



October 6th, 2025

To: Potential Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Applicants

It is with great pleasure that I announce our fifth round of the Park District of Ottawa County Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program. The Board of Park Commissioners has authorized the distribution of up to \$220,000 for 2026 program awards.

Applications must be submitted no later than **January 9th, 2026 at 4:30pm**. Please include documentation that clearly supports the estimated cost of proposed project. NEW THIS YEAR: applications must be submitted through online Jotform grant application link - <https://form.jotform.com/252013433898156>

A grant panel will review the applications and make award recommendations to the Park Board. In reviewing the applications, the panel will consider priority projects, collaboration with current Park District project planning, conformance with application requirements, safety issues, cost/benefit ratio, maintenance, and population served. Grants must be for future purchases.

Funding will be distributed AFTER the project is completed and final report with proper documentation has been submitted, OR a signed service agreement and/or construction contract with final costs has been submitted and reviewed by Park District Executive Director. Entities requesting the distribution of funds by submitting a signed service agreement and/or construction contract must also complete a final report with proper documentation when the project is fully completed. An invoice from the Grantee to the Park District with the reimbursement amount of actual funds spent, or invoice with service agreement and/or construction contract amount, must be submitted in order to process check payments. All invoices to the Park District must be received by December 4th, 2026 in order to receive funding distributions from the 2026 grant cycle.

Failure to complete projects in a timely manner, failure to submit the required final report and failure to permanently display grant acknowledgment signs are all reasons to deny future funding requests.

An optional in-person grant meetings has been scheduled on October 15th at 10am. A virtual meeting link to the meeting will also be provided. The meeting will be held in the conference room at the Shores and Islands Welcome Center. Please contact Jannah at (419) 707-4051 or jwilson@ottawacountyparksoh.org in order to receive virtual meeting link or to RSVP for the in-person meeting.

The Board of Park Commissioners recognize the importance of forming partnerships to provide maximum outdoor recreation access and safety to all Ottawa County residents. We look forward to working with you to achieve increased and improved outdoor recreation opportunities for all.

Sincerely,
Jannah Wilson
Executive Director

**Park District of Ottawa County
Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program
“Connecting People, Places and Parks”**

Park District of Ottawa County Mission Statement and Vision Statement:

Mission Statement:

The Park District of Ottawa County is dedicated to preserving, enhancing and connecting Ottawa County’s natural and recreational resources for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

Vision Statement:

Building a future where nature is accessible, shared and connected to Ottawa County’s communities.

General Grant Information and Program Requirements

Funding for this Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program has been provided by the Park District of Ottawa County Board of Park Commissioners as a component of the Park District’s property tax levy. It was the consensus of the Board that a program of assistance to Ottawa County political subdivisions would increase benefits from tax dollars and provide greater access to outdoor recreation opportunities in Ottawa County.

Applicant Eligibility

Ottawa County political subdivisions of the State of Ohio (cities, villages, townships, county), and Ottawa County public libraries are eligible to apply for funding, provided the agency is partnering with a responsible agency or responsible for public outdoor recreation facilities, green spaces, and/or trails and is located all or part in Ottawa County. All projects must provide open public access. The Board, Council or other legislative body must pass a general resolution or ordinance indicating agreement for participation in the program and compliance with the terms of the program.

Project Eligibility

The area for which grant funding is intended must be owned by or under long term lease (15-year lease or greater) to the entity applying for the grant. Grant awards are to be used for permanent improvements to public outdoor recreation spaces/facilities/trails or equipment to maintain spaces/facilities/trails. Grant funds are **NOT** to be utilized for staffing, operational, or administrative costs. Grant funding may be used for engineering if the plans correlate with an outdoor recreation improvement on property owned or under long term lease to the entity applying for the grant. Grants for property acquisition may be considered and is at the discretion of the Park District of Ottawa County Board of Park Commissioners.

The goal of this grant program is to improve access to outdoor spaces, aid in the development of active transportation routes to parks and points of interest, and bolster public outdoor recreation opportunities within Ottawa County. The awards will be made on the basis of conformance with program requirements, connectivity, safety issues, cost/benefit ratio, maintenance and operational history, and regional/county-wide importance.

Grant applications will be reviewed by a grant panel composed of local professionals and community members. The Grant Panel will utilize a scoring system along with a panel discussion in order to determine recommended funding amounts. For your information, the scoring rubric is attached to this application. The grant panel will make a funding recommendation to the PDOC Board of Park Commissioners who will make a final determination on grant funding allocations. Decisions of the Board of Park Commissioners with regard to project approval may not be appealed.

Funding Information

Program funding is determined by the Park Board on an annual basis. The Board of Park Commissioners has authorized the distribution of up to \$220,000 for 2026 program awards. Applicants may apply for projects up to \$50,000.00. **One application per entity per funding cycle.**

A commitment to project cost sharing is not required but encouraged. Applications with cost sharing will receive additional points on the scoring rubric.

Funding will be distributed AFTER the project is completed and final report with proper documentation has been submitted, OR a signed service agreement and/or construction contract with final costs has been submitted and reviewed by Park District Executive Director. Entities requesting the distribution of funds by submitting a signed service agreement and/or construction contract must also complete a final report with proper documentation when the project is fully completed.

Grant applications will be denied if the applying entity has incomplete grant projects, and/or grant projects with final reports that have not been submitted. Grant applications may also be denied if signage provided for previously completed grant projects has not been installed.

Compliance with Federal, State and Local Laws

Federal, state and local laws pertaining to non-discrimination, Ohio and federal minimum wage legislation, prevailing wage thresholds, bidding requirements, building codes, zoning, health regulations, conflict of interest rules and related regulations must be met at all times. Compliance with these requirements, as applicable, remain the responsibility of the recipient of the grant funds.

If applying for playground equipment, the equipment **must** be IPEMA Certified (International Playground Equipment Manufacturers' Association, www.ipema.org) and follow the Consumer Product Safety Commission safety checklist - <https://www.cpsc.gov/safety-education/safety-guides/playgrounds/public-playground-safety-checklist>

Trail Projects – Trail signage with emergency services information should be considered as part of the trail plan. Literacy themed trails should include a letter of support from a partnering local public library.

Variance in Project Scope

Any variance to the scope of the original project must be approved by the Board of Park Commissioners. Variances include cost, project completion timeline, engineering and design modifications, and project extensions. Communicate all variances in writing to Park District Executive Director for variance board resolutions. Variances will not be approved for significant project modifications such as changes in project location, or significant changes to the project description.

Additional Requirements

Upon receiving grant award letter, recipients will be required to attend a scheduled in-person grant meeting with Park District Executive Director and submit completed grant contract (grant contract form will be attached to grant award letter). Grant contracts will be signed by the Park District of Ottawa County Executive Director and a signed copy will be scanned and e-mailed back to recipient. Projects may not commence until the grant contract is fully signed.

Recipients must maintain a sign posted near or at the grant improvement(s), which identifies the area as having benefited from the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program. A standard 10x12 aluminum/plastic composite sign with frame (sample photo of sign attached) will be provided by the Park District for each project.

Please discuss any specific signage needs or changes during grant meeting. Projects which have received grant funding must be open and accessible to the general public. Fees charged (if any) for use of improved facilities may not substantially penalize non-residents.

Funding will be distributed AFTER the project is completed and final report with proper documentation has been submitted, OR a signed service agreement and/or construction contract with final costs has submitted and reviewed by Park District Executive Director. Entities requesting the distribution of funds by submitting a signed service agreement and/or construction contract must also complete a final report with proper documentation when the project is fully completed. An invoice from the Grantee to the Park District with the reimbursement amount of actual funds spent, or invoice with service agreement and/or construction contract amount, must be submitted in order to process check payments. All invoices to the Park District must be received by December 4th, 2026 in order to receive funding distributions from the 2026 grant cycle. The final report shall include all costs associated with the project and have associated paid invoices. Within the final project report, entities are required to attach at least three photos and one 200-word article showcasing the completed project. The Park District of Ottawa County will have rights to use this report to publicize the use of our levy money in our publications, on social media and as desired.

Failure to complete projects in a timely manner, failure to submit the required final report and failure to permanently display grant acknowledgment signs are all reasons to deny future funding requests. Reimbursement will be made for actual funds used only and not exceeding the awarded amount.

Any questions regarding the Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program should be directed to PDOC Executive Director Jannah Wilson at 419-707-4051, or by e-mail at jwilson@ottawacountyparksoh.org.

2026 PDOC Parks and Trails Grant Timeline (Updated 7/21/2025)

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

October 6th, 2025 - Grant application opens

October 15th, 2025 - 10am, In-person grants meeting (Park District Office at Shores and Islands Welcome Center)

January 9th, 2026, 4:30pm - Grant applications due (submit through Jotform link - <https://form.jotform.com/252013433898156>)

January 19th-23rd, 2026 - Grant judging, funding recommendations to Park Board

February 10th, 2026 - Park Board approves grants and funding amounts

February 19th, 2026 - Grant award letters and contracts e-mailed

December 4th, 2026 - All invoices for funds distribution from the 2026 grant cycle must be submitted along with proper documentation

* Submit project final report with proper documentation and invoice from Grantee to Park District for reimbursement of expended funds up to awarded amount.

OR

* Submit a signed service agreement and/or construction contract with final costs and invoice from Grantee to Park District for the distribution of final costs up to awarded amount. Final report and proper documentation with copies of paid invoices will be required when project is fully completed.

**Park District of Ottawa County
Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program
Application Checklist**

2026 IMPORTANT DATES:

GRANTS DUE JANUARY 9th, 2026 by 4:30PM

GRANTS AWARD NOTIFICATIONS E-MAILED FEBRUARY 19th, 2026

ALL PAPERWORK FOR 2026 GRANT FUNDS DISTRIBUTION MUST BE SUBMITTED BY 4:30PM ON DECEMBER 4TH, 2026

This checklist has been developed to assist you in the completion of your application. This form does not need to be attached to your application.

FORMS TO SUBMIT FOR APPLICATION:

SUBMIT APPLICATION AND ALL DOCUMENTATION THROUGH JOTFORM LINK

<https://form.jotform.com/252013433898156>

- _____ Project application; include statement of whether request is for a cost-sharing grant. If cost-sharing, both total cost of project and grant amount requested must be included
- _____ Resolution of Participation (annually – sample provided)
- _____ Proof of project site area ownership, lease or management agreement
- _____ Project cost justification: (i.e.: contractor price quote, supplier price quote, copy of equipment supply catalog)
- _____ Letters of support (optional, highly recommended)

FORMS TO SUBMIT AFTER PROJECT COMPLETION:

- _____ Final report form and invoice to Park District with actual funds spent for reimbursement
- _____ 200-word article
- _____ A minimum of 3 high resolution digital photos of project

Grant signage provided by the Park District must be mounted in place before grant project will be considered complete. Sites will be audited to insure signs have been placed. Signs will be provided by the Park District of Ottawa County. Please contact the Park District if you have alternate sign plans.

Park District of Ottawa County
2026 Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program
RESOLUTION # _____

(Applicant)

RE: Resolution Agreeing to Cooperate for the Purpose of Providing Outdoor Recreation Improvements

WHEREAS,

(Governing Body of the Applicant)

desires to utilize funding available through the 2026 Park District of Ottawa County Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that

1. _____
(Governing Body of Applicant)

agrees to cooperate for the purposes of increasing and improving outdoor recreation opportunities under the terms and conditions of the "2026 Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program" administered by the Park District of Ottawa County Board of Park Commissioners.

2. _____, _____ is hereby authorized to apply
(Title)

to the Park District of Ottawa County Board of Park Commissioners for funding assistance from the "2026 Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program".

3. this resolution was presented and acted upon at an open/public meeting of

(Governing Body of Applicant)
held on _____ in accordance with Ohio Open Meeting Laws.
(Date)

GOVERNING BODY OF APPLICANT AGENCY

Chairman, Mayor, President, etc.

Other Official

Other Official

**Park District of Ottawa County
Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Program
Grant Recipient – Final Report**

In accordance with a request from the State of Ohio Auditor's Office, please complete this form and return it to the Park District Office at the conclusion of your project.

Agency _____

Governing Body _____

(City Council, Mayor, Trustees, etc.)

Contact Person _____ Title _____

***** (Official address of the Governing body where the check will be sent.)

Address _____

Street

City

Zip

Telephone _____

E-mail Address _____

Project Title _____

Starting Date _____ Completion Date _____

Project Costs:

Labor _____

Materials/Equipment _____

Contract Services _____

Other _____

Total Project Expenses _____

Grant Amount Awarded: _____

Agency Cost Share Amount: _____

Attach copies of all documentation and paid invoices. Also attach invoice with grant reimbursement amount (reimbursement for expended funds only) for check processing. Send documentation and payment invoice (from Grantee to Park District) to:

jwilson@ottawacountyparksoh.org

Please submit 200-word article and 3 digital photos of the project to Jannah Wilson jwilson@ottawacountyparksoh.org

Park District of Ottawa County

Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Evaluation

(Form used to score applications – for information only.)

Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Project Number: _____

Project Name: _____

Is the application complete? Y____ N____

Proof of ownership, lease, management: Y____ N____

Cost justification documents: Y____ N____

Is applicant eligible? Y____ N____

Is there project cost sharing? Y____ N____

Are there other sources of grant funding available for this project? Y____ N____

Scoring (1 low, 5 high)

Does the project provide improved access and/or connectivity to an outdoor area? _____

Cost/benefit (is it worth the \$) _____

Is the project sustainable? Is there an operations and maintenance plan? _____

Does the project contribute to community need and/or safety improvements? _____

Does the project showcase collaboration and creativity? _____

Does the project positively impact the County and region as a whole? _____

Extra Point for Cost Share (one extra point for cost share at or above 20% of the total cost of the project. For example, if a project is \$10,000.00 and the applicant is paying \$2,000.00 with a grant request of \$8,000.00, the applicant would receive one additional point)

Extra Point: _____

Total Score: _____

Comments:
