

MULTI-USE TRAILS

ARTAC Reviewer Instructions, Staff Review, and Score Sheet

REVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS

Purpose of Scoring

The purpose of this scoring process is to evaluate applications fairly, consistently, and based on demonstrated project value, readiness, community support, public benefit, and alignment with the Alaska Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

General Guidance

- Score each application independently before the Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (ARTAC) scoring meeting using the criteria provided.
- Apply scoring consistently across all applications.
- Base scores on information provided in the application and on written applicant responses distributed by DOT&PF program staff. Do not rely on outside information, assumptions, or personal knowledge that is not available to the full committee.
- Use the full scoring range. A strong response may receive all available points, while a weak or unaddressed response may receive few or no points. Do not default to a middle score merely because it feels safer.
- Match the application to the closest scoring description. When a response falls between two scoring levels, select the lower score unless the higher score is clearly supported.
- Provide written justification for unusually high or low scores and identify material concerns that should be discussed by the committee.
- Written justification and evaluation notes may be subject to public disclosure and should remain factual, objective, and professional.

Examples of Using the Full Point Range

Level	Typical percentage	General example
Highest	90–100%	The criterion is fully addressed, well supported, and presents little or no uncertainty. For a 10-point item, a score of 9 or 10 may be appropriate.
Strong	70–89%	The criterion is addressed well, with only minor gaps or concerns. For a 10-point item, a score of 7 or 8 may be appropriate.
Adequate	40–69%	The minimum information is present, but important detail, documentation, or clarity is limited. For a 10-point item, a score of 4 to 6 may be appropriate.
Weak	1–39%	The response is incomplete, poorly supported, or raises significant concerns. For a 10-point item, a score of 1 to 3 may be appropriate.
Not addressed	0%	The application does not address the criterion, or the information provided does not demonstrate any creditable response.

Community Context and Fairness

- Evaluate projects considering size of community, project’s location, available resources and workforce capacity of the applicant and community.
- Do not disregard proposals from smaller or rural communities solely because they have a lower population, fewer users, fewer staff, or a less polished application.

- Do not score writing style, grammar, formatting, or professional graphic design beyond what is needed to understand and evaluate the project.
- Focus on whether the project is feasible, addresses a demonstrated need, is appropriately scaled, and provides meaningful public benefit.
- Do not rely solely on the number of people served. A project serving a small community or resolving critical regional access need may score highly when its benefit is well demonstrated.

Applicant Questions and Communications

- ARTAC members must submit questions for applicants to DOT&PF program staff at least **two weeks** before the scheduled scoring meeting.
- Committee members may not contact applicants directly about an application during the review and scoring process.
- DOT&PF program staff will compile questions, obtain applicant responses, and distribute all questions and responses to the entire committee so that every reviewer has access to the same information.
- Only information in the application or in official written responses distributed by DOT&PF may be used to revise a score.

Conflicts and Applicant Assistance

- Members may provide general public information but may not assist with drafting, editing, or strengthening a specific application. Before reviewing applications, members must disclose any assistance, affiliation, or interest involving an applicant. Members must not score or discuss an application they assisted. A member who is an applicant, or whose immediate family or affiliated organization is an applicant, is recused from reviewing and scoring all applications in that funding cycle. Direct questions to the ARTAC Chair and DOT&PF program staff.

Public Scoring Meeting and Final Scores

- The ARTAC scoring meeting will include public discussion of the applications and preliminary scores.
- Committee members may revise their scores during the meeting based on the committee discussion and official information available to all reviewers.
- Reviewers should not change a score solely to match another reviewer; any revision should reflect the reviewer's own judgment after discussion.
- Scores submitted at the conclusion of the public scoring meeting will be considered final.

What Reviewers Should Not Consider

- Personal knowledge with or opinions regarding the applicant.
- External information not included in the application or distributed by DOT&PF.
- Assumptions about community support, opposition, land access, or readiness that are not supported by the record.
- A preference for one project type, geographic area, user group, or organization over another.
- Whether the application was professionally written, except where the lack of clarity prevents evaluation of the project.

