Sunflower Trails RFP (Request for Proposals):
Building Community by Building Trails

Release Date: September 21, 2021

Submission Date: Tuesday, November 9, 2021 (*technical assistance for electronic submission will be available up to 4pm CST on this date*)

Eligible Applicants: Local units of government and/or nonprofits with goals aligned with community health and development

Available Funding: Up to $55,000 based on cost of project and scope of work

Eligible Expenses: Costs associated with Trail Development and Construction (materials and labor directly related to building the trail) and Trail Signage; see page 5 for more details.

Required Match: YES - See page 6 for details

Grant Timeline: Up to 24 months

Sunflower Support: Please read entire RFP first before you begin the electronic submission. We welcome your questions; contact Elizabeth Burger anytime at eburger@sunflowerfoundation.org.
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Sunflower Foundation began funding trails in 2005 as a way to promote equitable opportunities for physical activity and wellbeing. Since then, we have partnered with communities, schools and nonprofits across the state in more than 200 public trail projects in 73 Kansas counties. Such trail projects include natural surface trails; trails in parks, green spaces and schools; trails to support active transportation; and rail-trail corridors. Sunflower Foundation has also supported regional trail planning, statewide trails and outdoors promotion, and capacity-building for volunteers. We also offer opportunities for education, networking and advocacy.

We believe everyone - regardless of age, ability, background or income - should have access to outdoor public spaces such as public trails, and thus be able to experience the physical, mental and emotional health benefits that come with connecting to nature and community.

This funding opportunity builds on Sunflower’s long history of trail investment in Kansas. We are excited to support the advancement of Kansas trails and their contributions to multiple health and community benefits. These benefits include:

- Improved physical and mental health associated with regular physical activity;
- Enhanced mental health, cognition, creativity and social well-being associated with nature;
- Increased sense of community pride, cohesion and “quality of life, quality of place;” and,
- Increased potential for economic development and revitalization through “active tourism.”

The overall goal of this funding initiative is to improve the health and wellbeing of Kansans and their communities by supporting the development of public trails.

We seek to partner with a variety of stakeholders to expand the footprint of trails in communities of all sizes, locations and backgrounds. Trails are expected to be at least ½ mile in length to facilitate exercise and at least 6 feet wide to accommodate a variety of activities, modalities and uses (school trails may be an exception). Trails should be intended for non-vehicular use except for 1) assisted mobility devices, and 2) e-bikes, depending on local rules and regulations.

Sunflower Foundation values all types of trails – trails in parks, school trails, rail-trails, shared-user paths, natural surface trails, and so forth. However, priority for this RFP will focus on underserved areas, including and especially:

- Neighborhoods, towns and regions with either no trails and/or very few public places for physical activity and recreation; or/and,
- Trail projects with the explicit intention of creating access to under-resourced populations, especially those which represent diverse backgrounds (e.g., race, ethnicity, income).

We also encourage trail projects that are proactive with strategies to increase and diversify the pool of trail partners and users. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Signage that serves to celebrate and/or acknowledge a town’s history and culture, especially in ways that recognize the contributions of all and the inclusion of everyone;
- Addressing the needs of community members who might experience barriers in accessing the trail (e.g. transportation, age, physical or cognitive ability, personal safety, etc.).
ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

Eligible organizations include:

- Kansas municipalities and/or local units of government;
- Public schools within the Kansas unified school district (K-12);
- Kansas-based nonprofit with goals to enhance health and/or community development, improvement and well-being (e.g., health coalitions, economic development councils). **Nonprofits must demonstrate tax-exempt 501c3 status.**

**NOTE:** Partnerships between nonprofits and local governmental entities are encouraged. If a nonprofit is the grantee (i.e., receiving grant funds to build a trail on public land) this partnership must be demonstrated by a Memorandum of Understanding between the nonprofit and the local governmental unit that owns the land.

Non-eligible organizations include entities that already have an active (current) Sunflower Trails grant.

**NOTE:** We are committed to helping as many Kansas communities as possible build trails with priority given to qualified applicants who have not received previous Sunflower Trail grants. We encourage communities with multiple past Sunflower Trail grants to consider the opportunity, **Invitation to Apply: Trail Champion Cohort.**

TRAIL PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

**Access**
Public access to the trail is required, although hours may be restricted for user safety; e.g., daylight hours only. **Trails must be on public property with some exceptions.** Documentation of land and/or right-of-way ownership may be requested.

