

ALASKA TRAILS AND LOCAL ACCESS SYSTEMS

ATLAS

A VITAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK FOR ALASKANS



MULTI-USE TRAILS PROGRAM AND APPLICATION GUIDE

FUNDED BY THE RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP)



Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities



Alaska Multi Use Trails Program
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Introduction and Background

The Alaska Multi-Use Trails Program, funded by Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a federally funded award program that provides reimbursable, matching funds for the development, maintenance, and repair of recreational trails and trail-related facilities across Alaska. The RTP also supports trail-related environmental protection, safety, and education projects. Historically, the program was administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through its Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, with guidance from the Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB). **Administrative Order No. 361 (2025)** has **transferred lead administrative responsibility to the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)**, effective October 1, 2025. DOT&PF is now the official state agency managing the RTP in Alaska, replacing DNR in this capacity. This manual reflects the transfer of the program to DOT&PF and outlines updated procedures, requirements, and roles for applicants, DOT&PF staff, and partner agencies in administering RTP awards.

This manual serves as the official applicant and program administration guide for the Alaska Multi -Use Trails funded under the Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

Authority: The RTP is authorized at the federal level by [23 U.S.C. §206](#) and funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). As the new lead agency, DOT&PF will serve as the primary point of contact with FHWA for all RTP matters. [Administrative Order No. 361](#) serves as the state authority for this change in lead agency, and it also amends prior orders regarding the advisory board structure. DOT&PF and DNR have executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA, 2026) to guide a smooth transition of the program, ensure compliance with federal requirements, and define each department’s continuing roles. This manual incorporates relevant provisions from that MOA and Administrative Order 361.

Program Purpose: The RTP provides up to **90% federal reimbursement** of eligible project costs, requiring a minimum **10% non-federal match** from awardees. The goal is to improve outdoor recreational trail opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized users by funding trail construction, renovation, signage, trailhead facilities, equipment for trail maintenance, and safety/education programs. All projects must serve public recreational trail needs. The program operates on a **competitive award cycle** each year, with eligible applicants including non-profit organizations, educational institutions, local and tribal governments, state and federal agencies, and other qualified entities.

Statewide Goals Alignment: Under DOT&PF leadership, the RTP will be aligned with Alaska’s broader transportation and outdoor recreation strategies. Projects funded should support **DOT&PF’s statewide goals** – such as improving public access and mobility, ensuring safety, supporting economic vitality, and maintaining sustainable infrastructure – as well as priorities identified in the [Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#). The SCORP is a five-year strategic outdoor recreation plan that evaluates demand for recreation and identifies priority needs; RTP investments will be coordinated to complement SCORP’s priorities. DOT&PF will integrate RTP projects into statewide transportation planning mechanisms to ensure trails are considered in broader transportation and community connectivity plans. Program performance will be tracked and publicly reported (e.g. via dashboards of project status and funding distribution) to promote transparency and continuous improvement.

Roles and Responsibilities

DOT&PF (Lead Agency): As of October 1, 2025, DOT&PF has full responsibility for administering Alaska's RTP. DOT&PF's duties include:

1. **Program Management:** Serving as the primary contact with FHWA for RTP funding, reporting, and compliance matters. DOT&PF will carry out all program management functions formerly performed by DNR. This encompasses announcing annual award opportunities, providing program guidance and training to applicants, receiving and processing award applications, and executing award agreements with selected project sponsors.
2. **Project Oversight:** Ensuring that each funded project complies with all applicable federal and state requirements (environmental, fiscal, and programmatic). DOT&PF will oversee project implementation, monitor progress, and conduct periodic site inspections or reviews of subrecipient performance. It will also handle requests for reimbursement, track matching contributions, and prepare required financial and performance reports.
3. **Fiscal Administration:** Managing the RTP funding allocation from FHWA – including requesting federal fund obligations, disbursing reimbursements to awardees, and monitoring overall fund expenditures. DOT&PF must ensure that the **mandatory funding distribution** per 23 U.S.C 206(d) that requires at least 30% of funds for motorized trail projects, 30% for non-motorized projects, and 40% for diverse/mixed-use projects is met each year. It will also ensure administrative costs do not exceed the allowed 7% of the annual apportionment and that any safety/education projects collectively use no more than 5% of funds.
4. **Final Project Selection Authority:** After evaluation (described in later sections), the DOT&PF Commissioner or a designated official will make the final decisions on project awards each cycle, considering the recommendations of the advisory committee and program staff. DOT&PF retains final authority for selection and funding decisions.
5. **Interagency Coordination:** Coordinating with other agencies and stakeholders. DOT&PF will work closely with DNR for certain technical support and planning functions (detailed below) under a cooperative approach. DOT&PF will also notify FHWA of the change in lead agency and coordinate any needed updates to federal program agreements (e.g. NEPA programmatic agreements).

DNR (Partner Agency): Following the program transfer, **DNR no longer administers or manages RTP awards** on a day-to-day basis. However, DNR will cooperate with DOT&PF in specific ways:

1. **Transitional Support:** DNR has provided DOT&PF with all existing RTP program records, files, and materials (applications, past award documents, databases, etc.) to ensure continuity. DNR designated a liaison to assist during the transition, helping answer questions about past practices and facilitating introductions to stakeholders as needed.
2. **Advisory Participation:** Staff from DNR's Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation may serve in a technical advisory capacity on the new DOT&PF committee Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (ARTAC) to share expertise on trails and State Parks priorities. Although the Outdoor Recreational Trail Advisory Board (ORTAB) will no longer score RTP awards, DNR may continue to involve ORTAB or a successor board for its own programs (like the Land and Water Conservation Fund).

3. **Statewide Trails Planning:** DNR will continue to lead SCORP updates and broader outdoor recreation planning for the state. DOT&PF and DNR will coordinate to ensure RTP projects align with SCORP and to share data (e.g. trail inventory, usage statistics) for planning purposes.
4. **Reimbursable Services:** DNR can be engaged by DOT&PF through Reimbursable Services Agreements (RSAs) for specific technical services that support the RTP. For example, DNR could assist with maintaining statewide trail GIS databases, providing cultural resource expertise, or supporting development of the next SCORP, under agreed-upon terms. (See **Section on RSAs and Interagency Agreements** below for details.)

FHWA (Federal Oversight): The Federal Highway Administration oversees the RTP at the national level and provides funding to the state. FHWA reviews DOT&PF's management of the program for compliance with federal law and may periodically audit projects. DOT&PF will submit annual reports to FHWA and seek FHWA approval for certain actions (such as authorizing funds for projects). If FHWA conducts program reviews that include years when DNR was in charge, DNR will cooperate by providing historical records or participating in review meetings.

Award Recipients (Project Sponsors): Eligible award recipients (also called subrecipients) include government entities, tribes, nonprofits, and other organizations capable of managing federal funds. Recipients are responsible for executing their project as proposed, complying with all award conditions, providing the required matching funds or in-kind contributions, and reporting on progress and expenditures. After award, each project sponsor will enter into an award agreement with DOT&PF, becoming a subrecipient of federal funds with attendant compliance requirements (detailed later). Sponsors must follow state procurement rules or their own approved procurement standards when hiring contractors or purchasing materials, and they must allow DOT&PF and auditors to review project records as needed.

Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (ARTAC)

With the transfer of the RTP to DOT&PF, **the former Outdoor Recreation and Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB) will no longer serve as the RTP advisory body.** Administrative Order 361 formally **terminated ORTAB's RTP-related functions.** In its place, **DOT&PF has established the [Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee \(ARTAC\)](#)** to fulfill the federal requirement for an advisory committee representing both motorized and non-motorized trail interests.

Structure and Membership: ARTAC is organized under DOT&PF and operates in an advisory role for the RTP. The committee's membership and operation include:

1. **Composition:** The ARTAC will have a **balanced representation of trail users**, including motorized, non-motorized, and diversified (multiple-use) trail interests. Federal law (23 U.S.C. §206(c)(2)) requires that the committee represent diverse recreational trail users. At minimum, ARTAC will include **three members**, each representing one of the major user categories (e.g. one representing motorized trail users, one non-motorized, one diversified). However, DOT&PF may appoint a larger committee to ensure broad statewide and multi-disciplinary representation (for example, including members from different regions of Alaska, and individuals with expertise in accessibility, education, or rural trails, as needed). Membership may also include representation from minority and persons with disabilities communities to uphold inclusive trail access values (as was encouraged under ORTAB).

