

RTP Webinar-20231205_130014-Meeting Recording

December 5, 2023, 6:00PM

1h 1m 19s



Pyle, Lauren 0:03

Together on teams, I'm going to be sharing at slides throughout this presentation, but during our our call today and please stay on mute if at all possible.

🕒 **Polfus, Claire** started transcription



Pyle, Lauren 0:15

Unless it's time for our Q&A and then you can go ahead and. Share at that point, if you'd like, you're also able to use the chat at any point, and so just stay on mute.

👤 **Tori Dobbs** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 0:29

There's the little microphone button.
It's often at the top.
You can do that.
You can keep your camera on.
Keep your camera off.
Whatever your personal and Internet bandwidth for today, you've got that and I see that we're troubleshooting a little bit of audio here coming through in the chat.

👤 **Valcour, Valerie** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 0:48

So let's get that figured out.

👤 **Ron Redmond** joined the meeting

👤 **Caitlin Cusack** joined the meeting

 **John McNerney** joined the meeting

 **Eric Durocher** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 0:49

Is the echo gone for whoever had identified it for us?

 **Sharon, VTGC (Guest)** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 0:55

OK.

Great.

Thank you.

Well, we are recording today's session for folks who couldn't attend live and we'll go ahead and get started.

So if we haven't had the chance to cross paths yet, hello.

My name is Lauren Pyle.

I use she her pronouns and I'm the outdoor recreation grants manager manager for the the Department of Forest Parks and Recreation.

 **Margaret & John** joined the meeting

 **Anne Massie** joined the meeting

 **Joe Fox** joined the meeting

 **Alex Wilson (Guest)** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 1:20

So we are glad you're here today for the introductory webinar about the Recreational Trails program and I am joined today by Claire Polfus, who is also on our team at FPR, who will be presenting a little bit during this session, but also helping to troubleshoot any technology it respond to the chat and help out from there.

 **Andrew Padilla** joined the meeting

 **Ali Ide** joined the meeting

 **Carolyn Lawrence (she/her) (Guest)** joined the meeting

 **Kassia (she/her), Vermont River Conservancy** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 1:42

So you'll hear from Clare as well.

And so with that, we'll go ahead and get started.

And so today's session is really an introduction to the Recreational Trails Program or RTP program.

 **Jenna (s/h) SHLT** joined the meeting



Jenna (s/h) SHLT 1:52

Yeah.



Pyle, Lauren 1:56

And So what we're gonna cover today is we're gonna share a bit about the program itself, touch on the timeline eligibility both for applicants as well As for projects.

 **David Newell** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 2:06

Well, we'll talk about some tips and tricks.

 **Bruce** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 2:10

Some advice for completing the pre application touch on compliance requirements? Share some additional resources and then open it up for some Q&A and so additional information about most of what we're going to be able to cover is also

available in the RTP project development and pre application guidance document, which is available on our website.

 **Dayton Crites** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 2:33

So we'll drop the link in later.

 **Doug Pilcher** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 2:41

And so to get us started today about the RTP program, the Recreational Trails program.

So if you haven't heard about this program before, RTP is funded by the US Federal Highway Administration, and so it has been a long standing program here in Vermont and in just the last 15 years has funded just under 8 1/2 million dollars through competitive grants for trails, programs.

 **Matt** joined the meeting

 **Anna Howell** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 3:09

And this year, in 2024, we have almost a half a million that we're going to be able to be awarding.

And so with that that the RTP grant is first and foremost, it is a reimbursement grant.

 **Ali Ide** left the meeting

 **Katarina Lisaius (she/her)** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 3:23

The does require a 20% match and so that's 20% of the project total.

And so I think from here I'm gonna Click to the next slide and turn it over to Claire because on this webinar we have a mix of folks based on what you clicked when you

registered, who have either received an RTP grant before who have applied before and a lot of folks who are new to the RTP program.

 **Ali** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 3:48

And so, Claire, if you wanna to touch on a little bit more about the evolution of this program.



Polfus, Claire 3:55

Great.

Thanks.

And as Lauren mentioned, RTP has been a critical source of trail funding for trails projects in Vermont for over 20 years.

And so we have a long history with this program and as the the requirements from the federal government have evolved and the the program has needed from a Vermont, the Vermont side of the program has needed to evolve as well.

 **matt** joined the meeting

 **Matt** left the meeting



Polfus, Claire 4:25

Many of you probably who have applied before new Sherry Winnie, who retired last summer, and it just so happened that.

 **Christine Hughes** joined the meeting



Christine Hughes 4:30

Yes, that would be great.

That would be great.



Polfus, Claire 4:36

We were in the middle of reviewing the program and making recommendations for the next steps for the program, right when Sherry announced her retirement.

So it was actually a really good opportunity to kind of get Shari's grounding on all of her experience with the program.

And then with Lauren coming on, taking those steps that she recommended, as well as a group that was put together by the Vermont trails and Greenways Council, which is the advisory group for this program, put together last summer and going into this next year.

 **Isaac (Vermont Racial Justice Alliance)** joined the meeting

 **Angie Bolduc** joined the meeting



Polfus, Claire 5:10

So the vision of the program as well as some of the recommended did changes we can highlight and some of you will probably recognize some of the changes that we have going forward with this program.

Umm great thanks.

I was just gonna ask for in the next slide.

So we did align on the vision for RTP.

We want RTP to be fair and equitable for all trails organizations in Vermont, and we recognize that there are, you know, large professional trail organizations that get RTP grants and there's small municipal, all volunteer boards who get RTP grants and we wanna make it possible for everyone to be able to access this funding.

We also want to make sure that the funding that we give out umm goes towards projects that utilize really high quality design and construction practices so that we're protecting the environment as well as the experience of the users and the investment of public dollars into trail projects across Vermont.