DOT&PF STAFF REVIEW

DOT&PF program staff complete this review before ARTAC scoring. Pass/fail determinations should be supported by staff notes. Applications that do not pass a required eligibility item should not proceed to ARTAC scoring unless the deficiency is resolved in accordance with the solicitation and program procedures.

Project and Community Information

Applicant	
Project name	
Reviewer	
Community or service area	
Community population	
Estimated number of people served	
Federal funds requested	
Required match	
Total project cost	

Project Type

Select all that apply: ☐ New recreational opportunity ☐ Missing link ☐ Maintenance or rehabilitation
☐ Safety and education ☐ Historic access trail ☐ Other: _____

Administrative Review Checklist

Review item	Pass	Fail	Staff findings / required follow-up
Application completeness All required forms, responses, attachments, maps, and certifications are present and sufficiently complete for review.	☐	☐	
Eligible applicant meets the eligibility requirements stated in the solicitation and 23 U.S.C. 206.	☐	☐	
Eligible project and costs Proposed activities and major cost categories are eligible under the Recreational Trails Program and are not prohibited uses.	☐	☐	
SCORP alignment Application identifies and demonstrates how the project is included in, or furthers a specific goal of, the current Alaska SCORP or other qualifying recreational trail plan.	☐	☐	
Public recreational purpose Project primarily enhances a public recreational trail opportunity and is not	☐	☐	

Review item	Pass	Fail	Staff findings / required follow-up
principally for transportation, private access, or another non-RTP purpose.			
Land ownership and public access Ownership is identified and required permissions, easements, agreements, or written assurances are provided or can reasonably be completed before authorization. Improvements on private land must include legally binding public access.	☐	☐	
Environmental and permitting information Application identifies likely environmental reviews, permits, consultations, and approvals. No known issue makes the proposed schedule clearly infeasible.	☐	☐	
Budget completeness Required budget form is complete, mathematically accurate, and supported by appropriate estimates or documentation. Budgeted expenditures are consistent with the proposed scope of work and reasonable	☐	☐	
Match compliance Required match amount and source are identified, eligible, adequately documented, and available within the proposed project period.	☐	☐	
Maps and location information Required vicinity and project maps are included and sufficiently identify the project location, trail limits, land ownership, and proposed work.	☐	☐	
Recommend for ARTAC review No unresolved eligibility or completeness issue prevents merit scoring by ARTAC.	☐	☐	

Staff Determination

☐ Proceed to ARTAC scoring ☐ Hold for clarification ☐ Do not advance

Staff reviewer: _____

Date completed: _____

Summary of unresolved issues or conditions:

Alaska Recreational Trail Advisory Committee (ARTAC) SCORE SHEET

Applicant	
Project name	
Reviewer	
Community population	
Final Score	

Project Type

Select all that apply: ☐ New recreational opportunity ☐ Missing link ☐ Maintenance or rehabilitation
☐ Safety and education ☐ Historic access trail ☐ Other: _____

Enter a score for every criterion. Use the full point range and provide comments that explain the basis for the score, particularly when the score is very high, very low, or identifies a material concern.

Applicant Capacity and Long-Term Stewardship (8 points)

Purpose: Assesses whether the applicant has the organizational ability, relevant experience, partnerships, and long-term maintenance approach needed to complete and sustain the project.

Consider:

- Relevant experience or qualified partners
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Ability to administer the award and complete the work
- Realistic long-term maintenance or stewardship plan

Score	Scoring guidance
8	Strong evidence of relevant capacity, clear responsibilities, and a credible long-term maintenance plan.
6–7	Good capacity and maintenance planning with only minor gaps.
3–5	Basic capacity is demonstrated, but experience, responsibilities, or long-term maintenance is only partly addressed.
1–2	Limited evidence of capacity or a vague maintenance approach.
0	No meaningful evidence that the applicant can complete or sustain the project.