2. **Appointment and Terms:** ARTAC members are **appointed by the DOT&PF Commissioner**. Members serve staggered terms, and may be reappointed for additional terms in accordance with Alaska Statute AS 39.05.055. Staggered terms ensure continuity on the committee by not replacing all members at once. If a vacancy occurs, the Commissioner will appoint a new member to serve the remainder of that term. The DOT&PF Commissioner (or a designee) will also designate a **Chair** from among the members to lead meetings.
3. **Function and Duties:** ARTAC's primary role is to **review award applications and advise DOT&PF on project funding recommendations**. Committee members individually read and score eligible applications (using standardized score sheets) and then convene to discuss and finalize scores or rankings of project proposals. ARTAC provides a forum for diverse trail user perspectives to be considered in the evaluation process. The committee will typically meet at least once per year (e.g. in the winter after applications are submitted) to score projects and make funding recommendations. The meetings will be announced publicly and conducted in accordance with applicable open meeting guidelines for advisory boards. In addition to scoring projects, ARTAC may advise DOT&PF on RTP program development, such as suggesting improvements to scoring criteria, identifying emerging statewide trail needs, or reviewing RTP-funded project outcomes.
4. **Conflict of Interest and Impartiality:** ARTAC members must remain impartial and **avoid conflicts of interest** in the award review process. Members will be asked to declare any potential conflict (for example, if they are involved with an organization that has applied for a award) and recuse themselves from scoring or discussing that proposal. This ensures fairness and credibility in the committee's recommendations.
5. **Recommendations and Selection:** After scoring and discussing all applications, ARTAC will forward its **project funding recommendations to the DOT&PF program staff and leadership**. Typically, the committee's recommendations include a prioritized list of projects and suggested funding levels. While DOT&PF's officials have final decision-making authority, they give significant weight to ARTAC's collective expertise and balanced viewpoint. In most cases, projects recommended by ARTAC are approved unless there is a clear issue (such as ineligibility or funding availability constraints). If DOT&PF modifies the funding list (for example, due to budget limitations or strategic considerations), it will document the rationale. All applicants will be informed of the outcome, and award announcements will credit the advisory committee's role in the evaluation process.

Note: ORTAB's involvement with RTP ended with the transfer. However, ORTAB (or a successor board under DNR) may continue to function in relation to other programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, per Administrative Order 222 (as amended). The creation of ARTAC within DOT&PF does not affect DNR's use of ORTAB for non-RTP purposes.

Program Funding and Eligible Projects

Funding Source and Allocation: Alaska's RTP funding comes from the Federal Highway Trust Fund and is apportioned to states by FHWA annually. The program is **reimbursable** – awardees must incur costs and then request reimbursement from DOT&PF, up to the approved award amount. Each award can cover **up to 90%** of eligible project costs (this higher federal share reflects Alaska's federal-aid funding match ratio). Awardees are responsible for at least **10%** of the project cost as a local match, which can be provided in cash or as in-kind contributions (such as volunteer labor, donated materials, or equipment use). The required match must be from

non-federal sources, except that certain federal funds that can legally be “matched” (like Tribal Transportation Program funds or other federal awards if allowed) may be applied – applicants should consult DOT&PF if they intend to use other federal funds as match.

The total RTP funding available each year varies with federal appropriations. DOT&PF will announce the approximate amount of funding in the **Call for Projects**. As noted, by federal mandate, at least 30% of Alaska’s RTP funds each year must be spent on projects that primarily benefit **motorized** trail uses, at least 30% on **non-motorized** trail projects, and the remaining ~40% on **diverse use** projects (serving both or multiple user types). DOT&PF will classify each project proposal into one of these categories to ensure compliance with this distribution. Additionally, no more than 5% of the annual funds may be used for trail safety and education projects, and DOT&PF’s own program administrative costs are limited to 7% of the annual apportionment.

Award Limits: To distribute funds broadly, DOT&PF may cap the maximum award per project. Maximum award amounts will be identified in the annual Call for Projects. There is no minimum award size, but practical minimums (e.g. \$5,000 or \$10,000) may be suggested to ensure projects are substantial enough to justify federal reporting.

Eligible Applicants: RTP awards are open to a wide range of entities:

1. **Non-profit organizations** (including trail clubs, environmental/conservation organizations, user groups with 501(c)(3) status, etc.),
2. **Municipal and local governments** (cities, boroughs, counties, and quasi-governmental entities like service areas),
3. **State agencies** (for projects on state lands or that benefit the public statewide),
4. **Federal agencies** (for projects on federal lands, though federal agencies must typically provide the required match from non-federal sources or partner with local groups),
5. **Native American tribes or Alaska Native corporations**, and
6. **Educational institutions** (school districts, universities) that manage trails or outdoor facilities.

Individuals or for-profit businesses are *not* eligible to apply directly, but they can partner with an eligible sponsor or be contracted to perform work on a project. All applicants must demonstrate the capacity to manage federal funds responsibly – including financial stability and administrative capability to complete the project and comply with reporting.

Eligible Project Types: The RTP can fund a variety of trail-related projects. Common eligible project categories include:

1. **Trail Maintenance and Restoration:** Maintenance, rehabilitation, or restoration of existing recreational trails. This can include resurfacing trails, fixing trail structures (bridges, boardwalks, culverts), erosion control, clearing vegetation, and repairing damage to sustainable conditions.
2. **Trail Construction:** Development and construction of **new recreational trails**. This includes planning and building new trail routes or extensions, building support structures like footbridges, switchbacks, railings, etc. Construction projects must comply with environmental requirements (NEPA, permits) before work begins (see Compliance section).

3. **Trailhead and Trailside Facilities:** Installation or improvement of facilities that support trail use, such as trailhead parking areas, restrooms, kiosks, shelters, signage, benches, and accessibility features. For example, RTP funds could help build a new trailhead with an information board and vault toilet or install mileage markers and interpretive signs along a trail.
4. **Equipment for Trail Maintenance:** Purchase or lease of trail maintenance equipment is eligible, **if the equipment will be primarily used for trail-related purposes.** Examples include snowmobile groomers, ATVs or small tractors for trail work, mechanized trail building tools, chainsaws, brush mowers, or hand tools for volunteer crews. Typically, equipment purchases are allowed if they are necessary and reasonable for maintaining trails; the award application should justify the need and how the equipment will be managed. (Title to equipment will be vested in the awardee, but the awardee must use it for the intended purpose and follow disposition rules if it's sold later.)
5. **Trail Safety and Education Programs:** Development and dissemination of **educational materials, safety programs, or training** related to trail use. For example, awards can fund trail safety clinics, production of trail maps or brochures, "Leave No Trace" ethics education, or classes on trail building and maintenance for volunteers. These projects are capped (statewide) at 5% of the annual RTP funds, so they may be limited in number or dollar amount. Education projects should have a statewide or regional benefit if possible (rather than very localized impact).
6. **Land Acquisition/Easements:** Acquisition of land or permanent easements for trails, trail corridors, or trailhead access is allowable if it facilitates a recreational trail project. Such proposals must ensure the purchased property will be dedicated to public recreational use in perpetuity. Typically, appraisals and negotiations should be completed, and the RTP funds cannot exceed fair market value. Acquisitions often have additional requirements (like NEPA, Uniform Relocation Act compliance for any displaced persons, etc.). A template "Property Acquisition/Easement Certification" form is provided for these projects.

Ineligible Costs/Activities: Some activities are not eligible for RTP funding. These include:

1. **Law Enforcement** patrol programs (routine law enforcement is not eligible under RTP).
2. **Planning Studies** or advocacy – while planning is a critical part of project development, RTP funds are generally for on-the-ground projects. (Some necessary design and engineering costs for a specific trail construction project are allowed, but stand-alone planning or feasibility studies are not typically funded.)
3. **Facilities that are not trail-related:** e.g. campgrounds, playgrounds, or parks with no recreational trail nexus (those might be eligible under other programs like LWCF, but not RTP).
4. **Projects on private land with no public access:** RTP projects must serve the public. If on private land, there must be a public access easement or other mechanism to ensure public use.
5. **Condemnation of property (eminent domain):** RTP funds cannot be used to condemn land for trail projects.
6. **Duplicate funding:** Costs that are already funded by another federal source (you cannot count the same expense twice for federal reimbursement). Also, costs incurred before a project is formally approved and authorized by DOT&PF/FHWA are generally not eligible for reimbursement (no "pre-award" costs, unless explicitly allowed).

7. **Administrative overhead of the awardee:** General organizational operating costs (rent, utilities, salaries not related to the project) cannot be charged to the RTP award, aside from the specific project expenses and direct project management time. Indirect costs can only be included if the organization has an approved federal indirect cost rate, and it is applied to the project per that rate agreement.

DOT&PF program staff can answer questions on eligibility during the application phase. If a proposed project or cost is questionable, it's best to inquire early or note it in the application for clarification. All projects must adhere to **federal cost principles (2 CFR 200 Subpart E)** ensuring costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the project.

Application Procedures

Annual Award Cycle: The RTP in Alaska operates on an annual award cycle tied to the federal fiscal year. Each year, DOT&PF will announce a **Call for Projects** (typically in late summer or early fall) for the upcoming funding cycle. The announcement will be posted on the State of Alaska Online Public Notice system, DOT&PF's website, and sent to a program mailing list. It will include key dates, available funding, and links to application materials. The timeline below is illustrative and may vary by funding cycle. Specific dates will be identified in the annual Call for Projects.

1. **August:** Program Kick-off – Call for Projects released. Application materials (forms, instructions, guidance documents) are made available on DOT&PF's RTP webpage and/or an online award management platform. In 2025, the application process was conducted via an online portal (Submittable) by DNR; DOT&PF will maintain an online submission system for convenience and efficiency (details will be provided each year). DOT&PF will also hold an **applicant workshop or webinar** around this time to walk through the application process, explain any changes, and answer questions.
2. **September: Public Notice period** – All applicants are required to post a public notice about their proposed project by a specified date (often by the end of September). This public notice informs the local community of the project proposal and invites public comment. It must include key details like project name, location, sponsor, and a contact to submit comments. Applicants must post the notice in a visible manner (e.g. on-site or in a local newspaper or community bulletin) and **submit a copy of the notice and proof of posting to the program** by the deadline. DOT&PF will also post these notices on the state's Online Public Notice website for broader visibility. Public notice is **mandatory** – an application will be disqualified if this step is not completed by the deadline.
3. **October: Application Deadline** – Typically around October 31. By this date, applicants must have completed all required application steps (which may include an initial public notice submission followed by the full application form and attachments). Late submissions are not accepted. Once submitted, any changes or updates to an application after the deadline are generally not allowed, aside from responding to requests for clarification from program staff.
4. **November/December: Application Review and Scoring** – DOT&PF program staff will first **screen applications for eligibility and completeness** in November. This includes verifying applicant eligibility, ensuring all required documents are included, and that the project appears to meet basic program requirements. If minor issues are found, staff may reach out to applicants for clarification or missing pieces (at DOT&PF's discretion). Qualified applications are then forwarded to ARTAC members. **ARTAC**

scoring meetings are usually held in December (exact timing can vary; for example, under DNR an ORTAB meeting was held in mid-December to score projects). ARTAC members will score each application using the standard criteria (see *Project Scoring* section) and then meet (in person or virtually) to discuss scores and finalize recommendations. These meetings are open to the public to observe, and applicants are often invited to present their projects or answer questions from the committee.

5. **January: Recommendations**– By early January, ARTAC’s recommended project list is submitted to DOT&PF leadership. DOT&PF reviews the recommendations for eligibility, funding availability, program priorities, and compliance with federal funding distribution requirements under 23 U.S.C. § 206(d). Following this review, DOT&PF develops the final list of projects selected for funding.

As part of its ongoing oversight role, DOT&PF will provide FHWA with the proposed RTP award list and supporting information demonstrating compliance with federal program requirements. FHWA may review the award list and provide comments or questions; however, FHWA concurrence is not required for project selection. Final determinations regarding project eligibility for federal reimbursement occur during project authorization, when FHWA reviews project-specific documentation and applicable compliance requirements, including environmental review obligations. DOT&PF will consider any FHWA comments received prior to issuing award agreements and authorizing project implementation.

6. **February/March: Award Announcement and Award Agreements** – DOT&PF will formally announce the awards (press release, website posting, and direct notification to all applicants). **Award notification letters** will be sent to successful applicants, including any specific conditions or adjustments (e.g. reduced funding amount or scope changes if applicable). Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified and offered a debrief if they desire feedback. DOT&PF will then prepare **Memorandum of Agreements (MOA)** for each project. These agreements are contracts that outline the terms and conditions of the award, including the project scope, budget, match requirement, period of performance, and all compliance requirements (federal and state). The awardee’s authorized official will need to sign the agreement, and in some cases, provide a resolution from their governing board accepting the award. The target is to have award agreements signed and in place by spring (March or April), so that project work can commence as soon as weather allows in the spring/summer.
7. **Project Implementation (Spring onward):** Once agreements are signed, DOT&PF issues a formal **Notice to Proceed** (or equivalent authorization) to each awardee, allowing them to begin incurring costs. Projects then move into the implementation phase, described in a later section. Most projects funded in this cycle will be active during that summer and possibly into the next year, depending on project timeline. DOT&PF will set an end date for each project (often 1 to 2 years from award) by which work should be completed and all funds expended, though extensions may be awarded if justified.

Application Package: A complete Multi-Use Trail (RTP) application will typically consist of several components, all of which must be submitted by the deadline. DOT&PF will provide templates or forms for many of these on our website at [Multi-Use Trails Program - Alaska DOT&PF](#) . The required components generally include:

1. **Project Application Form:** This is the main application where the applicant provides basic information and narrative descriptions. It will cover sections such as: project title, applicant organization info, project location, **project description and scope of work**, project timeline, detailed budget breakdown, description of public benefit, and statements addressing evaluation criteria (e.g. how the project aligns with program goals and SCORP, the level of community support, and how the project will be maintained in

the long term). DOT&PF will supply a general overview of the application and the scoring rubric. Applications will be submitted via [Submittable](#).

2. **Budget Workbook:** A detailed budget spreadsheet must be filled out, showing all project costs by category (e.g. labor, equipment, materials, contracts, etc.), the amount of RTP award funds for each, the matching contributions for each, and a total project cost. The budget should clearly identify the source of the matching funds (e.g. \$10,000 from City general fund, \$5,000 value of volunteer labor at \$X/hour, etc.). DOT&PF provides a **Budget Workbook template (Excel)** for consistency. All costs in the budget should tie back to the activities described in the project scope. Applicants should double-check their math and ensure the budget narrative explains each cost – a well-prepared, accurate budget will score higher.
3. **Project Timeline/Schedule:** The application will require a proposed timeline for the project, often as a simple schedule or Gantt chart. This should break the project into tasks (planning/design, environmental clearance, procurement, construction, etc.) with estimated start and end dates. The timeline is important for demonstrating the project is ready to proceed and can be completed in a reasonable period. Ambitious yet realistic schedules (with some allowance for Alaska’s short construction seasons) will be rated favorably.
4. **Maps and Site Plans:** The applicant should include a map showing the project location. For trail projects, a **topographic map or aerial photo** with the trail route marked is ideal. For projects involving construction, a site plan or diagram of the improvements is helpful. Maps should be clear and include labels or a legend. If the project is in a specific park or area, indicate access points or nearby landmarks. Good maps help reviewers understand the project context and can be a factor in scoring under the project description and public benefit criteria.
5. **Public Notice Documentation:** Proof of the required public notice must be attached. This includes a copy of the notice text that was posted and a brief report of **when and where it was posted** (e.g. dates and locations of postings, or a tear-sheet from a newspaper, etc.). If any **public comments or opposition** were received as a result of the notice, the applicant should include those comments and provide a response or explanation of how they will address any concerns. Applicants are specifically asked on the application form whether there was any opposition and how it was handled. Engaging the community and addressing issues early can strengthen an application’s chances (and is required by state process).
6. **Environmental Review Questionnaire:** Each application must include an **Environmental Review Checklist or form** to preliminarily identify the potential environmental impacts of the project. DOT&PF (in consultation with FHWA) must determine the project’s compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (**NEPA**) prior to approving any construction activities. To streamline this, applicants fill out a checklist (provided as the **Environmental Compliance Review form**) indicating if their project might affect resources such as wetlands, historic sites, endangered species, etc., and describing any permits or agency consultations that may be required. This information helps DOT&PF anticipate the level of environmental clearance needed (most trail projects qualify as **Categorical Exclusions** under FHWA NEPA regulations). *Note:* The application’s environmental section is for initial analysis – **final NEPA approval is conducted by DOT&PF** after award, but a well-considered checklist will assure reviewers that the applicant is aware of and prepared for compliance steps.
7. **Letters of Support:** While not always mandatory, including letters of support can greatly strengthen an application under “community support” criteria. These could be letters from local government officials

(e.g. a city mayor or tribal council) endorsing the project, community organizations or user groups who will benefit, land managers or landowners awarding permission, etc. If the project is on land not owned by the applicant, a **landowner permission letter** or agreement is required (for example, if a nonprofit is proposing a trail on city land, the city must approve of the project). Strong support demonstrates the project is a community priority and is feasible.

8. **Match Commitment Letters:** If any matching funds are coming from a partner or third party, include letters or documents confirming those contributions (e.g. a foundation award letter, or a volunteer group's pledge of labor, etc.). For in-kind match like volunteer labor, a letter from the organization providing volunteers outlining the commitment can suffice.
9. **Past Performance:** DOT&PF will conduct a **risk assessment** of applicants, especially those who have received federal awards before. While not a separate submission from the applicant, the applicant may wish to note their track record or improvements made since past projects. The program staff will review whether the applicant successfully delivered past RTP projects (if any) on time and on budget. Poor past performance won't automatically disqualify an application, but it may factor into a risk-based point adjustment or require additional conditions (such as increased monitoring) if selected. Conversely, an applicant with a solid track record may be seen as lower risk.

DOT&PF encourages applicants to **start early** and reach out with any questions during the application period. Common pitfalls include waiting until the last minute (which could lead to technical problems with submission or missing elements) and not reading the instructions carefully. Attending the annual application workshop (or viewing its recording) is highly recommended – applicants who have participated in these trainings tend to submit higher quality applications.

Project Evaluation and Scoring

All RTP applications are evaluated through a competitive scoring process to determine which projects best meet program objectives and provide the greatest public benefit. DOT&PF uses a structured scoring rubric totaling 100 points to assess project readiness, community benefit, applicant capacity, and overall project quality. The evaluation criteria and scoring framework are currently under review by the Program Manager and the Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (ARTAC). The descriptions below are intended to provide applicants with general guidance regarding the factors considered during project evaluation.

1. Application Completeness (8 Points)

This category evaluates whether all required application materials have been submitted and whether the application package is complete, organized, and responsive to program requirements. Reviewers will consider whether all required forms, attachments, supporting documentation, certifications, and other required materials are included. Applications that are complete and require little or no follow-up clarification will receive higher scores.

2. Applicant Capacity and Readiness (8 Points)

This category evaluates the applicant's ability to successfully complete and maintain the proposed project. Reviewers may consider the applicant's organizational experience, staffing, project management capabilities, previous award performance, partnerships, and long-term maintenance plans. Applicants should clearly demonstrate their ability to manage federal funds, complete the project within the proposed schedule, and maintain project improvements after construction or implementation.

3. Project Description and Scope (10 Points)

This category evaluates the clarity, completeness, and feasibility of the proposed project. Applicants should clearly describe the work to be completed, project objectives, anticipated outcomes, and any supporting infrastructure or improvements included in the proposal. Reviewers will assess whether the project scope is sufficiently detailed to determine feasibility and whether required permissions, easements, or access documentation have been addressed.

4. Narrative Quality and Clarity (8 Points)

This category evaluates the overall quality, organization, and effectiveness of the written application. Applicants should provide clear and concise responses that fully explain the proposed project and its benefits. Reviewers will consider whether the application presents information in a logical manner and whether project goals, needs, and outcomes are easily understood. Applications will be evaluated in the context of community size, organizational capacity, and project complexity.

5. Project Timeline (10 Points)

This category evaluates the reasonableness and feasibility of the proposed project schedule. Applicants should provide a timeline that identifies major project tasks, milestones, and anticipated completion dates. Reviewers will consider whether the schedule is realistic, whether sufficient time has been allocated for permitting, procurement, environmental review, and construction activities, and whether the timeline aligns with the proposed budget and scope of work.

6. Maps and Graphics (5 Points)

This category evaluates the quality and usefulness of maps, site plans, photographs, and other visual materials submitted with the application. Maps should clearly identify project locations, land ownership, access points, and project limits. Graphics should help reviewers understand project conditions, proposed improvements, and the overall context of the project.

7. Public Benefit (16 Points)

Public benefit is one of the most significant evaluation factors. This category assesses the extent to which the project addresses a documented recreational need and provides meaningful benefits to the public. Reviewers may consider the number and diversity of users served, the creation of new recreational opportunities, improvements to existing facilities, accessibility enhancements, safety improvements, youth engagement opportunities, and connections to regional trail systems. Applicants are encouraged to provide data, studies, community plans, or other supporting information demonstrating public need and anticipated benefits.

8. Community Support and Engagement (15 Points)

This category evaluates the extent and quality of public outreach, stakeholder engagement, and community support. Reviewers may consider letters of support, resolutions, tribal consultation efforts, public meeting summaries, public notice documentation, and evidence of meaningful engagement with affected communities and user groups. The presence of public opposition will not automatically reduce a score; however, reviewers may consider whether concerns were acknowledged and addressed through outreach, project modifications, or other mitigation measures.

9. Budget Quality and Accuracy (10 Points)

This category evaluates the completeness, organization, and accuracy of the project budget. Applicants should provide detailed cost estimates, supporting documentation, and clear explanations for proposed expenditures. Reviewers will consider whether calculations are accurate, whether budget information is consistent throughout the application, and whether proposed costs are adequately documented and supported.

10. Budget Reasonableness and Alignment (7 Points)

This category evaluates whether proposed expenditures are appropriate for the project scope and whether costs appear reasonable for the type, size, and location of the project. Reviewers will assess whether labor, materials,

equipment, professional services, and other costs are justified and directly related to project objectives. Budgets that demonstrate efficient use of RTP funds and strong alignment between costs and project outcomes will receive higher scores.

11. Funding Match and Compliance (2 Points)

This category evaluates whether the required non-federal match has been identified, documented, and complies with RTP requirements. Applicants should clearly identify all match sources and provide supporting documentation where appropriate. Match contributions may include cash, eligible in-kind contributions, donated services, volunteer labor, or other eligible non-federal resources. Higher scores will be awarded to applications that clearly demonstrate compliance with all match requirements and provide sufficient supporting documentation.

In summary, the scoring system emphasizes a well-prepared application, a demonstrated project need, sound project planning, meaningful public benefit, and strong community support. Each application is independently evaluated by multiple ARTAC members using the approved scoring criteria. Following individual review, ARTAC may discuss scoring results and develop funding recommendations for DOT&PF consideration. The maximum possible score is 100 points. Final funding decisions will consider application scores, available funding, compliance with federal RTP funding distribution requirements under 23 U.S.C. § 206(d), project eligibility, and other programmatic considerations identified in the annual Call for Projects.