Obviously we have to fulfill all of our obligations to Federal Highway, but we also know that sometimes those obligations are difficult and we wanna make sure that we can support everyone through a straightforward and transparent process.

Finally, as I mentioned, the Vermont trails and Greenways Council is statutorily obligated to advise us on this program, and so we have set up a system of review every five years.

And then we also work regularly with the board of the Council on any changes to the program.



Pyle, Lauren 6:57

Thanks, Claire.

When, as Claire mentioned, this group made a lot of recommendations over the past.

Year doing one of those deep reviews, and so throughout the presentation today, I'm going to try to call out some of the the really the big shifts from previous years that you'll see in part due to their feedback.

And so to get us started thinking about the grant itself, step up.

One is timeline.

And so we are in the middle of our pre application phase for the RTP program.

And so that opened November 20th and is open through December 30th of this year.

Then, in early January, folks who submitted their pre application who are invited to submit a full application will be notified some by by mid January.

Full applications are due February 11th, but this upcoming year and then from that mid February point through May, we'll be doing grant review and then grant agreement development and that's at the end of that grant review phase is when grant, the folks who've been selected will be nominated, will be notified if that stage we'll shift into our grant agreement development which is going to be happening from May to September of this upcoming year and then projects can begin.

October 1st is the date we're planning on October 1st of 2024 and going through December 31st of 2026.

And so this actually provides 2 complete field seasons for the project and one of the recommendations that came out of the RTP working group is that we generally plan for the first season to be planning and permitting to go through any final steps to make sure that everything is ready.

And then that second field season is really the the time that we focus on a lot of implementation.

So you might be thinking to yourself why so long, particularly when we get to that grant agreement phase and the grant, you know, their grant review.

And so you don't have to read all the bubbles, but this is just show you what is happening.

 **Grant Admin** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 9:12

It's kind of peeling back the curtain.

What is happening behind the scenes that take so long for some of those pieces? And so during the grant application and review process that requires multiple steps, it includes scoring and review by a ranking committee.

We have FPR agency approval and then we actually have to submit the grants that we're recommending to the US Federal Highway Administration for authorization. And then when we get to the grant agreement development phase, there's several compliance reviews that are a part of that process.

So section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, national Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, state risk assessments, things like that.

 **Assistant** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 9:50

And so depending on the complexity of the project, the results of the compliance reports, as well as the responsiveness of the grantees, all of that's gonna shape where within that made of September line I how quickly grant agreements are completed.



Assistant 9:52

So.

 **Suzanna Brown** joined the meeting

 **Matt** joined the meeting

 **Guest** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 10:08

And so this is just to show you that like we always are working as quickly as possible, but if you're wondering why that extended timeline between when you might start to

find out to when to do the work, it's because all of this is happening in the middle. And so to to kind of zoom back and simplify, you know, I mentioned that we're we have this phase and we have, we're starting with a pre application and that was another recommendation from the RTP Working group and that's really where we are right now and what we're going to focus on for the rest of this webinar. So to submit a pre application to the RTP program you have to be an eligible applicant.

Eligible applicants for this program include municipalities, nonprofits and governmental entities, so that includes state, regional, federal.

It can also include tribal entities and other governmental entities.

So you have to be an eligible applicant if you are not one of these groups, you can potentially be a partner on a grant or a something like that.

 **Adam (Guest)** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 11:10

And if you are a for profit business, there would be consult some contracting pieces to go through that you couldn't automatically be a partner that's included, but it doesn't preclude you from ultimately participating in an RTP project.

But these are the applicant types and what can you do as an applicant?

Well, you have to have a trail and it has to do with focused on either motorized or unmotorized.

Use and so the Federal Highways Administration actually has a designated allocation for that all states have to comply to with and that's that over our total pot of funding, 30% of it has to go to supporting motorized projects, 30% has to go to non motorized projects and 40% are mixed use.

 **Sandy Gregg** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 11:59

And mixed use is any combination of two or more types of activities, so that could be things like mountain biking and walking.

It could be things like ATV and walking, so can be a mix of ebikes and mountain bikes, so it can be a mix of activities there any type of two activities and for this grant round.

If you are a non motorized trail project, the maximum that you can apply for is \$50,000.

This is an increase over last year, so last year's CAP was only 30,000.

So this year you can have a a \$50,000 Max.

if you are a non motorized project.

If it is a motorized project, there is no maximum, and so you might be thinking, well, what are the types of things I can do with my trail?

We've kind of put them into these few big buckets.

The first one is maintenance or restoration of existing trails.

That is what you can do is one of the main things you can apply for.

You can build new trails.

 **Matt** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 13:09

You can add amenities to your trails and trail signed or trailhead uh features, and so a there's amenities.

Can include things like signage, kiosks, composting toilets, resize, recycling receptacles or other structures along the trail.

RTP grants allow for land acquisition for trails including trail easements and a small portion of RTP funds can be used to support educational projects and so something to note beyond just the straight eligibility.

This year, the Review Committee is going to be considering a few key priorities during the the selection process.

So organizations that did not receive an RTP grant in 2023 are going to be given preference over the most recent round of grantees, except in special circumstances projects that include remedying deferred maintenance or trail rehabilitation are going to be given preference over neutral construction or creation of improvements.

And RTP projects are gonna be intentionally selected to post to support both geographic diversity across the state as well as the diversity of trail uses.

And so saying all that I want to acknowledge that the photos in this slide and the next don't fully show the breadth of eligible RTP activities.

So we've got a selection of photos I've used on the slides that are actually from RTP grantees.

If you can see in the fine print, they're actually from previous grantees, so they're authentic photos from projects that have been funded by this grant in recent years.