**Length**
- Minimum ½ mile (2,460 feet) in length for community-based trails, and
- Minimum ¼ mile (1,320 feet) for school-based trails.

**Width**
- Community and school trails with a broad user base should be a minimum of six (6) feet.
  Research shows that wider trails facilitate greater usage.

**Construction Materials**
The choice of materials is the choice of the applicant; however, the application should provide rationale of why certain materials were chosen for this specific project.

**Maintenance Plan**
We require all trail projects to have a long-term maintenance plan outlining what entity will be responsible for trail upkeep and repair and how this maintenance will be funded.

If you have any questions about any of these expectations – especially those regarding access, length and width - please contact Elizabeth Burger before beginning the application process. We understand that length and especially width may sometimes be determined by physical site limitations, topography, intended user base and scope of work. We welcome your questions and the opportunity to learn more about your trail project considerations.
FUNDING PARAMETERS

This RFP is intended to 1) Support the development of new trails/expand existing trails with trail construction, and 2) Enhance the safety, usability and experience of the trail with select infrastructure and signage (see Eligible Expenses, below, for details).

- Trail grants will pay up to 50% of total project costs (eligible expenses only) with a limit of $55,000, regardless of total project costs;
- Trail grants require a 1:1 match for every dollar requested. Match may be a combination of cash and in-kind (See Match Requirements on page 6 for details).
- Eligible expenses will be paid using a cost-reimbursement method (grantee submits documentation and receives up to 50% of approved expenses).

**Example 1**
- Total Project Cost (eligible expenses): $190,000
- SF Trail Grant Pays up to 50% of eligible expenses up to $55,000
- SF Trail Grant Award = $55,000

**Example 2**
- Total Project Cost (eligible expenses): $44,000
- SF Trail Grant Pays up to 50% of eligible expenses up to $55,000
- SF Trail Grant Award = $22,000

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

All trail projects are different. Thus, we do not have specific “caps” on each category of eligible expenses. However, the application must clearly explain how each funding request is instrumental to the overall project and its stated goals. Sunflower staff will have final determination in approved amounts, but always in conversation with the grantee.

Category I: Trail Development
Funding for engineering specifications deemed necessary for the trail project to receive federal transportation dollars.

Category II: Trail Construction
Funding to construct new trails and expand existing trails.
- Dirt work to build/resurface trails; stabilize trail integrity where water control is a concern.
- Trail surface materials, including transportation and labor associated with using such materials (e.g., limestone screenings, asphalt, concrete).
- Infrastructure* necessary for trail sustainability and user safety (e.g., culverts, tubing, bridge reinforcements, railings); does not include traffic safety features.

*Infrastructure does not include any of the items included on the list of Non-Eligible Expenses, page 6.

Category III: Trail Signage* (Only considered in conjunction with Trail Construction)
Funding for signage that increases the safety, usability and user experience of that trail, including:
- Trailhead signs/kiosks
- Signs along trail to mark distance and safety
- Signs along trail for user education/points of interest
- Signage that serves to celebrate and/or acknowledge a town’s history and culture, especially in ways that recognize the contributions of all and the inclusion of everyone.

*Trail must be under construction and preferably near completion before signage expenses can be reimbursed.
We recognize that creating parks, trails and green spaces which are accessible, safe and inviting require many important components. However, the following items are not eligible for this RFP and therefore cannot be approved/reimbursed nor used as match:

- Expenses related to the aesthetics of the trail and trailhead’s surrounding area; e.g., grass, mulch, irrigation systems, weed control, flowers, ornamental bushes/trees.
- Expenses related to non-trail infrastructure and amenities; e.g., lighting, benches, trashcans, water fountains, playground equipment, fitness equipment.
- Expenses related to traffic safety and management; e.g., parking lots, crosswalks, traffic lights and signals.
- Expenses related to non-trail construction such as restrooms, parking lots and dog stations.

If you have any questions about the eligibility of an expense, please contact Elizabeth Burger before completing the grant budget and submitting the application.