After scoring, ARTAC will typically rank projects from highest to lowest score and may recommend full or partial funding for each. DOT&PF will consider ARTAC scores and rankings as a key factor in project selection. However, DOT&PF also ensures that the federally required **30% motorized / 30% non-motorized / 40% diverse** funding splits are met. This means, for example, if the top scoring projects were all non-motorized, DOT&PF would still need to fund some lower-scoring motorized projects to achieve the 30% minimum for motorized. Fortunately, with a diverse array of applications, the scoring process usually yields a mix of project types near the top. If any adjustments are needed to meet funding distribution or other strategic goals, DOT&PF will do so in a manner consistent with the intent of the scoring. All such decisions will be documented.

Strategic Alignment: It's worth noting explicitly that projects are also reviewed for how they **align with DOT&PF's strategic goals and the SCORP**. While there may not be separate point categories labeled "strategic alignment," these themes are embedded in the criteria above (especially Public Benefit). DOT&PF's mission in administering RTP includes enhancing transportation connectivity, safety, and economic benefits through recreational infrastructure. Projects that, for example, improve safe routes for walking/biking, contribute to tourism and economic development, or connect communities to each other or to important natural areas can be considered as advancing DOT&PF and statewide objectives. The SCORP provides current statewide outdoor recreation priorities, such as addressing maintenance backlogs on existing trails, improving access in underserved regions, and promoting health and wellness through outdoor recreation. Reviewers will have these considerations in mind, so applicants should highlight any such alignments. In fact, the MOA guiding this program transition specifies that evaluation criteria *must* be aligned with FHWA guidance and SCORP priorities. Therefore, demonstrating how a project fits those frameworks can indirectly improve its competitiveness.

Finally, after projects are selected and announced, DOT&PF will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants upon request. This can help future applications. The competitive nature means not all good projects can be funded each year, but often an unfunded project can be resubmitted in a subsequent cycle (perhaps improved based on feedback).

Environmental, Cultural, and Accessibility Compliance

All RTP projects must comply with applicable **environmental and historic preservation laws** before and during implementation. Since RTP uses federal funds, **NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act)** review is mandatory for each project. **DOT&PF, as the administering agency, is responsible for ensuring NEPA compliance** – this includes determining the appropriate level of environmental review and obtaining FHWA approval. In practical terms, most RTP projects will fall under a **Categorical Exclusion (CE)** category, meaning they do not individually or cumulatively have significant environmental impacts (typical for small trail projects, rehabilitation, minor development). However, a NEPA checklist must be completed and reviewed to confirm this. No ground-disturbing work or irreversible commitments of resources can occur until **DOT&PF issues a NEPA clearance** for the project.

NEPA Process: After award, DOT&PF environmental staff will work with each awardee to complete the NEPA requirements. Keep in mind, project costs incurred prior to FHWA authorization are not eligible for reimbursement. The **Environmental Compliance Review form** submitted with the application serves as a starting point. DOT&PF may request additional information or studies depending on the project: for instance, if a trail will pass through wetlands, a wetlands delineation and possibly a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit (Section 404) might be needed. If a project could affect threatened species habitat, consultation under the Endangered Species Act is required. These processes will be coordinated by DOT&PF, but the awardee may need to provide information or even hire specialists (award funds can often cover such compliance costs as part of the project). It's important to factor in time for these reviews in the project schedule. **DOT&PF has a Programmatic Agreement with FHWA** for certain CEs, and Administrative Order 361 directs updating those agreements to add DOT&PF as signatory for RTP projects. In short, DOT&PF will ensure a proper NEPA document (usually a CE form with all necessary attachments) is completed and approved for each project before work starts. Awardees will receive notice when they have NEPA clearance to proceed.

Historic/Cultural Resources: Compliance with the **National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106** is a crucial part of environmental review. Many trail projects occur on public lands where cultural or historical resources may be present (e.g. archaeological sites, historic structures). DOT&PF will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) at the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (Office of History and Archaeology) on each project. The awardee might be asked to provide details on ground disturbance, locations of any known historic sites, or traditional cultural properties in the area. If a project has potential to affect historic properties, DOT&PF (or the land managing agency if on federal land) may need to conduct an archaeological survey or monitor construction. If artifacts or human remains are discovered during project work, work must stop, and the find reported for evaluation per state law. All Section 106 consultation and any necessary mitigation must be completed before or during the project as appropriate. Generally, maintenance on existing trails has low risk, but new trail construction could require a cultural survey. The award budget can fund such surveys if identified as needed.

Other Environmental Requirements: Depending on project scope, additional laws and permits could apply, for example:

1. **Clean Water Act:** If the project discharges fill into waters or wetlands, a Section 404 permit from the Corps of Engineers and a Section 401 water quality certification may be needed. Bridge or culvert work might require these.

2. **[ANILCA Title XI](#) or other special use permits:** If on certain federal lands (like National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, etc.), there may be special permitting processes. Awardees must obtain all landowner permissions or permits.
3. **[Coastal Zone Consistency](#):** (Alaska's coastal management program is no longer active statewide, but local coastal plans might affect certain areas).
4. **[Executive Order 11988 \(Floodplains\)](#):** Projects in floodplains should be designed to avoid adverse impacts.
5. **[Executive Order 11990 \(Wetlands\)](#):** Avoidance and minimization of impact to wetlands is required. Mitigation may be necessary if unavoidable.

DOT&PF's environmental staff will guide awardees through these as part of NEPA. The **bottom line** is: **No construction activities can begin until DOT&PF has given explicit environmental clearance.** Awardees must adhere to any mitigation measures or conditions specified in the NEPA document or permits (e.g. avoiding work in bird nesting season or maintaining erosion controls during construction).

Accessibility Requirements: All projects must be reviewed for compliance with **accessibility laws**, notably the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) (for facilities on federal land or built with federal funds). Recreational trails have some unique standards: the U.S. Access Board has developed accessibility guidelines for outdoor developed areas (which include trails) on federal lands, and these are good practice benchmarks even for other lands. In general, if a trail or facility can be made accessible, it should be – especially trails that are designed for foot traffic in or near developed areas. The application should address how the project will incorporate accessibility (e.g. a new trailhead will include an ADA-compliant parking space and an accessible route to the trail; a viewing platform on a trail will be wheelchair-accessible; or, if steep terrain prevents full accessibility, the applicant should acknowledge that and perhaps describe alternative accessible experiences available nearby). ARTAC and DOT&PF will consider accessibility in scoring (it ties into public benefit). During project implementation, DOT&PF will ensure that any constructed facilities meet ADA standards (for example, proper width, slope, surface firmness for accessible trails, proper dimensions for restrooms, etc.). The **ADA also requires** that when existing facilities are altered, they should be made accessible to the maximum extent feasible. Awardees may consult DOT&PF's Civil Rights Office or ADA coordinators for technical guidance.

Civil Rights Compliance: As a federal-aid program, RTP projects are subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and related nondiscrimination authorities. **Title VI** prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal assistance. Awardees must ensure their projects (and any public outreach for them) are inclusive and nondiscriminatory. If the project involves public events (like trail planning meetings or volunteer days), reasonable steps should be taken to include people of all backgrounds and provide translation or accommodations if needed for limited English speakers. **Environmental Justice (EJ)** considerations also apply – DOT&PF will evaluate if projects have disproportionate negative impacts on minority or low-income populations (unlikely for trails, which generally are positive amenities, but construction nuisances should be considered). **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act** and the ADA ensure no discrimination on the basis of disability – connecting back to accessibility. **Title IX** (gender) and **Age Discrimination Act** also apply broadly. In practical terms, by building accessible, safe, public trails, awardees are usually furthering equity. However, each award agreement will include standard civil rights clauses that the awardee must adhere to, and the awardee may be asked to report any Title VI complaints or investigations. DOT&PF's Civil Rights Office is available to provide guidance, and FHWA may review Title VI compliance as part of program oversight.