 **Guest** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 14:54

And as I mentioned, there's the motorized and non motorized categories and you might be thinking to yourself, well, what falls into that.

And so RTP I I grant the RTP program defines recreational trails and any kind of thoroughfare or track across land or snow used for recreational purposes.

So this slide shows examples but is far from a universally complete list, so funds can be awarded for a wide range of activities and opportunities that happen a lot across trails and multiple trail uses in a single project are encouraged.

 **Laurel Anne Copeland** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 15:33

What's not eligible?

That's one of the things we've been asking hearing over the couple years of like, well, can I do this?

And So what we've done is we've prepped a list of things that you can't do.

You can't use RTP funds to condemn any property or which would fall under like eminent domain, right?

 **Angie Bolduc** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 15:51

You can't use RTP funds to promote motorized used on designated Nonmotorized lands.

You can't build a trail on land where it's prohibited to build a trail or land where you don't have landowner permission to build a trail.

You can't use RTP funds to support sidewalks, Rd improvements or other transportation type focused improvement.

Things like bike lanes don't fall into that RTP program at the national level.

 **Marchand, Lora** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 16:20

You can't use RTP funds in Vermont for picnic tables, campgrounds or playground or play equipment.

So all of those are not eligible.

Uh, you can't use it for exclusively feasibility studies or standalone planning.

You can do planning in conjunction with the implementation, but you can't just do a planning grant with the RTP funds, you can't use RTP funds for promotion or advertising.

Law enforcement, General land acquisition or fundraising.

So for some of these pieces, we have alternate programs that FPR administers that might be a better fit.

I know many of you here on the call today are probably familiar with the Vorak community grant programs, which would fund some of these activities.

We're also in the process of putting together the details for a round of land and water Conservation fund grants in 2024 that could fund other things that maybe aren't a fit for the VOREC grants.

So between we're hoping that between these three grants, we can help support most of your outdoor recreation needs here in Vermont.

And so now that you've kind of maybe got your project plan in mind, how do you submit a pre application?

Well, you have until 11:59 PM on December 30th to do so, and it is a simple two step process.

1st is that there is an online form.

The link is on the website and it is a fillable form.

That is the nuts and bolts details you need to know things like your name, your email, how much money do you need, where is your project happening?

It's a quick form that's filling out a lot of those details, and then after you have submitted that form, this is when you're gonna give us the meat of the pre application.

We're asking for three sets of documents.

One is the RTP work plan.

There is a template available on our website.

We're going to touch on that in a bit.

The budget again, we have a template for you and your completed permit navigator results.

And so I'm going to go through all of those things in a lot more detail in terms of what you need to know, but that's what you need to do is you need to submit the online form and you need to submit those three documents by email by 11:59 on December 30th of this year.

Applications that we don't have all of those pieces, all four of those by that deadline are going to be considered incomplete and will not be eligible for review.

When we get those applications or those pre applications, excuse me, I'm December 30th right after the new year one.

What we're gonna be checking for are four major components.

And so this first review is being done by the FPR staff team.

We're looking for eligibility that does the applicant and does the project meet the requirements we're going to be checking for.

Feasibility.

Is your project realistic?

Is your budget realistic for your project?

Do we think there's a high probability of success?

Are you ready?

Does it show a full and complete plan?

That seems really actionable and well thought out are the permits and the land owner permissions already in place or in the process of being secured?

Do you have a plan to get all of those things?

And does the project meet some of the basic compliance requirements for the RTP program?

So those federal requirements, that's what we're going to be checking for and applications that meet the eligibility feasibility, readiness and compliance, those pre applications, those applicants are gonna be invited to then go on and submit a full application.

And so we will be reaching out to all all everyone who submits a pre application in January to let you know whether or not you've been invited to that full step.

And so some tips and tricks now digging into the heart of the pre application of what does this mean?

We're gonna start with the work plan as that first attachment.

And so your work plan, we've provided you a template.

You can download it from our website.

This is the space to tell us what are you doing?

Who will do it?

What will accomplish and when is it gonna happen?

That's that's really the pieces that we need to know.

And so as you're thinking through building out your work plan, what we want you to do is to separate activities that require different people, materials, equipment or timelines.

So if there are, you know, two pieces of trail maintenance and this one piece you're gonna be working with say that the the view ICC to do that in this other piece we're going to be contracting an arborist for that like split those out into separate activities in your work plan because it's different people happening at different times and different needs.

And as you're thinking through your work plan, some of the potential activities that you might consider including, do you have any surveying design or engineering that's gonna happen as a part of your project?

Remember you can include this so long as it's part of that bigger implementation.

It just can't be only the surveying design and engineering what is the permanent that you need to go through in terms of that?

Plan that your whole first year can be a given to permitting and other compliance requirements.

Do you have timelines for bids?

Quotes final budgets because you're submitting our proposal now for work that starts in October, we don't actually expect you to have a contractor ready to go as soon as October 1st rolls around that we expect that to be a part of your work plan that you would need to, you know, get those updated bids, those updated numbers and to make your final determinations, I there's gonna be multiple, you know, whatever your construction phases or maintenance phases are for this.

And then, you know, there might be things like site visits or events that you might want to include as a part of this.

We have provided a template.

It's, uh.

A simple chart in that template and things to keep in mind.

Try to make it clear and concise.

So short and sweet, but to tell to tell your story and what's going on.

So just to make it easy to read, you don't have to fill a lot of words in there.

If you can sum it up and just to sentence and depending on how you build your plan mentally, so I know sometimes we can be lumpers or splitters in terms of plan.

You're like all of these things is 1 activity.

That's great if that's how you can do it.

And you wanna itemize it out that way?

