6 STEPS TO SUCCESS IN TRAIL BUILDING

Note: these steps are based on the assumption that you have a location for the trail and a rough idea of the trail design (linear trail, loop trail in park, connecting trail, etc).

1. Confirm Community Desire and Need for a Trail
   Ask: Why and how will the trail make a difference in the health of your community?
   - Who will the trail directly and indirectly benefit?
   - Who are the targeted and expected users?
   - Who might be the unexpected users?
   - Do you have local community health assessment or data to demonstrate need for the trail?
   - What are other possible benefits? (e.g., increased volunteer efforts, social cohesion, quality of life indicators, etc).

2. Determine Who Can Help
   Ask: Confirm for your community that there is a desire for and need for a trail.
   - Who are the potential partners?
   - Who can help build the trail?

3. Request Grant Funding
   Ask: When requesting grant funding, work backwards. Determine how much money is needed to construct the trail, then develop a budget from those numbers and see how it matches to available funding.
   - Triple check grant requirements: Sunflower Foundation Trail grants are based upon actual amount of the trail costs, but a budget based on solid numbers would be helpful for any trail-related grant request or fundraising efforts.
   - Solicit multiple bids or quotes to establish fair market value and develop your budget from those numbers.
   - Talk to the program officer and/or finance contact about match funds to determine what costs are allowable. Most foundations that require documentation for expenses will also require some kind of confirmation/documentation for match funds as well.

4. Research Grants and Funding Opportunities
   Do:
   - READ the Requests for Proposals (RFP) and grant application very carefully for each organization. Each organization will have different goals, agendas, and criteria.
   - If the funding source encourages a conversation with the program staff, talk to the recommended contact.
   - If a match is required, start exploring options (city budgets, other grants, fundraising, etc).

5. Establish Strong Champions + Diverse Partnerships
   Ask: Determine how potential users could be partners and supporters of trail development. Be open-minded! Funders greatly value partnerships. Establish champions — strong committed, relentless individuals who drive the process.
   - How will partners benefit from the trail?
   - What resources/ideas/energy can they bring to project?
   - What kind of working relationship and history, if any, have been established from other projects?

6. Solidify Support Through Partners/Coalition
   Even if a contractor builds the trail, there are still many actions you can take to ensure success:
   - Fundraise/Crowd Fund
   - Promote and raise awareness
   - Event planning for the trail
   - Create a trail maintenance plan
   - Plan for evaluation of use

Resources:
- Kansas Trails Council
- American Trails
- Rails to Trails Conservancy
- Trail Maintenance and Management Guide to Fundraising for Community Projects
- Maximizing Trail Budgets through Competitive Bidding

Additional Resources:
- How To Build A Trails Coalition: The Pikes Peak Model
- Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism
- Kansas Department of Transportation
- Kansas Health Foundation
- Kansas Association of Community Foundations
- Trail Specifics: Research, Identify, Specify and Justify
- Multi-Use Trails – Ensuring Regional Planning Benefits of Trails and Greenways
- Health and Trails
- Shared Use Path Design (Comprehensive)
- Surfacing Topics
- Planning Trails and Greenways
- Examples of Legal Agreements for Trails
- Trail Enhancements Resource Library