Buy America: A specific federal requirement relevant to some RTP projects is the **Buy America** provision for steel and iron. FHWA-funded projects generally must use American-made steel or iron products. This can affect trail projects that involve items like steel bridges, culvert pipes, railings, or rebar for concrete. There is some administrative relief in certain cases (for example, if the amount of steel is minimal or waivers apply), but applicants should be aware of this. DOT&PF will provide **Buy America guidance** (as was provided on the DNR website) and will check compliance during project implementation. If a project plans to purchase a steel bridge kit, for instance, the supplier must certify that it meets Buy America (produced in the U.S.). This requirement does not apply to equipment purchases (like ATVs) but does to construction materials. Awardees should consult with DOT&PF early if their project involves steel/iron to ensure compliance or secure a waiver if eligible.

In summary, DOT&PF will ensure that **all RTP projects comply with NEPA, historic preservation requirements, accessibility standards, and other environmental laws**. Awardees must cooperate in this compliance process by providing necessary information and following all stipulated mitigation measures. Non-compliance can result in project delays, funding suspension, or repayment of funds, so it is taken very seriously. The award timeline and work plan should incorporate these compliance tasks. Fortunately, since many trail projects are environmentally benign or beneficial, the process is usually straightforward with proper planning.

Awards and Project Implementation

Award Notification: Once project selection is finalized and approved, DOT&PF will send out award packets to the successful applicants. The packet typically includes an **Award Letter** (congratulating the applicant and summarizing the award), a **Memorandum of Agreement** for signature, and various attachments such as general provisions, reporting templates, and instructions for next steps (e.g. a checklist for starting the project). Unsuccessful applicants will receive a letter and are encouraged to contact DOT&PF for debriefs to strengthen future applications.

Memorandum of Agreement: The **Memorandum of Agreement** is a crucial document that establishes the official relationship between DOT&PF (as the pass-through entity of federal funds) and the awardee (subrecipient). It will reference federal requirements under [2 CFR 200 \(Uniform Guidance\)](#) and FHWA RTP guidance that the subrecipient must follow. Key elements of the agreement include:

1. **Scope of Work:** A detailed description of the project activities and deliverables, often drawn from the application but refined as needed. Only work within this scope is eligible for reimbursement. Any changes to the scope later will require DOT&PF approval (via a written amendment).
2. **Project Schedule:** The agreement will specify the **period of performance** – start and end dates for the project. Typically, the start date is upon full execution of the agreement (or a specified date) and the end date could be 12–24 months out. All work and costs must occur within this window to be eligible, unless an extension is awarded in writing.
3. **Project Budget:** The agreement will include a budget table showing the approved award amount and the budget categories (sometimes by phase or type of expense). It also notes the required match amount. Deviating from this budget (e.g. moving funds between categories or adding new line items) usually requires prior approval. Minor variances might be allowed with DOT&PF project manager consent, but larger changes need a formal amendment.

4. **Federal and State Requirements:** A section incorporating standard terms such as compliance with **2 CFR 200** (Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards), **FHWA regulations, civil rights laws, environmental conditions, debarment and suspension** (the awardee must not be debarred and must ensure that contractors are not debarred, which DOT&PF will verify via SAM.gov), **drug-free workplace, procurement standards**, etc. By signing, the awardee agrees to all these provisions.
5. **Reimbursement Process:** The agreement will outline **how to request reimbursement**. Generally, the awardee will submit periodic **Reimbursement Requests** (monthly or quarterly, as needed) along with documentation of costs (invoices, timesheets, etc.). DOT&PF will review and then reimburse eligible expenses up to the 90% federal share. A typical clause is that DOT&PF will pay within a certain time after receiving a complete request (often 30 days, subject to state accounting processes). If the awardee fails to provide adequate documentation, DOT&PF can withhold payment until resolved.
6. **Reporting Requirements:** The awardee will be required to submit **Progress Reports** (usually quarterly, or semi-annually at minimum). These reports describe work completed, any challenges, percent complete, and upcoming activities. They also report on **match contributions to date** and **project expenditures**. A **final report** is required at project completion, summarizing the project's accomplishments, outcomes (e.g. miles of trail built or maintained, amenities installed), and including "after" photos.
7. **Retention and Audit:** The agreement will specify that the awardee must **retain all project records for a period (commonly 3 years) after the final payment**, and that the project is subject to audit by DOT&PF, State of Alaska auditors, or federal auditors. If any costs are found ineligible, the awardee would be required to repay those.
8. **Maintenance Obligation:** Especially for construction projects, the agreement will include a commitment that the awardee (or landowner) will maintain the trail/facility for a certain number of years (often the useful life of the improvement). For example, if RTP funds build a trail, the sponsor agrees to keep it open to the public and maintained for, say, 20 years. This prevents the scenario of federal funds building something that then is abandoned. If a project ceases to be used for public recreation before the stipulated time, the awardee may have to repay a prorated portion of the funds or find an alternative acceptable to DOT&PF/FHWA.
9. **Termination and Remedies:** Standard clauses allow DOT&PF to terminate the award for cause (e.g. if the awardee fails to comply or make adequate progress) or convenience (though rarely used). It will outline remedies such as withholding funds, requiring corrective actions, or in worst case, terminating and possibly recovering funds.
10. **Signatures:** The agreement must be signed by the DOT&PF authorized representative and the awardee's authorized official (often an executive director, mayor, or similar authority). Some awardees may need to have their governing body approve the agreement by resolution before signing.

Initial Steps After Award: Once the agreement is signed, DOT&PF will typically hold a **kickoff meeting** or call with the awardee. The purpose is to go over the terms, clarify any questions, and set expectations. The DOT&PF program manager will be the primary point of contact for the awardee moving forward. At this stage, DOT&PF will also ensure the project has all prerequisite approvals: notably, starting or continuing the **NEPA process** (if not already cleared) and verifying any permits or land access rights are in place. **No construction or field work can**

start until NEPA is completed (as emphasized earlier), even if the award agreement is signed. If a project is simple maintenance that was categorically excluded in the application stage, DOT&PF may issue NEPA concurrence quickly. For more complex projects, the awardee may be asked to hold off on certain tasks (like ground disturbance) until an environmental document is finalized. DOT&PF might issue a limited Notice to Proceed for preliminary tasks (surveying, engineering design) while NEPA is underway, if those tasks do not prejudice the NEPA outcome.

Procurement: Awardees must procure any contractors, equipment, or supplies **according to the applicable procurement rules**. If the awardee is a government entity, it must follow its local government procurement code or state procurement regulations (which generally require competitive bids or quotes above certain dollar thresholds). Non-profits must follow procurement standards outlined in **2 CFR 200.318-327** for federal awards, which similarly emphasize full and open competition for purchases. **Buy America** provisions must be followed for steel/iron as noted. Awardees should keep records of how they solicited and selected vendors (e.g. bid advertisements, selection criteria, etc.), as DOT&PF may review this to ensure fairness and cost reasonableness. If an awardee wants to use its own labor force or equipment (“force account”), that should be approved by DOT&PF in advance and proper cost accounting must be in place.

Reimbursement Requests: Throughout the project, awardees will spend funds and then submit for reimbursement of the federal share. DOT&PF will provide a **Reimbursement Request Form or portal**. Typically, the awardee will attach supporting documentation: copies of invoices from contractors or suppliers, timesheets for staff labor, receipts for materials, etc., and proof of payment (like cancelled checks or bank statements) to show the awardee has paid these costs. The request will break out which costs are to be reimbursed (90%) and which are being counted as match (the 10% or more). DOT&PF staff will review each request, verify costs are within the approved scope and budget and are allowable under federal rules. They may ask for corrections or additional backup if something is unclear. Once approved, DOT&PF processes the payment through the state’s accounting system to the awardee (electronic fund transfer or check). **Advance payments** are generally not provided; this is a reimbursement program, though DOT&PF tries to process reimbursements promptly to minimize cash flow strain on awardees. Frequent requests (monthly) are allowed, but some awardees choose quarterly. At minimum, a reimbursement should be filed at least once every six months to show activity.