That's fine, but if you're saying, well, this is this step and this is this step and you really like to split things out for your own conceptual development, any major activities should have a deliverable attached to them, something that you're accomplishing as a part of that.

But if you are one of those folks who likes to split it into all the tiny steps, it is OK for not every line item to have a deliverable attached to it.

And if you have multiple trails or multiple major sections of trail, that's a part of this project we know sometimes with RTP projects it is very focused on just this one area. You know, this is where we're working.

Other ones are saying, well, we're gonna do 4 sections of our whole trail or we're gonna do we work statewide.

And these are the areas that are the types of projects we want our prioritize and within our grants.

And so if you do have multiple major sections, the chart that we've given you in that work plan template, please just copy and paste it down and give us like one block for each chunk of trail, uh to do.

And if you're sitting there thinking to yourself, she said this word. Deliverables.

A couple times.

What on earth is FPR talking about?

We've provided examples in the pre application guidance about this, but when we're thinking about the deliverables, it's like what is the result of the work?

What can you measure that's going to be something that we can say?

Yeah, you did it.

This is what success looks like and so example deliverables could be like.

Well, we're going to say make X number of miles of newly universally accessible trails.

We're going to say X miles of trails are going to be maintained X number of culverts are going to be installed X number of bridges X number of people reached via

educational programs.

Uh, why number of trail signs installed?

Uh, how many miles of snow trails are going to be gripped?

So just think about those kind of pieces that say, yeah, this is a way that we can define success and that we we did the project as planned and so we were asking you to think about that and include those in your work plan.

The next document we're asking you to submit during the pre application phase is your budget and so for your budget, please be thorough, detailed and accurate.

 **David Newell** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 25:24

Let this be your best guess of what the costs are going to be your for your project and truly your best estimates.

If you don't already have a concept in mind, you know we're not just trying to say like, I think a new bridge should cost \$30,000.

Don't make up numbers in that way.

If you have something in mind that you're anticipating needing contractors or needing somebody to come in and do that work, seek quotes now.

Like, reach out to folks who do this work and try to get multiple quotes to get an estimate of a realistic estimate of what that cost will be.

And then plan for inflation that we are recommending you do that in this project.

So you're could say, yeah, well, my average cost that I got back for this work component was \$25,000.

I want a budget more than that.

You know, I'm gonna budget an extra 5% because we anticipate, you know, even here in Vermont over the last couple of years, construction prices have fluctuated wildly in terms of the materials, labor, all of those pieces.

And so we want you to plan in your budgets to be able to have a plan for a little bit of growth for that cost based on what you know now, but do make it your best guess for now and make sure it really includes everything that you're planning to put in the project.

I did this one to touch on a common piece that comes up with the RTP grants, which is should I use it our staff to do this or should we hire a contractor and the answer is you could do both but they are different in terms of the amount of reporting and

work there is.

It is much easier to document hiring a contractor to do this that you can say yes, we put out our quest requests for bids.

Here are the three bids that we got back.

We went with this contractor and here is why and then we can submit just the invoices from the contractor at the end and the payment records like for the documentation purposes that's there.

If you do choose to use staff time, just know that you're gonna have to do a little bit more internal administrative support.

There are things that we generally need to see or have on records, things like staff time reports, so that's not just saying, hey, I worked 30 hours this week, but it's I worked 30 hours on this project.

It needs to be able to be pulled out to that project level and to be able to pull we often need things like these Subs and other like kind of information like that.

And so you can do both.

It's just to sort of prepare in terms of your administrative load, if you're using staff time versus contractor time, you might see a little bit of a difference there.

Next thing for budget uh is the match, right?

So I mentioned at the beginning that this is a reimbursement grant and it does require a match, though the match for the RTP grants, it does require a 20% of the total project.

 **Hayden Smith** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 28:19

So that's not 20% of what you're requesting, 20% of the total cost of the project is what you are required to provide, but that match doesn't always have to be cash, it can be cashed if you have your talent, your nonprofit, your governmental entity is saying, yeah, well, we're going to pay this much into it.

We've got that funding, we have another grant, something like that, that could be a part of it, but your match could also be like in Kinder.

A soft match is what it sometimes called.

That can be things that are not covered by RTP funds that you are contributing, things like staff labor that's not covered by RTP funds, that could be things like volunteer time for folks who are investing effort.

It could be donations of tools or supplies, and so you will be required in our budget template.

You know, we have, like, well, what is it?

What are the things that are used?

You're spending money on and then and you know, is it something you're requesting from the OTP program or is it matched?

And then we have you lumped together your match and this is an RTP requirement.

It's not because we wanna make you fill out more boxes.

It's something we actually have to report on.

Of what percentage of your match is from federal, state, local, or private resources.

So that's something that we have to report, which is why you're going to see it in there.

And so we've tried to make the template as easy as possible to use.

The template is actually the budget template is actually set up and there's directions in.

It just says, you know, enter your information in these fields and then it will do the math for you.

So it will actually help you out and do the math that way.

So you can check your balances and we've even said this cell and this cell should match, so check for that.

 **Guest** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 30:04

So we've built that into the spreadsheet and so be sure to check that out as you dig in.

You might be wondering what exactly is you can ask for money for and so one of the requests that we heard from the RTP working group was additional clarity around what are the eligible expenses.

Umm, so the preapplication guidance document includes a lot of additional examples, but on the whole things that you can look for are and include are your engineering, design, permitting and any type of compliance checks.

So we're going to touch on what they call AR as the archaeological resources assessments, but that would be an eligible cost to include in your grant for RTP funds.

Project Administration is an allowable cost, so project administration is allowed construction, design, surveying, engineering and you have a construction contracting that's a part of that.

Any labor that you have is an allowable cost.

With RTP grants, tools and materials, supplies, equipment rentals, publication and research, publication, research and design fees and acquisition costs.