Reviewer comments (*Identify strengths, capacity concerns, and maintenance issues.*)

Score: _____ / 8

Project Description and Scope (10 points)

Purpose: Evaluates whether the proposed scope of work is clear, eligible, feasible, and sufficiently defined to understand what will be constructed, maintained, acquired, or delivered.

Consider:

- Project location and limits (geographical, environmental, or related to access?)
- Feasibility of specific tasks, quantities, and deliverables
- Consistency with eligible RTP work
- Land access and ownership considerations
- Detailed plan for construction, rehabilitation, maintenance, equipment, or education as applicable

Score	Scoring guidance
9–10	Scope is clear, detailed, eligible, internally consistent, and feasible.
7–8	Scope is generally clear and feasible, with minor gaps that should not prevent implementation.
4–6	The general project is understandable, but important scope details, quantities, or feasibility information are limited.
1–3	Scope is vague, incomplete, or raises significant eligibility or feasibility concerns.
0	Insufficient information to understand or evaluate the proposed work.

Reviewer comments *(Note any unclear, unsupported, or potentially ineligible scope elements.)*

Score: _____ / 10

Project Narrative (10 points)

Purpose: Evaluates how clearly the application explains the connection between the project activities and the identified problem, clearly highlighting the need, proposed solution, and expected results.

Consider:

- Demonstrated problem or opportunity
- Clear project goals and expected outcomes
- Logical connection between need, scope, and results
- Relevant local or regional context
- Consistency between narrative, maps, schedule, and budget

Score	Scoring guidance
9–10	Compelling and complete narrative that clearly connects the need, proposed work, and expected results.
7–8	Strong narrative with minor gaps or limited supporting detail.
4–6	Adequate explanation of the project, but key connections, evidence, or outcomes are not fully developed.
1–3	Narrative is difficult to follow, incomplete, or weakly supported.
0	Narrative does not provide enough information to understand the need or intended result.

Reviewer comments *(Focus on project substance rather than writing style or grammar.)*

Score: _____ / 10

Project Readiness and Timeline (15 points)

Purpose: Assesses whether the project can proceed promptly after award and whether the schedule is realistic for completing required reviews, design, procurement, construction, and closeout.

Consider:

- Land access and ownership status
- Environmental review and permitting status
- Design or work-plan development
- Procurement readiness
- Committed match and partner commitments
- Realistic milestones and completion date

Score	Scoring guidance
14–15	Shovel-ready or nearly shovel-ready. Land access is secured; environmental, permitting, and design needs are complete or clearly on a short path to completion; match is committed; and the project can move promptly toward authorization and implementation.
10–13	Strong readiness. Most prerequisites are complete or well advanced, and the remaining steps are clearly identified and realistically scheduled.
6–9	Moderate readiness. The project appears feasible, but several important prerequisites remain unresolved, or the schedule is uncertain.
1–5	Low readiness. Major land, environmental, design, permitting, funding, or schedule issues remain unresolved.
0	The project is not ready to proceed, or the application does not provide enough information to assess readiness.

Reviewer comments *(For this rubric, “shovel ready” is a program scoring term, not a statutory definition. Explain which prerequisites are complete and what remains.)*

Score: _____ / 15

Maps and Graphics (5 points)

Purpose: Evaluates whether maps and supporting visuals allow reviewers to understand the location, ownership, existing conditions, and proposed work.

Consider:

- Vicinity and project site maps
- Trail boundaries and project features
- Land ownership or management

- Scale, labels, legend, and orientation
- Photos, diagrams, or other visuals when useful

Score	Scoring guidance
5	Maps and visuals are clear, complete, and make the project easy to understand.
3–4	Required maps are present and generally useful, with minor omissions or readability issues.
1–2	Maps are included but lack important detail, clarity, or consistency with the narrative.
0	Required maps are missing or unusable.

