to nullify the grant agreement if the recipient fails to meet deadlines including the signing of the grant agreement in the requested timeframe, to provide required documentation, or to produce listed deliverables. Specifically, if no significant progress has been made after the first year of the contract, the grant agreement may be nullified and funds reassigned.