So as I said, if you want to know more about all of these things, check out that application.

The pre application guidance that's available on the website because it teases things out a little bit more because you might be thinking the labor labor could include things like contractors, staff salaries, cost for youth conservation for use conservation crews.

All of those pieces could be there.

So we've got that kind of called out there and I think I just saw something come up in the chat briefly of like is there a recommended volunteer rate.

And so we do, we do have a recommended volunteer rate that is posted as part of that guidance.

So we have one that's there.

If you have a different volunteer rate, you can use that, but we do have one that we've offered.

And so now I'm going to go through the things that aren't eligible with RTP grants in terms of that budget.

Really, we went through that whole list of ineligible activities.

Any cost associated with those you cannot apply for if it's an ineligible activity, you can't use it in terms of the RTP budgets.

 **Jim Henderson** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 32:29

Lodging in food is one that's a little bit sneakier.

It's one that people often don't think about, but it is not a permissible use for the RTP budgets.

Any expenses made prior to signing the grant agreement RTP is a reimbursement program, but it doesn't reimburse in general what we call pre award costs.

So cost that you've done now with the exception of the Aras.

So we can do those at a certain stage within the process.

So you can't get started now, but we will provide more information to folks who are selected, but that would be one of the few exceptions to a pre award reimbursement.

The other pieces that we can't reimburse is are any expenses that don't meet state procurement requirements.

So with that, this is all going to be spelled out in any type of grant agreement.

So we'll have additional information in the full application guidance, but we need to show as an investment of state and really federal funds that we're following proper financial procedures.

And so things like that could fall into that category would be things like awarding a contract without getting multiple bids.

I you know, if you were to contract without multiple bids, unfortunately that's not something that's generally reimbursable.

Things where you made a purchase but don't have any type of documentation is something that we can't unfortunately reimburse.

So we do need that appropriate documentation.

And then the last bucket of category of things that I do actually come up with, grantees that are ineligible expenses are things that go beyond the scope of work.

That was originally proposed, so if you said, yeah, well, we wanted to do kiosks and trail signs and maintenance like that's what we're putting into our proposal and you're like, and also we decided to add benches like, if benches weren't in your grant agreement, then we can't include those.

That's kind of the pieces like make sure your project, your budget, everything that you would need to include, these included in that grant that preapplication bunched up.

And I'm seeing some pieces here about some of the pieces that are gonna come up later in the webinar.

So we can come back to to some of those pieces in the chat around design and permitting.

Because there is a question I I did want to touch on like this, we're moving into like permitting and permissions here away from budget is around land owner permissions.

And so with landowner permissions, we are gonna require that you have landed or permission by the time you submit your full application.

Uh.

And they're only needed for any project where the applicant doesn't own the land 100% in fall.

And so if your Township owns 100% of the land where the project is happening in the town is applying great.

You don't need landowner permission.

You are the landowner.

You we don't need any kind of documentation for that, but if any portion of your project is happening on land that is owned by another entity, we will have a permission form.

That's when it comes time to the full application.

They you will be able to go ahead and submit and there are some different timelines with that.

For example, if your project is just grooming snow, you need a one year landowner permission agreement.

If you have, it's something that's more of a general maintenance activity.

Things like adding kiosks, small assets, that's a 5 year commitment, neutral construction or major trail infrastructure.

We're looking at 10 years and anything that is like a permanent facility or structure, things like restrooms, bridges, pavilions, that requires a 25 year commitment from the land owners.

And so you don't need this at the pre application stage, but there is a question in the online form that says do you own the land?

 **Adam (Guest)** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 36:30

Yes or no, and if you say no, it says.

Where are you know, there's a couple of questions that are saying, do you already have your permission?

If not, what's your plan for getting it?

So you're gonna have that piece there, but know that by the time we get a full application, you are going to need that.

 **Adam (Guest)** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 36:44

So it's good to start those conversations now.

Because permitting and permission are kind of the two sides right there.

And so I've been seeing a couple questions come up in the chat around permitting for different ways and so permitting any projects that are funded through the RDP program are gonna have to follow state and federal requirements.

And so here in Vermont, one of the easiest ways to do that is and to start that process is something that is offered through the Department of Environmental Conservation.



Anne Massie left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 37:19

It's called permit navigator and so you can go through the permit Navigator site and we have the link on our website and it's a tool that's gonna help you identify which permits are there in both ACT 250 and various agency of Natural resources permit requirements.

Uh.

And so you can go through this tool as a guest.

You don't have to give it all your information.

Now you can, if you're ready to move forward with that, but you can go through as a guest and at the very end you'll get something that you can print out or download.

It's a PDF of your results, and that's what we're going to be asking for at this at this pre application stage is that pre application is just that permanent navigator results and so during that process you know we have detailed directions in the pre application guidance during that process.

There's actually a couple of different checkboxes in the permit navigator tool where it will ask you if you want an ACT 250 jurisdictional opinion.

That's it means if you want them to actually take your permit navigator application and give it to the Department of Environmental Conservation Staff to start reviewing for ACT 250 per balance.

And so with that, if you do not want that now, don't click the box.

It comes up a couple times.

You don't have to do that at this stage in the pre application.

That being said, you will need to have permits in place before any construction can start, so you are allowed to begin the permit process as soon as you are ready.

But remember, you cannot use RTP funds to cover any permit requirements until after the grant agreement has been signed.

You can use if you start now when are doing permitting stuff, you can use that towards your match.

Any type of permitting pieces you can use towards your match, but you can't use RTP grant funds now.

And so I've been seeing some things come up in the chat around, you know, you mentioned the universal accessibility or or the historical preservation requirements.