Progress Reporting and Communication: Awardees must submit periodic **progress reports**, as specified in the agreement (often quarterly). A progress report form may be provided. It will ask for updates on: tasks completed this period, tasks planned for next period, any delays or issues encountered, status of budget (funds expended and match to date), and confirmation that the work is on track. It may also include questions about any publicity or photos of the project. Timely reporting is important; DOT&PF uses these reports to do required quarterly progress updates to FHWA. If an awardee falls behind or doesn’t communicate, DOT&PF will reach out and can escalate if needed (site visits, etc.). **Good communication** between awardee and DOT&PF is key. Awardees are encouraged to promptly inform DOT&PF of any significant issues – for example, unexpected environmental concerns, contractor problems, cost overruns, or scope changes they are considering. DOT&PF can often help troubleshoot or approve adjustments, but surprises at the end are harder to resolve.

Project Amendments: If changes are needed during the project, they must be formally requested to DOT&PF. Common changes include: **time extensions** (if project delays occur due to weather, etc., an awardee can request to extend the end date), **budget reallocations** (moving funds between budget categories or adding match), or **scope modifications** (altering the project work). DOT&PF can approve minor modifications via letter/email, but significant changes may require an **amendment to the memorandum of agreement** signed by both parties.

Importantly, any change must still keep the project eligible and substantially similar to what was approved. If an awardee, for instance, cannot complete a portion of work, DOT&PF will consider whether the remaining project still meets its objectives. If the scope is reduced, DOT&PF might reduce the award amount correspondingly to redistribute funds elsewhere. Changes that would violate the 30/30/40 funding balance or other federal rules cannot be approved. All amendments should be requested well in advance of the project end date.

Project Completion and Closeout: Upon finishing the project, the awardee will notify DOT&PF and submit a **final reimbursement request** for any remaining funds along with a **Final Report**. The final report typically includes: a narrative summary of the project achievements, before-and-after photographs, confirmation that the scope was completed, a description of the public response (e.g. attendance at a ribbon cutting, usage statistics if available), and how the project will be maintained moving forward. The awardee also certifies that all contractors have been paid, and any disputes resolved. DOT&PF may perform a **final site visit** or inspection to verify the project was completed as intended. If any punch-list items are identified, the awardee would address them.

Financially, DOT&PF will reconcile the project's expenditures and match. If the awardee did not use the full award amount, DOT&PF will de-obligate the unspent balance (it can be reprogrammed to other projects or next year's cycle). If the awardee over-expended or did work beyond the scope, those extra costs are solely the awardee's responsibility. When everything is in order, DOT&PF will issue an **award closeout letter** acknowledging completion and reminding the awardee of ongoing obligations (like maintenance and record retention). All project records must be retained by the awardee for at least **three years after closeout** (or longer if any audit or legal issue arises)sam.gov.

DOT&PF will include the project in its RTP annual report to FHWA, highlighting accomplishments. Often, success stories are shared publicly to promote the program's impact. Awardees are encouraged to hold ribbon-cutting events or engage media to celebrate the project – acknowledging RTP and DOT&PF/FHWA support.

Fiscal Oversight and Subrecipient Monitoring

Managing federal funds carries significant responsibility for both DOT&PF and the award recipients. DOT&PF must follow federal Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200) in its oversight of subrecipients, and awardees must comply with the requirements as subrecipients of federal awards. This section outlines how financial oversight and compliance monitoring are conducted:

DOT&PF Oversight Responsibilities: As the pass-through entity, DOT&PF is required by 2 CFR §200.332 to undertake certain monitoring and management actions for subawards. Key activities include:

1. **Risk Assessment:** Before awarding and as part of monitoring, DOT&PF assesses each subrecipient's risk of non-compliance. This considers factors like the size of the award, the awardee's prior experience with federal awards, results of previous audits, and whether the awardee has new personnel or systems. Based on this risk, DOT&PF may tailor the monitoring intensity (e.g. high-risk subrecipients might get more frequent check-ins or site visits). In the application scoring, prior performance was considered qualitatively; here, it's a formal process documented for compliance.
2. **Subaward Agreement Clarity:** DOT&PF ensures that each award agreement (subaward) includes all required data (Federal Award Identification, Assistance Listing Number (ALN) which for RTP is typically 20.219, amount of federal funds, requirements, etc.) and required clauses from 2 CFR 200 Appendix II (like

termination, lobbying prohibition, etc.). The agreements explicitly incorporate 2 CFR 200 rules so that subrecipients are aware of them.

3. **Training and Technical Assistance:** DOT&PF will provide guidance to subrecipients on program requirements. This manual itself is part of that effort. Additionally, DOT&PF is available to answer questions, provide templates, and even one-on-one assistance if a subrecipient is struggling with fiscal procedures or documentation. The goal is to prevent issues by being proactive – for example, if a nonprofit has never had a federal award, DOT&PF might walk them through setting up a financial management system that segregates award funds, maintaining a ledger, etc.
4. **Review of Performance and Financial Reports:** As mentioned, DOT&PF reviews every reimbursement request and progress report. These reviews are not just for processing payments, but also to check for **allowable costs**, adherence to budget, and progress toward objectives. If a report indicates the project is behind schedule or encountering problems, DOT&PF will flag it and may require a corrective action plan. Financial report review includes ensuring matching contributions are being provided as promised and that costs align with the agreed scope.
5. **Site Visits and Inspections:** DOT&PF will conduct **monitoring site visits** for selected projects, especially mid-project or when critical work is underway. During a site visit, DOT&PF staff may examine project documentation (timesheets, invoices, procurement files) and physically inspect the work in progress or completed. They will also discuss with project staff their procedures for compliance. A site visit is an opportunity to identify any compliance issues early. A written report is usually provided after, noting any findings or recommendations. For example, a finding could be that the subrecipient wasn't documenting volunteer match hours correctly – DOT&PF would instruct them on proper documentation.
6. **Audit and Single Audit Tracking:** If a subrecipient expends **\$1,000,000 or more in federal funds in a fiscal year** (from all federal sources, not just RTP), it must undergo a **Single Audit** per [2 CFR 200.501](#) (previously known as A-133 audit). DOT&PF will notify such larger awardees of this requirement and will require they submit their audit report when done. DOT&PF reviews any audit findings related to RTP funds and ensures the subrecipient takes corrective action. For most RTP awardees (often smaller entities), a full Single Audit may not be triggered, but DOT&PF still may request financial statements or conduct its own mini-audit upon closeout.
7. **Documentation and Record-Keeping:** DOT&PF keeps comprehensive files on each subaward, including copies of all reports, correspondence, and monitoring activities. This documentation is essential for demonstrating to FHWA or state auditors that proper oversight is occurring. It also allows DOT&PF to analyze patterns and improve the program (for instance, if many awardees have trouble with a certain compliance area, DOT&PF can adjust training on that topic).

Subrecipient (Awardee) Responsibilities: Once in a award agreement, the subrecipient has agreed to a host of requirements. Some of the key ongoing responsibilities:

1. **Financial Management System:** The awardee must use a **financial management system** that accurately tracks expenditures of the RTP award and the matching funds. The system should provide records that identify the source and application of funds, with entries supported by source documentation. Essentially, if an auditor asks “show me all the invoices and payments for this project,” the awardee should be able to

produce that easily. The system must also ensure that expenditures are within the approved budget categories.

