



Park District of Ottawa County

“Connecting People, Places and Parks”

Parks and Trails Improvement Grant 2026

WELCOME AND BACKGROUND INFO

Park District of Ottawa County Mission and Vision Statements:

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.

GOAL OF GRANT PROGRAM:

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.

- Fifth year to offer the grant program (Ottawa County map with projects)
- Funding for the grant program has been approved by Park District's Board of Park Commissioners as a component of the 2026 annual budget.
- 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.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBILITY

○ **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 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.
- Grant funds are NOT to be used for staffing, operational, or administrative costs.

○ **Applicant Eligibility:**

- Ottawa County political subdivisions (city, village, township, county)
- Ottawa County public libraries

FUNDING INFORMATION

- The Board of Park Commissioners has authorized the distribution of up to \$220,000 for 2026 grant awards.
- Applicants may request up to \$50,000.00. One application per entity.
- **Applicants must have prior projects completed with final report(s) submitted and signage installed in order to be eligible for 2026 funding.**
- A commitment to 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.

Variance in Project Scope

- Any variance in 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 the Park District Executive Director for a variance board resolution.
- Variances will not be approved for significant project modifications such as changes in project location, or significant changes to the project description.

Compliance with Federal, State and Local Laws

- 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 www.cpsc.gov



ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- **Grant Contracts – Awarded applicants must submit completed grant contract before projects may commence. The contract will be attached to award letter.**
- Project signs must be posted near or at grant improvement site. A standard 10-x12 aluminum/plastic composite sign with frame will be provided by the Park District. Other arrangements regarding signage may be considered, please communicate signage requests to Executive Director.
- Grant recipients will be required to attend a scheduled in-person grant meeting with Park District Director and submit completed grant contract at or before meeting.
- Literacy themed trails should include a letter of support from a partnering local public library.
- Letters of support are encouraged for all projects.
- Final reports and documentation....

GRANT TIMELINE

- January 9th – Application deadline, 4:30pm
- January 19th-23rd – Grant application judging
- February 10th – Board approve grant awards
- February 19th – Grant award letters and contracts will be e-mailed. In-person meetings will be scheduled with grant recipients.
- December 4th – All invoices for funds distribution from the 2026 grant cycle must be submitted along with proper documentation.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Forms to submit with application – NEW IN 2026 – Online Application:

- ☐ Project Application – Jotform Link (submit all attachments with project application in Jotform)
- ☐ Resolution of Participation (attachment in project application)
- ☐ Proof of Project Site Ownership, Lease, or Management Agreement (attachment in project application)
- ☐ Project Cost Justification (quotes, estimates, supplier pricing) (attachment in project application)
- ☐ Letters of Support are not required but highly recommended

Forms to submit after project completion:

- ☐ Final Report Form and Invoice to Park District (for payment)
- ☐ 200 Word Article with at least 3 High Res Photos of Project

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

- Find grant guidelines and application link at www.ottawacountyparksoh.org
 - OR
- Contact Jannah Wilson at jwilson@ottawacountyparksoh.org for grant guidelines and application link

HOW TO SUBMIT APPLICATION

- Submit Project Application with attachments through Jotform by January 9th, 2026 at 4:30pm

GRANT APPROVAL PROCESS

- A grant panel composed of community members and local professionals will utilize a scoring system along with a panel discussion in order to determine recommended funding amounts.
- Funding recommendations will be made to the Board of Park Commissioners who will make the final determination on grant funding allocations. Decisions may not be appealed.
- The scoring rubric is attached to the application packet.

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION AND FINAL REPORT

- ❑ Projects funds may be distributed in two ways:
 - ❑ Submit project final report with proper documentation and invoice from Grantee to Park District for reimbursement of expended funds up to award amount.
- OR
- ❑ Submit 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 the awarded amount. Final report and proper documentation with copies of paid invoices will be required when project is fully completed.

Final Report document may be found in application packet. Please submit 200 word article and at least 3 high resolution digital photos of project with Final Report.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact Jannah Wilson at jwilson@ottawacountyparksoh.org or (419) 707-4051 with any questions related to the 2026 Parks and Trails Improvement Grant program