And so I wanna touch on this because they they all applications or all grant projects will need to follow state and federal compliance and really those fall right now into to four big buckets and we're going to have more information about this in the full application guidance which are actually hoping to get up within the next couple weeks since you'll be able to see it before the deadline.

But we want to be able to share that, but things that you'll need to know for compliance, there are physical compliance requirements.

 **Guest** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 39:58

So these are some things like the certificate of good standing for the state, we have our business office has a risk assessment questionnaire that will do when I need a certificate of insurance W Nines, procurement stuff.

All of this is for when you're get to your grant agreement phase.

This is not for now.

This is just to know that this is a part of the process.

If you apply for an RTP grant, you don't have to give us any of this.

Now please do not send me a certificate of insurance.

Please do not do that.

We don't need it now that, but that'll be a later thing and the next bucket of the of of compliance pieces that there's this several different environmental compliance pieces in order to support the national Environmental Protection Act, we have our state permits.

There are potential impacts for northern longer bats for endangered species

compliance and FPR staff actually will help as best we can get you through that process in terms of like navigating, what do you need to do and where you can find it.

But the permit navigator tool helps to flag all of the permits you need.

And for us, that's actually really helpful because they say, yeah, we can read through and say, well, you need this permit and probably this permit maybe that one.

And we can tell that in your permit Navigator report, and that's one of those kind of feasibility checks versus we have also seen in the past permit Navigator reports that flip about 20 to 25 different permits.

And if we see that coming in, it's going to raise a flag for us.

It's like easier project actually feasible, because that's a lot of permits.

That's a lot of pieces that you might need, and in general we don't see that happen in the trails.

And you know the trails applications, but it just something to consider and that your permit Navigator reports will help flag that to begin that process ARCP at the national level has requirements around universal accessibility.

Unless you meet one of the designated exceptions and saying.

But I'm building on the mountain like this is an exception.

It is one of the categories that you can do and we actually have all of those exceptions already outlined.

It's at the very end of the pre application guidance, so please read that documentary again and you'll be able to see that.

But if you're building, say, a trail in your town park and you don't have a reason that you shouldn't be doing that, just go ahead and build that into your design plan.

Now is that it's gonna have to be universally accessible if it's going to be supported by RTP funds.

And then the last piece that is there, it's it's a historical preservation compliance piece.

It's related to section 106 of the Historical Preservation Act, and that is really just a check about potential impacts on historical human resources.

And so there is a process with that.

We have some questions built into the full application to help assess for that, but I've been seeing some questions come in the chat right now, so I'll go ahead and tell you a little bit more about how that works.

And so during our full application, we're going to ask you questions more about

what you're doing and much more detail than we're asking with this kind of additional work plan, some additional checkboxes, some other pieces that are really like, are you working exclusively within the same footprint of an existing disturbed area or are you going more than five feet beyond an existing disturbed areas?

So if you're saying but I'm only maintaining the trail in the trail where the trail is, you would click note, you know, we have some questions like that built in.

And so after the application, after applications have been selected, what we do is you know internally is we actually have a teammate who helps to review these, who looks that up and then we submit the projects to the Department of Historical Preservation here in Vermont.

And they actually go through the projects that are there and say this one seems like it's not going to have any kind of pieces, it's going to be in section 106 compliance. It's gonna be fine.

They'll give you that.

They'll give that project that letter of approval that way.

And then there are projects where they might say there are questions.

We don't know what's here.

We don't know what the answer is, but there's the potential that this could impact something.

And so sometimes one of the next steps, you know, they do desk reviews.

Sometimes one of the next steps is contracting a consultant to do what they call an archaeological resource assessment or aura, and then that takes a few months, which is again why we have that to your timeline.

And so we're going to be trying to identify through even as early as the application phases, which projects probably might need an aura and to be able to help those applicants move through the timeline and to build that into their plans.

And again, that's an RTP funded piece.

And so really, all of these things are to help you be successful while still protecting the amazing resources we have here in Vermont.

And so we have built the timeline to be able to hopefully accommodate for these pieces.

But know that there are steps that have to be included, because this is a federal fund.

And so I've gone through a lot really quickly and if you like to see these things in written format, we do have a lot of this in a pre application guidance that's available on our website.

And here's the link to our website right there.

We're also gonna be posting additional resources, including the recording of this webinar and other pieces as we develop them and fully finalize them will continue to add that to our website.

We're also going to have an opportunity in just over a week for an open office hours.

I know we're already 45 minutes in of me talking to you.

You probably came to this meeting with a lot of questions.

We're gonna open up here in just a minute and answer as many as we can, but we wanna hold space for conversations next Wednesday, December 13th at 3:00.

 **Margaret & John** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 45:53

O'clock for your other questions, if you would like to hop online, because unfortunately we don't have the staff capacity to meet with every single pre application.

Any person who's interested in that one to one as a starting point.

So we have these office hours as the space to come and have conversations.

If that schedule doesn't work, or if your question is more time sensitive, please email us.

We're asking you the email as our first line of conversation and we've been trying to get back to those pretty quickly for this grant or any other grants.

And so you can email us at ANR dot FPR recreation grants.

There's only one R in there.

I'm just seeing a typo, ANR.FPRrecreationgrants@vermont.gov not rrrecreation, and so that is probably the email actually where you got a notice of this webinar today.

So that'll be the piece.

And so now for our last 15 minutes together or 13 minutes, we wanted to open it up for some Q&A.

And so I'll go ahead and stop sharing my screen now.

And before I just opened it up in General, Claire, are there any questions in the chat that haven't gotten addressed yet?



Polfus, Claire 47:13

Yes, there are.

Am I the first one that I couldn't address in the short period of a chat?

Is what if actual project costs exceed the budget submission in the application?