2. **Allowable Costs:** The awardee must ensure that every cost charged to the award is allowable per federal rules (2 CFR 200 Subpart E) and the program guidelines. Common unallowable costs that must be avoided include entertainment, alcohol, lobbying activities, and any expense not directly related to the trail project. If indirect costs are charged, they must have an approved rate or cost allocation method.
3. **Procurement and Contract Oversight:** The awardee must follow the applicable procurement standards and, once contractors are hired, actively manage those contracts to ensure full compliance with all requirements. If prevailing wage requirements under the Davis-Bacon Act apply, the awardee is responsible for monitoring contractor payrolls and enforcing those requirements. Under current FHWA guidance, the Davis-Bacon Act generally does not apply to RTP projects unless the project is located within a highway right-of-way or is otherwise integrated with a federal-aid highway project. DOT&PF will make this determination on a case-by-case basis and will notify the awardee if Davis-Bacon compliance is required.
4. **Environmental Mitigation Compliance:** If the NEPA process or permits imposed any mitigation (e.g., replant vegetation after construction, monitor for invasive species, avoid certain work windows), the awardee must implement those and document it in progress reports.
5. **Match Documentation:** The awardee must document the **match contributions** with the same rigor as award expenses. For cash match, this means showing invoices and payments of the non-federal share. For **in-kind match**, such as volunteer labor, the awardee should have sign-in sheets for volunteers, descriptions of work done, and use a reasonable rate to value the labor (DOT&PF can provide guidance, often unskilled volunteer labor is valued at a standard rate, or if professional services are donated, at the professional's typical rate). Donated materials should have letters stating their value, etc. These records should be submitted or available for verification.
6. **Reporting and Communication:** Subrecipients must submit reports on time and respond to DOT&PF requests for information promptly. If any issue arises that may impact the project or compliance, they should inform DOT&PF. It's better to proactively address a problem (like a potential budget shortfall or a compliance question) than to ignore it.
7. **Record Retention and Access:** As noted, all project records – financial and programmatic – must be kept for at least three years after closeout. If a Single Audit is required, records may need to be kept longer if the audit has findings still being resolved. The subrecipient must allow DOT&PF, State of Alaska auditors, FHWA, or the U.S. Inspector General access to these records upon request for monitoring or audit purposes. This might include on-site review of original documents.
8. **Subrecipient Monitoring of Contractors:** If the subrecipient further passes funds to a **lower-tier subrecipient or contractor**, they have to monitor those similarly. Generally, RTP projects do not involve sub-subrecipients (most awardees perform the work or hire contractors for construction, who are not subrecipients but vendors). But if, for example, a non-profit gets an RTP award and then sub-awards a portion to a partner organization, the original awardee is responsible for monitoring that partner.

Federal and State Audits: RTP projects can be selected for audit by various entities. The Alaska State Legislature's auditors or DOT&PF internal auditors might audit the program. FHWA periodically conducts **program**

reviews of state RTP administration. If selected, DOT&PF and potentially some subrecipients would be asked to provide files and demonstrate compliance. By following the procedures in this manual and maintaining documentation, both DOT&PF and subrecipients will be prepared for any such review. Administrative Order 361 acknowledges that audits may cover years DNR administered the program, and DNR will assist with those records if needed. Going forward, DOT&PF will maintain all necessary records to account for the program's performance and financial integrity.

In case of any **compliance findings** (whether through DOT&PF monitoring or external audit), DOT&PF will work with the subrecipient on a **corrective action plan**. Minor issues can often be fixed (e.g. submitting a missing report, improving documentation). Serious issues, like misuse of funds, could lead to suspension of payments or termination of the award. In extreme cases of non-compliance or fraud, DOT&PF could disallow costs and require repayment, and refer matters to authorities. Thankfully, such instances are rare. The goal of monitoring is to prevent problems and ensure each project succeeds while following the rules.

DOT&PF will also continually reference **FHWA's RTP guidance and best practices** to update its monitoring procedures. This includes staying current on any changes to federal regulations (for instance, if 2 CFR 200 is updated or if FHWA issues new RTP-specific rules). All program staff will receive training on award management regulations. Internally, DOT&PF will use tools like checklists for award managers to review projects at key milestones, and maintain a schedule of reporting deadlines for all active projects to ensure nothing slips through.

Reimbursable Services Agreements (RSAs) and Fiscal Transfers: A unique aspect of this program transition is the possibility of DOT&PF using **RSAs with DNR** for support (as mentioned earlier). An RSA is essentially an inter-departmental funding agreement within the State of Alaska. For example, if DNR's Division of Parks has an expert GIS person who maintains the statewide trails database that feeds into SCORP and is useful for RTP, DOT&PF could enter an RSA to fund a portion of that position's time. Similarly, DOT&PF might fund DNR to conduct certain trail planning or outreach tasks that benefit RTP. From a fiscal oversight perspective, RSAs are **intra-governmental** and not subawards. DOT&PF would ensure that any RSA-funded work is clearly delineated and does not duplicate what awardees are doing. RSAs would be paid with RTP's allowable administrative funds or possibly with the 5% education funds if relevant (since RSA'd tasks are not awards, they are essentially contractual services between agencies). This manual clarifies that while DNR is not an award recipient for RTP, it may still handle funds via RSA for agreed services. Those RSA arrangements will be documented via separate MOA or agreement, and any outputs (like data or reports) from DNR will be integrated into the program's operation.

In summary, **fiscal integrity and compliance** are top priorities under DOT&PF's stewardship of the RTP. By following 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance and FHWA policies, DOT&PF will maintain a high level of accountability. Awardees, in turn, must uphold their end by managing funds properly and cooperating with oversight. This partnership ensures the RTP remains a credible and successful program, competitive for future funding and able to deliver tangible benefits to Alaska's trail users.

Templates

The following forms provide additional resources, templates, and examples to support both program staff and award applicants/recipients. They are located on our website. These can be used as reference materials and adapted for each award cycle as needed.

1. **RTP Application Form (Template)** – A blank copy of the standard application form for the Alaska RTP, including all sections and questions that applicants must complete. This form template is annotated with tips for each section drawn from the instructions in this manual. *(This corresponds to the “FY2025 Application” form previously used, updated to reflect DOT&PF as the administering agency.)* Applicants and staff can refer to this template to understand the expected format and level of detail for applications.
2. **Budget Workbook Template (Excel)** – A sample of the Excel workbook used for detailing project budgets. The form provides a printed example of the workbook with hypothetical numbers, illustrating how to break down costs and calculate the federal share and match. Instructions for each column (Expense Category, Description, RTP Funds, Match, etc.) are included. This example serves as a guide for applicants to model their own budget submissions and for staff to review them.
3. **Environmental Compliance Checklist (Sample)** – The standard Environmental Review/NEPA questionnaire form that applicants must fill out, accompanied by a completed example for a fictional project. This shows how an applicant should identify potential environmental concerns and how DOT&PF staff would use the information. It also lists common permits and consultations that might be needed, acting as a quick reference for both applicants and program staff during project planning.
4. **Project Scoring Sheet and Instructions** – The actual **scoring rubric** used by reviewers (ARTAC members) with all scoring criteria and point values. This document is pending review and is not posted to the website at this time.
5. **Sample Memorandum of Agreement and General Provisions** – A template of the RTP Award Agreement with blanks for project-specific information, and the standard “boilerplate” general terms and conditions that accompany each agreement. Having this in the manual allows applicants (and new program staff) to familiarize themselves with the legal language and requirements ahead of time. It covers federal requirements (Uniform Guidance, Title VI, etc.), reporting obligations, and maintenance commitments in full detail. A sample signature page is included to show the format for execution by DOT&PF and the awardee.
6. **Reimbursement Request Form** – A reimbursement claim form that an awardee will submit.
7. **Progress Report Template** – The format in which awardees must report progress. The example provided shows sections for work completed, upcoming work, problems encountered, timeline status, and a financial summary. An illustrative example is given (e.g. “Task 1: Trail clearing 50% complete, Task 2: bridge materials ordered, etc.”). This helps standardize reporting and ensures awardees cover all necessary topics.

Each of these forms is intended to serve as a practical tool. The manual’s main text provides the detailed narrative and requirements. DOT&PF program staff should keep these up to date (for instance, if forms or processes change in future years, the manual should be revised accordingly). The ultimate aim is to make the RTP process as **clear, transparent, and user-friendly** as possible, while ensuring compliance with all governing rules.

Document Control: This final 2026 Alaska Recreational Trails Program Manual supersedes prior interim transition guidance and serves as the official program administration and applicant guidance document for the 2026 RTP

cycle. DOT&PF will maintain and update this manual as federal requirements, state policy, or program procedures evolve.

For questions or clarification on the content of this manual or the RTP process, please contact the DOT&PF Statewide Trails Program Manager at dot.rtp@alaska.gov , or visit the DOT&PF RTP website for additional information and updates.