**MATCH REQUIREMENTS**

**Matching Funds**
Applicants must demonstrate a match of $1 for every $1 requested from Sunflower Foundation. However, **up to 50%** of the applicant’s match dollars can be in-kind support.

**Eligible In-kind Expenses for Match**
- Eligible goods, materials, labor and services provided by a qualified entity* and donated towards the trail project during the grant term or within 18 months of the grant term start (see “Eligible Expenses” page 5)
- Applicant must provide documentation of fair market value of goods and services.
- In-kind match cannot exceed 50% of the cost of the required total match.

**Non-eligible In-Kind Expenses for Match**
- Donated goods and services that fall under the list of “Non-Eligible Expenses” (see top of page).
- Volunteer efforts.
- Administration/management costs; general overhead.
- Match funds are intended to cover the cost of doing specific work for the trail project and not cover any general operating or overhead costs including management and administration.

*Public works and other municipal entities may be considered qualified entities; however, match funds are intended to cover the cost of doing specific work for the trail project and not cover any general operating or overhead costs including management and administration. Please contact Elizabeth Burger with any questions about this type of match.

**Cash match** is considered the following:
- Funds from applicant organization
- General donations
- Approved grants from other sources (receipt of funds at time of submission is not required)
  - Please also indicate any outstanding proposals to other organizations and note date of expected award announcement.
## Summary of Match Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Award</th>
<th>Grantee Match ≥50% Total Project Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤ 50% Total Project Cost</td>
<td>50% of Grantee Match</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunflower Foundation Funds</td>
<td>Cash Match by Applicant</td>
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### Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Cost: $50,000</th>
<th>Sunflower Award: $25,000 (50% of project cost)</th>
<th>Grantee Match (50% total cost) = $25,000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cash Match: ≥$12,500 (50% of $25,000)</td>
<td>In-Kind Match: ≤$12,500 (50% of $25,000)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Cost: $110,000</th>
<th>Sunflower Award: $55,000 (50% of project cost)</th>
<th>Grantee Match (50% total cost) = $55,000</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cash Match: ≥$27,500 (50% of $55,000)</td>
<td>In-Kind Match: ≤$27,500 (50% of $55,000)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Cost: $150,000*</th>
<th>Sunflower Award: $55,000 &lt;50% of project cost (capped at $55,000)</th>
<th>Grantee Match (&gt;50% total cost) = $95,000*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cash Match: $60,000 &gt;50% of $95,000 match*</td>
<td>In-Kind Match: $35,000 &lt;50% of $95,000 match</td>
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*In the above example, the grantee’s in-kind match was less than 50% of their total match, so the cash match is more than 50%.

## GRANT ADMINISTRATION

### Bids & Budget

Obtaining bids/estimates is an important part of developing the grant budget. We realize this can be a challenging process, and especially now with pandemic-era supply chain and labor shortage issues. However, we do need to have some cost basis for all budget line items for your trail project. We encourage applicants to do as much research as possible about their costs:

- Many national trail organizations have robust websites with information on trail-building costs and signage costs that can provide a good start.
- Contact other communities that are working on a trail project or recently completed one. Ask if they are willing to share information about their costs.
- If you are struggling to obtain a bid or estimate, contact Elizabeth Burger to discuss.

**NOTE:** While estimates will suffice for the application process, we can only execute a Letter of Agreement (LOA) and formally award the grant when we receive copies of formal bids/price quotes. The final grant award is based upon actual formal bids. Thus, final grant awards may vary in amount, not to exceed original request.
Letter of Agreement
Once formal bids are submitted, Sunflower staff can draft a Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the final approved budget as part of that document. The LOA will also include the approved Scope of Work (SOW), grant timeline and reporting requirements. The LOA will be sent electronically to the grantee primary contact for review by all parties and requires signatures from the grantee organization’s authorized signatory as well as the project coordinator (if contacts are different). The LOA should be returned to Sunflower electronically with the grantee keeping a copy for themselves. Upon receipt of the signed LOA, the grant formally begins and work is expected to start within 30 days. At this point, grantees may request grant funds for reimbursement of approved, eligible items as needed.

Grant Term (24 months)
The grant starts upon signature and return of the LOA. Grantees are expected to complete the approved Scope of Work within 24 months of returning the signed LOA. However, we understand the complexities of doing trail projects and will work with every grantee around emerging challenges.