 **Tori Dobbs** left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 47:28

That's a great question and part of one of our our our pieces that we're going to be doing is trying to help application help applicants make that plan in the final grant proposal so that the budget is as accurate as possible.

So if you submit a pre application, you are actually going to have the chance to revise your budget, your work plan.

The other pieces prior to full submission.

In fact, if you're invited to move to that next phase, we anticipate offering some feedback.

Please address the feedback that we've given you.

So like our staff team might look at it and go, OK, we see, we see what you included there.

We might suggest you're reevaluate this budget line, or maybe that you, you know, as you said, if we look at something we got, we think you're going to probably need an AR it just based on this first piece.

Go ahead and add it to your budget now.

And so we're gonna have some conversation around that for folks who are invited to submit a full application.

So that's his first piece is like this.

Is this right now is not your what you're beholden to for the next two years you will have a chance to revise.

That being said, it should be your best guess as of right now, because if you say well I submitted my pre application and now my my final proposal is totally different, that could actually potentially disqualify you.

If it is totally different, so it does need to be your best guess along the way.

That being said, we know that costs change.

We do want you to try to have that best estimate, but our our HTTP grants for us, we're making that allocation based on what our federal funding designation is.

So if your project ends up costing well above and beyond your initial but budget,

that's gonna be something that you'll have to find alternate funds to cover.
It's not something that RTP funds can say, Oh well, we'll just give you an extra 10 grand because it costs more, like we cannot do that.

The amount of funding that you are awarded is what you are awarded for.

RTP Claire do you have anything you'd like to add for that?



Polfus, Claire 49:28

Umm, no, but except?

Well, OK, yes, I do have that.

It's that there's a there within each budget line we have a 10% flexibility in your reimbursement that if things like change around within 10%, that's fine.

If it if it changes more than that, we would need to do a grant agreement amendment and then thirdly, as Lauren said, we can never raise the amount of money we distribute through the grant agreement because that amount is like federally, Umm, authorized, if you complete the project with using less money than you intended, you can do that, but you just can't go over.



Pyle, Lauren 50:21

Thanks Claire.

Anyway, I can add just a little bit because it's been coming in through emails a couple of times, so when we, Claire says that 10% line, that's just say like say you made your budget line for tools \$1000 and you brought, you actually had to spend like \$1050 that is within the 10%.

And so that's fine.

You can just take that \$50.00 out of another budget line, rise this to say why budgeted \$1000 for the tools.

It really cost me \$2000, like that is far more than that 10%.

And so we need to to adjust for it then.

So it's per budget line.



Polfus, Claire 50:58

Yes, exactly. Have.



Pyle, Lauren 50:59

Thank you.

Yeah.

And so, Claire, were there any other questions in the chat?



Polfus, Claire 51:02

Yeah, one more question.

I'm kasha asked a few questions that I just answered, but that her last question is what documentation is required for using staff time as a match?

I didn't answer that one because it's long.



Pyle, Lauren 51:17

Yes.

Yeah.

So for using staff time as a match and we really do generally require this same types of documentation as you would if you were requesting staff time.

And so we really need to see that.

And so it needs to be the the proof of hours worked and you know, in terms of like staff time reports, I spent five hours on the project this day doing this.

I spent 10 hours on the project doing that day, doing that.

I spent two hours here and so it's kind of that staff time report.

It is the overall staff pay proof is generally a piece and then.

There's one more piece, Claire.

I've temporarily my dude.

What's that third piece, that piece?



Polfus, Claire 52:01

Pay stubs or something?



Pyle, Lauren 52:03

Stuff theory.

Yeah.

So we do see people to see that like the overall time report.



Polfus, Claire 52:08

So so this question was specifically about the match and so we so you should be able to show us that if we request it.



Pyle, Lauren 52:13

Ohh sorry.



Polfus, Claire 52:19

So we are not, you're not required to demonstrate what Lauren just said for your reimbursement request.

Your reimbursement request should be focused only on what we are actually reimbursing.

But if we were to audit you, which is under all of our grant agreements, our right to do as the provider of the funds, you should be able to show us and demonstrate that that match occurred.

And so you're should be tracking your match in a similar way as what you are tracking.

Your reimbursable reimbursable expense, umm, we have another question in the chat.



Ron Redmond left the meeting



Polfus, Claire 52:58

What if the project cost is 110,000 and we are applying for other grants and fundraising to cover the other 60,000?

Do we break the project down and apply for 50,000 for a specific part of the project or can 50,000 go towards the overall project?



Pyle, Lauren 53:16

Yeah.

So within the budget template you will see a sections to request specific chunks of funds.

So we can't just say it's \$50,000 for the trail project out of this whole piece.



Katarina Lisaius (she/her) left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 53:28

So the way it actually works is like our eligible expenses are in our rows and then we

have a column for how much of that is RTP funds and how much of that is other funds, your match funds.

And so if you have almost 50% match, that's also totally OK more than 20% match is always OK.

So you can always show that, but we do have it that column broken down by RTP and not and based on some of the past grants that I've seen come in, I would actually recommend that you pick and choose the lines that you think are gonna be maybe some of the most stable and say RTP funds are gonna cover that and maybe some of these other ones that are maybe have some more chances for fluctuation. That's where our match funds are gonna be and put it there because we've seen that happen before where, like.

Well, I'm gonna take it and say, you know, if it's a we're using RTP funds for 80% of our costs, right, total cost and they're like, I'm just gonna make each line item be 80% and then my match is 20% of every line item.

That way, if something shifts a lot, we talked about needing to amend grant agreements, then we have to do that versus if you just say, I mean we know that we need \$20,000 worth of stone.

We're going to take that from the RTP funds and some of those other fluctuating pieces we're going to use our other funds for that because there could be some greater variation in that.

So I suggest splitting it out that way, but you do have to be able to separate that in your budget.

Report our budget template.



Polfus, Claire 55:01

Great.

Shelly has a question.

And Shelly, you might have to unmute yourself and help me with this because I'm not totally sure what your question is. She says.

Permit in permit navigator.

Which radial button are we clicking for trail tread improvement on existing trails?

Hopefully using VYC, not sure what you mean by radio button.



Shelley 55:25

Well, it would be a button that you click with your mouse and if you go into permit

navigator there's nothing about recreation or trails.

So any insight there?

If nobody's been into permit navigator yet, hang on to your hat.



Pyle, Lauren 55:46

It's it is a lot and with a lot of the permit navigator pieces, it'll come up later like I have been through there actually as a guest user.

So I've been through the whole piece as a guest user and so it starts with some of the pieces about like what's your location, where are you and if you're closer to an urban area versus it'll actually populate the questions based on where on the map you've picked.

Because if you're picking a really rural area, it'll actually pull up different pieces then say like I ran an example close to our our state office in Montpelier on in national life. And there are a lot more questions when you do it that way.

If you're closer to an urban area so it does populate it that way, and so it's not necessarily one selection button, you say this is where I'm doing trails.

It'll basically say like are you doing wastewater treatment?

Yes or no.

And so you do have to go through the whole process to find it.

I don't remember a specific piece where it was saying, you know, your overall project type that would flow that way.



Shelley 56:48

Don't click on other.



Pyle, Lauren 56:51

Yeah, it'll ask you a lot of open ended questions.

That is one piece and we have included that in the pre application guidance is the more specific you can be in your permanent navigator when you sit down to do that the better your results will be cuz if you click I don't know your responses will be go look it up later.

You might need this permit, so if you want to narrow your window as best you can do, try to build that information and get as much of it as you can.



Polfus, Claire 57:20

And just to repeat also what what this is doing is helping you narrow down which permits you might need.

It isn't actually applying for the permits, and so we are requiring you to do this step, but before actually implementing the project, you will need to do that next step which is actually getting the permits and contacting the Dec specialists that are listed on the permit Navigator results sheet.

There was some confusion last year thinking that this was actually permit.

Navigator was giving you the actual permits and it is not.

And this is also this is just the second year with permit navigator and they are making improvements and so we and we can provide feedback to our colleagues over at DC as well.

And so like, we are happy to to hear like if you find some things that are problematic, just give us an send us an email and we'll try and help you figure that out.



Pyle, Lauren 58:22

I see one coming into the chat here about the pre application and can you save it?

No and yes, all at the same time.

So if you remember, the pre application is 2 parts, one is the online form.

Once you start the online form, there's not a way to go back and revise it, but the online form is pretty your name, your email, the organization.

That's applying, and some of those big picture things.

It's meant to be pretty short and sweet.

So like if you've done all the rest, that should be really fast.

You know it.

It will ask you for your budget, so if you haven't done your budget sheet yet, might hold off on the online form.

But you don't have a way to go back and edit, but if you realize like ohh I entered the wrong name or I need to update it later, you can actually just go fill out the form again and just tell it like send us the email to say we realized we had an error.



Eric Durocher left the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 59:14

Please see the second entry or something like that so you can't save it and go back, but it's pretty short that way for the work plan, the budget and the permit navigator

pieces, you know, permit navigator.

I I I don't actually remember if you can save your progress along the way if you're doing it as a guest.

I don't believe you can.

I think that's a it's a one shot, but you could do it over again as many times as you need to.

We just need the final PDF for the work plan and the budget template.

Those are downloadable documents if you use Microsoft, you can use that in Word and Excel.

If you are a Google user or have alternate systems, generally you can open those file types in whatever your system is.

We just need to ultimately get back either a like a word or Excel version of those, or even a PDF we could work with and you will send those via email when you're finished, so you can save those as many times because we can't see it until you send it back to us.

 **Erik Ramakrishnan** left the meeting

 **Baird** joined the meeting



Pyle, Lauren 1:00:15

When I think we're at the top of our time here.

And so we will be posting this recording later.

We know that we probably didn't get to everybody's questions today, so please leave.



Baird 1:00:24

No.



Pyle, Lauren 1:00:26

Encourage you to email us if you have additional questions, so please send us an email.

I I and to share your questions, we'll be doing that or you can hop on live with us in just over a week for our next open office hours.

Alright, so thank you all so much for being here.

Thank you for your interest in the RTP program and we'll look forward to answering your questions and going forward from here.
So thank you so much and have a great rest of your day.

 **Dayton Crites** left the meeting

 **Zoning Administrator** left the meeting



Polfus, Claire 1:00:55

Yeah.

And just really quickly, John, could you send us that question about your town and town forest in email and we'll get back to you as soon as we can?

 **Kassia (she/her), Vermont River Conservancy** left the meeting

 **Christine Hughes** left the meeting

 **Grant Admin** left the meeting

 **Carolyn Lawrence (she/her) (Guest)** left the meeting

 **Tracy Martin (Guest)** left the meeting

 **Adam (Guest)** left the meeting



Polfus, Claire 1:01:03

It's just hard to transfer from this to mail, so to send us an email at AN.r.fprrecreationgrants@vermont.gov because it's a little more complicated than we can just answer quickly right now.

 **Community and Economic Development Specialist** left the meeting

 **Valcour, Valerie** left the meeting

 **Assistant** left the meeting

 **Martha DeGraaf** left the meeting

 **Jenna (s/h) SHLT** left the meeting

 **Alex Wilson (Guest)** left the meeting

 **Bruce** left the meeting

 **Marchand, Lora** left the meeting

 **Caitlin Cusack** left the meeting

 **Julie and Amie** left the meeting