Reviewer comments *(Identify any missing location, ownership, or project-detail information.)*

Score: ____ / 5

Public Benefit and SCORP Alignment (22 points)

Purpose: Evaluates the significance, reach, and durability of the public recreational benefit and how well the project advances a specific goal or priority of the current Alaska SCORP or another qualifying recreational trail plan.

Consider:

- Documented public need
- Impact to community based on potential groups of users
- Public access and availability
- Connectivity, missing links, or access to destinations
- Safety, health benefits, social connections, and recreation opportunities
- Benefits to multiple user groups or diverse trail use, where appropriate
- Historic or traditional access
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Consistency with identified SCORP goals or priorities
- Long-term public value relative to project cost

Score	Scoring guidance
20–22	Exceptional and well-documented public benefit. The project addresses a significant need, provides broad or critical access, has durable value, and clearly advances identified SCORP or trail-plan goals.
15–19	Strong public benefit with good documentation and clear alignment with one or more SCORP or trail-plan goals.
9–14	Meaningful public benefit is described, but evidence, reach, durability, or plan alignment is only moderately developed.
1–8	Public benefit is limited, weakly documented, narrowly available, or only loosely connected to SCORP or trail-plan goals.
0	No demonstrated public recreational benefit or plan alignment.

Reviewer comments *(Do not rely solely on population or total users; explain the importance of the benefit in context.)*

Score: _____ / 22

Community Support, Engagement, and Partnerships (20 points)

Purpose: Evaluates whether affected communities, landowners, tribes, user groups, partners, and the public have been meaningfully engaged and whether support is documented.

Consider:

- Letters of support and partner commitments
- Tribal consultation or coordination, when applicable
- Public meetings, notices, surveys, or other outreach
- Landowner and agency coordination
- Evidence that concerns or opposition were acknowledged and addressed
- Local contributions of funds, labor, materials, equipment, or other resources

Score	Scoring guidance
18–20	Extensive, meaningful, and well-documented engagement with broad support, strong partnerships, and clear commitments.
13–17	Strong support and engagement are demonstrated, with only minor gaps in documentation or representation.
7–12	Moderate support is shown, but engagement is limited, uneven, or not well documented.
1–6	Minimal outreach or support; important affected parties are missing or concerns are not meaningfully addressed.
0	No evidence of community support or engagement.

Reviewer comments *(Opposition does not automatically reduce the score; consider the quality of outreach and response.)*

Score: _____ / 20

Budget Quality, Reasonableness, and Alignment (10 points)

Purpose: Evaluates whether the budget is accurate, adequately supported, reasonable for the project type and location, and aligned with the proposed scope and schedule.

Consider:

- Mathematical accuracy and complete cost categories
- Reasonable labor, equipment, materials, contract, travel, and other costs
- Estimates, quotes, or other support
- Clear relationship between costs, tasks, and timeline
- Appropriate consideration of rural or remote delivery conditions

- Cost effectiveness and absence of unsupported or unrelated costs

Score	Scoring guidance
9–10	Budget is complete, accurate, well supported, reasonable, and closely aligned with the scope and schedule.
7–8	Budget is generally strong, with minor documentation, math, or reasonableness concerns.
4–6	Budget is adequate but contains notable gaps, weak support, or questionable allocations that require clarification.
1–3	Budget contains significant inconsistencies, unsupported costs, or poor alignment with the project.
0	Budget is incomplete or unreliable and cannot be meaningfully evaluated.

Reviewer comments *(Identify specific cost concerns rather than reducing the score for minor clerical issues alone.)*

Score: _____ / 10

SCORING SUMMARY

Criterion	Maximum	Score
Applicant Capacity and Long-Term Stewardship	8	
Project Description and Scope	10	
Project Narrative	10	
Project Readiness and Timeline	15	
Maps and Graphics	5	
Public Benefit and SCORP Alignment	22	
Community Support, Engagement, and Partnerships	20	
Budget Quality, Reasonableness, and Alignment	10	
TOTAL	100	

Final Reviewer Comments

Final score submitted at the conclusion of the ARTAC public scoring meeting: _____ / 100