Reporting Requirements
Grantees will be required to submit regular progress reports (both narrative and financial reports) as outlined in the LOA (typically, every 6 months) and a final report upon completion of the grant term. All reports should be submitted electronically via Sunflower’s online grants management system.

GRANT CRITERIA & CONSIDERATIONS

Review Process
A panel of Sunflower staff and external reviewers help evaluate each proposal, using a general set of criteria as well as specific considerations. All proposal components - including the application narrative, budget, budget narrative and all supporting documents - are reviewed, discussed and considered. Recommendations by the panel are presented to the Sunflower Board of Trustees for final consideration and funding decision.

Required Grant Criteria/Documents
- Complete Grant Narrative with all sections addressed (questions in application);
- Complete Budget covering the total (estimated) cost of the project (upload with application);
- Complete Budget Narrative explaining both the specifics of your funding needs in addition to how you’ll meet the match requirements (upload with application).
  o We offer a grant budget and budget narrative form template. However, you are welcome to use your own form if that is easier. If we can understand it, we will use it.
  o Budget/budget narrative should include an estimate for each requested eligible funding goods/service (e.g., cost of a load of limestone screenings, X number of loads, X hours of skid steer and operator time at what cost, etc.). If you do not have a formal bid from a vendor, explain the research behind the amounts you provide.
  o Documentation (quotes, bids, letters of commitment) regarding match of any kind.
- Organizational documents
  o IRS Form 990 or equivalent documentation of nonprofit status (if applicable);
  o Most recent audit or working link to online audit;
  o Current financial statements, including income statement and balance sheet, YTD.

* Documentation of community support, desire and need is not required but strongly encouraged!*
Considerations for Funding

When completing the proposal, you’ll be asked to respond to questions regarding the following topics:

- Applicant/Community Description
- Project History & Vision
- Community Desire, Need, Impact, Goals
  - Beloved community resource/asset
  - Outreach to new users
  - Demonstrating principals of diversity and inclusion
- Partners, Stakeholders, Users
- Project Specifics – where, what, when, who and how:
  - How the trail will be built
  - How much it will cost
- Long-term Maintenance/Sustainability

In addition, the budget narrative is your opportunity to explain how you arrived at cost estimates and how you plan to meet your match.

**We encourage applicants to consider:**

- Which eligible items are needed most to advance the trail project in a comprehensive, community-driven way?
- Which items can be funded through other sources, and how can Sunflower funds best be leveraged with other available funds?
- How can trail signage be truly optimized to meet overall project goals?
- Do funding amounts for certain expenses make sense within context of total scope of work, project goals, project cost, and in proportion to each other?

**NOTE:** Sunflower staff will have final determination in approved amounts, but always in conversation with the grantee.

**Recommended Supporting Documents**

Supporting documents and materials enhance the application. Every trail project is special and distinctive, just like the communities that wish to build them. We encourage you to be creative in sharing details that provide a rich picture. Such documents might include:

- Aerial view from Google Earth with the trail route highlighted. Include details on nearby neighborhoods, streets, connections, etc.
- Original (not template) Letters of Support from current and potential stakeholders and community members of all ages, backgrounds, incomes and abilities.
- Demonstration of community support can be reflected in many different ways: community surveys, local data, minutes from public meetings, photos, webpages, interviews, screenshots of social media activity, community strategic plan or planning document, local media, etc.
- Relevant photos that illustrate the trail location, potential users, current community status of walking conditions and green space, etc.
- If necessary for the project, any existing engineer or architect plans/renderings/drawings. Only submit if you already have them; do not seek such plans or spend money solely for this proposal.
- Smartphone video (<5 min) to capture what written words can’t always express or explain.

**Please clearly label all uploaded materials with applicant name and description of item.**
Submission Date
Proposals in their entirety (complete application, budget, budget narrative, and required and recommended supporting documents) are due on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 by 11:59pm CST.

NOTE: We can provide technical assistance regarding electronic submission and uploading of documents up to 4:00pm CST of submission day. Please plan accordingly.

Funding Announcements
Funding announcements are expected the week of December 13, 2021.

