



Preservation Trust Fund

Overview

Established by the Virginia General Assembly in 1997 and administered by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), the Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund (PTF) provides grants for acquisitions, easements, rights of way, and other methods of protecting open space for farming, forestry, recreation, wildlife, water quality, and more. In most cases, a right, privilege, or interest in real estate must be conveyed to either VOF or a locality, pursuant to Virginia's Open-Space Land Act, to be eligible for PTF funding.

Opportunity

VOF hosts two grant rounds annually, with requests for proposals announced in January and June or July each year, and grant awards made in June and October or November. Grant agreements have a two-year lifespan. VOF seeks proposals for projects that provide new or expanded public access to open space, such as parks, preserves, trails, greenways, outdoor classrooms, beaches, and boat launches, as well as projects that protect exceptional natural and cultural resources for the benefit of the Commonwealth. Proposals may be submitted for both public and private lands.

Applicant Eligibility

PTF grants may be awarded to any person, organization, or locality with a real estate interest to convey on either public or private land. Land already under locality ownership may be eligible for PTF funding as long as the parcel is not already protected through certain existing deed restrictions.

Land Protection Partnership

Permanent land protection is a required component of the Preservation Trust Fund, with the legislative language specifying that in most cases, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation or a locality must take a real estate interest in a property. Usually, the preferred applicant or land protection partner is the locality.

A Preservation Trust Fund grant award may be given to an applicant without a confirmed land protection partner. Grant recipients without the required partner may accept the grant award and use the two-year grant lifespan to develop the necessary partnership. No funds may be disbursed until the real estate interest is conveyed.

Funds Available

The amount of funding available for each grant round is determined annually. In recent cycles, grant awards have averaged \$150,000 per project. However, there is no absolute cap and exceptional projects, as well as those with substantiated need, have been funded at higher amounts. Applicants are encouraged to request the amount of funding that would allow the project to be fully implemented. Partial funding is possible. Funds may be disbursed only when a real estate interest has been conveyed to VOF, a locality, or an approved eligible holder under the Open-Space Land Act. Once a land protection instrument is recorded, the grant award may be issued in full with spend-down reporting to follow.

Project Prioritization

While VOF is offering grant awards for both public access and exceptional natural and cultural resource protection projects, VOF is prioritizing those projects in which the interest in real estate includes a provision to provide access to the property by the public. Successful proposals will protect and preserve open green space.

Funding for resource protection easements will be prioritized for those projects that show exceptional characteristics in the following categories: historic and cultural, water quality, scenic and open space, habitat, agriculture and forestry, and policy alignment. