



October 12th, 2026

To: Potential Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Applicants

It is with great pleasure that I announce our sixth 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 \$200,000 for 2027 program awards.

Applications must be submitted no later than **January 8th, 2027 at 4:30pm**. Please include documentation that clearly supports the estimated cost of proposed project. Applications must be submitted through online Jotform grant application link - <https://form.jotform.com/262314190660148>

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 3rd, 2027 in order to receive funding distributions from the 2027 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.

In-person or virtual meetings to review to grant application process and answer questions may be scheduled by request. Please contact Jannah at (419) 707-4051 or jwilson@ottawacountyparksoh.org in order schedule a 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.

This is a competitive grant program designed to support projects that demonstrate a clear community need and provide meaningful benefits to the county and region. Applications are evaluated based on demonstrated need, regional priorities, alignment with county-wide Park District strategic planning, compliance with application requirements, safety considerations, cost-effectiveness, long-term maintenance objectives, and the population served.

Grant funding is intended to support future purchases and may not be used to reimburse purchases made prior to the grant award.

Grant applications will be reviewed by a grant panel composed of local parks and recreation 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. Special consideration is placed on first-time grant applicants with eligible applications. 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 \$200,000.00 for 2027 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 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 3rd, 2027 in order to receive funding distributions from the 2027 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.

2027 PDOC Parks and Trails Grant Timeline (Updated 9/11/2026)

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

October 12th, 2026 - Grant application opens

January 8th, 2027, 4:30pm - Grant applications due - submit through Jotform link - <https://form.jotform.com/262314190660148>

January 18th - 22nd, 2027 - Grant judging, funding recommendations to Park Board

March 2nd, 2027 - Park Board approves grants and funding amounts

March 5th, 2027 - Grant award letters and contracts e-mailed

December 3rd, 2027 - 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**

2027 IMPORTANT DATES:

GRANTS DUE JANUARY 8th, 2027 by 4:30PM

GRANTS AWARD NOTIFICATIONS E-MAILED MARCH 2nd, 2027

ALL PAPERWORK FOR 2027 GRANT FUNDS DISTRIBUTION MUST BE SUBMITTED BY 4:30PM ON DECEMBER 3TH, 2027

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/262314190660148>

_____ 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
2027 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 2027 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 "2027 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 "2027 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

Parks and Trails Improvement Grant Evaluation

Evaluators should score the application based on information provided; do not award points based on assumptions or information not contained in the application

Scoring Guide – For Evaluator Use

Date: _____

Project Number: _____

Project Name: _____

General Scoring Guidance

Score each criterion from **1 (Low)** to **5 (High)** based on the extent to which the proposed project meets the criterion.

- **1 – Very Low:** Little or no benefit related to the criterion; the application provides minimal supporting information or justification.
- **2 – Low:** Some benefit, but limited in scope, impact, or supporting detail.
- **3 – Moderate:** Meets the criterion adequately; provides a reasonable and credible benefit.
- **4 – High:** Strongly meets the criterion; demonstrates clear benefits, planning, and supporting information.
- **5 – Exceptional:** Outstanding response to the criterion; demonstrates substantial, measurable, and well-supported benefits with a strong likelihood of success.

Evaluators should consider the **quality, scale, feasibility, and documented need** of the proposed project when assigning scores. A high score should be supported by information provided in the application rather than assumptions about the project.

1. Improved Access and/or Connectivity to an Outdoor Area

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

Consider whether the project:

- Creates new access to a park, trail, natural area, waterfront, or other outdoor recreational resource.
- Improves accessibility for people of varying ages and abilities.
- Connects existing trails, parks, neighborhoods, schools, community facilities, or other destinations.
- Removes barriers that currently limit access or use.
- Improves pedestrian, bicycle, ADA, or other non-motorized connections.
- Expands the number of people who can safely and conveniently access the outdoor area.

1 – Very Low: Little or no improvement to access or connectivity; benefits are limited or primarily cosmetic.

2 – Low: Provides a minor access or connectivity improvement affecting a relatively small area or limited number of users.

3 – Moderate: Provides a meaningful improvement to access or connectivity and benefits a reasonable number of users.

4 – High: Significantly improves access, accessibility, or connections between important community or recreational destinations.

5 – Exceptional: Creates a major new connection or substantially transforms access to an outdoor resource, with broad and well-documented community or regional benefit.

Score: ____ / 5

2. Cost/Benefit – Is the Project Worth the Investment?

Does the anticipated benefit of the project justify the requested grant investment?

Consider:

- Number and types of people expected to benefit.
- Long-term value of the improvement.
- Quality and durability of the proposed improvements.
- Whether the project addresses a significant need.
- Reasonableness of the proposed budget.
- Cost compared with the anticipated public benefit.
- Whether grant funds are being used efficiently and effectively.

1 – Very Low: Benefits appear limited relative to the cost; significant questions exist regarding the value or justification of the investment.

2 – Low: Some benefit is demonstrated, but the cost appears high relative to the anticipated impact or the justification is limited.

3 – Moderate: Reasonable relationship between cost and anticipated benefits; the investment appears justified.

4 – High: Strong public benefit relative to the cost; funds appear to be used efficiently and provide substantial value.

5 – Exceptional: Outstanding return on investment; relatively modest funding produces significant, lasting, or broad public benefits.

Score: ____ / 5

3. Sustainability and Operations & Maintenance

Is the project sustainable? Is there a clear and realistic operations and maintenance plan?

Consider:

- Expected lifespan and durability of improvements.

- Quality of materials and construction.
- Long-term maintenance requirements.
- Identification of who will be responsible for maintenance.
- Availability of funding or resources for ongoing maintenance.
- Environmental sustainability and resource conservation.
- Whether the project creates unreasonable future financial or maintenance obligations.

1 – Very Low: No clear maintenance plan or evidence of long-term sustainability; significant concerns about the project's ability to remain functional.

2 – Low: Limited maintenance planning or unclear responsibility for ongoing costs and upkeep.

3 – Moderate: Reasonable maintenance and sustainability plan with identified responsibilities and manageable ongoing needs.

4 – High: Strong long-term plan, appropriate materials/design, clear maintenance responsibilities, and reliable resources for upkeep.

5 – Exceptional: Highly sustainable project with excellent long-term planning, minimal or well-managed maintenance requirements, clear funding/responsibility, and strong environmental or operational benefits.

Score: ____ / 5

4. Community Need and/or Safety Improvements

Does the project address a demonstrated community need and/or improve public safety?

Consider:

- Evidence of an existing need or deficiency.
- Safety concerns addressed by the project.
- Number of people affected.
- Public input or community support.
- Whether the project serves underserved or higher-need areas/populations.
- Improvements to accessibility, visibility, pedestrian safety, trail safety, or other public safety concerns.
- Urgency of the identified need.

1 – Very Low: Little evidence of community need or safety benefit.

2 – Low: Some need or safety benefit is identified, but the need is limited or not well documented.

3 – Moderate: Clearly addresses a legitimate community need and/or provides a meaningful safety improvement.

4 – High: Addresses a significant documented need or safety concern affecting a substantial portion of the community.

5 – Exceptional: Addresses a critical or well-documented community need or significant safety issue and provides substantial, measurable benefits to the public.

Score: ____ / 5

5. Collaboration and Creativity

Does the project showcase collaboration and creativity?

Consider:

- Partnerships among municipalities, county agencies, nonprofits, schools, businesses, community organizations, or other stakeholders.
- Evidence of community involvement.
- Multiple sources of funding or in-kind contributions.
- Innovative approaches to solving a community problem.
- Creative design, programming, or use of resources.
- Leveraging existing facilities or infrastructure.
- Opportunities for the project to serve as a model for other communities.

1 – Very Low: Little evidence of collaboration or creative problem-solving.

2 – Low: Some collaboration or creative elements are present, but they are limited.

3 – Moderate: Demonstrates reasonable collaboration and/or some creative elements that strengthen the project.

4 – High: Strong partnerships, meaningful community involvement, and/or a notably creative approach.

5 – Exceptional: Extensive and meaningful collaboration combined with an innovative, creative, or exemplary approach that substantially strengthens the project and could serve as a model for others.

Score: ____ / 5

6. County and Regional Impact

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

Consider:

- Number of communities or populations benefiting.
- Potential to attract visitors or recreational users.
- Connections to regional trail systems or recreational assets.
- Economic, tourism, health, quality-of-life, or environmental benefits.
- Whether the project fills a gap in the County's recreational network.
- Potential to complement other County or regional initiatives, including the Park District's Strategic Plan.

- Whether benefits extend beyond the immediate project site or municipality.

1 – Very Low: Benefits are primarily limited to a small area or immediate users.

2 – Low: Some benefit extends beyond the immediate project area, but the broader impact is limited.

3 – Moderate: Provides meaningful County or regional benefit beyond the immediate project site.

4 – High: Demonstrates significant County-wide or regional value and strengthens connections or opportunities across communities.

5 – Exceptional: Has substantial County-wide or regional significance, creates broad public benefits, strengthens regional systems or destinations, and/or has strong potential to attract visitors and generate lasting community and economic benefits.

Score: ____ / 5

Additional Points

Cost Share

One additional point is available for cost share at or above 20% of the total project cost.

For example:

- Total project cost: **\$10,000**
- Applicant contribution: **\$2,000**
- Grant request: **\$8,000**
- Applicant cost share: **20%**
- **Extra Point: 1**

Cost Share Percentage: _____ %

Extra Point: ____ / 1

Eligible First-Time Applicant

One additional point is available to an eligible first-time applicant, as defined by the grant program.

Extra Point: ____ / 1

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation Category	Score
Improved Access and/or Connectivity	____ / 5
Cost/Benefit	____ / 5
Sustainability & Operations/Maintenance	____ / 5
Community Need and/or Safety	____ / 5
Collaboration and Creativity	____ / 5
County and Regional Impact	____ / 5
Cost Share	____ / 1
Eligible First-Time Applicant	____ / 1
TOTAL SCORE	____ / 32

Comments