Accessing the Application Online
Sunflower Foundation uses an online grants management system, Fluxx, which allows applicants to complete the application online and upload all required and recommended supporting documents.

If you do not have a Fluxx account with Sunflower:
- Set up an account by clicking here: https://sunflowerfoundation.fluxx.io/
- Click on “Create an account now” (see red arrow, below) and follow instructions
- If you have any trouble, email MJ Mayer at mjmayer@sunflowerfoundation.org
  Please allow up to 24 hours for assistance.
- Once you have established/opened your account, you will find instructions on the first screen to begin the Sunflower Trails application.

If you do have an existing Fluxx account with Sunflower and are ready for your application:
- Use your login to enter the portal and instructions for the Trails RFP will be there.
**FINAL THOUGHTS**

- Please read through this entire RFP and then the entire application before starting.
- We encourage you to write the grant narrative answers **offline** in a Word document and save frequently; THEN copy and paste into the online submission form.
- Contact us anytime via email with questions – we promise to get back to you! We are happy to schedule a phone call if a conversation is needed. Contact us sooner rather than later.
  - Contact [Elizabeth Burger](#) with any overall programming/budget questions.
  - Contact [MJ Mayer](#) with any Fluxx questions.

We always welcome your questions about the RFP and application, and enjoy discussing your project via email or scheduled Zoom meetings and phone calls. **However, information shared during these discussions cannot be considered part of the proposal.** The proposal itself – application, budget, budget narrative and all supporting documents – is the only opportunity to ensure every reviewer on the panel understands the merits of your project. As a reminder, we never expect applicants to hire professional grant writers. In fact, the best proposals are usually the authentic words, ideas and stories from the community members themselves.

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**Let’s Talk Trails!**

Join Elizabeth Burger as well as other trail applicants on Tuesdays over the lunch hour (12:00pm to 1:00pm CST) for a virtual “office hour” to ask questions, discuss your project, and hear the questions of other applicants. Elizabeth will provide a short overview (<5 min) each time, then open the floor. You do not need to register ahead of time for these Zoom meetings, and you can attend as many as you like. The meetings will end at 12:15pm if there are no participants by then.

**To attend a virtual office hour Zoom meeting:**
1. Go to Zoom [www.zoom.us](#) and click “Join a Meeting” - upper right hand corner of screen.
2. When asked for meeting ID, copy and paste the meeting ID, below, for the corresponding date into the box provided by Zoom.
3. Join the meeting.

**OR**, if you already have a Zoom account, click on the [link in red](#) provided for each meeting date.

**Tuesday, September 28 @ 12noon:** Meeting ID 841 9012 0037
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84190120037?pwd=MEhGNkliRUFanQyUePK3VKSStrUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84190120037?pwd=MEhGNkliRUFanQyUePK3VKSStrUT09)

**Tuesday, October 5 @ 12noon:** Meeting ID 898 3513 2777
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89835132777?pwd=ZU1aWmp6VnY2bjRLYm5JajdMVzBFZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89835132777?pwd=ZU1aWmp6VnY2bjRLYm5JajdMVzBFZz09)

**Tuesday, October 12 @ 12noon:** Meeting ID 832 1323 9417
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83213239417?pwd=U2lPbEpORVd1bIhNMGRz3hCeINJUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83213239417?pwd=U2lPbEpORVd1bIhNMGRz3hCeINJUT09)

**Tuesday, October 19 @ 12noon:** Meeting ID 886 4306 6218
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88643066218?pwd=Mz9bDFNONVBtUDByTHhsCUZLRWWvUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88643066218?pwd=Mz9bDFNONVBtUDByTHhsCUZLRWWvUT09)

**Tuesday, October 26 @ 12noon:** Meeting ID 875 6922 2388
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87569222388?pwd=YXFBOWp6RnNkejUwWE44SU5Mam1ydz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87569222388?pwd=YXFBOWp6RnNkejUwWE44SU5Mam1ydz09)

**Tuesday, November 2 @ 12noon:** Meeting ID 827 5606 7692
[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82756067692?pwd=MVVBMCS1eTRKQXpScXFkdG05UE5XZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82756067692?pwd=MVVBMCS1eTRKQXpScXFkdG05UE5XZz09)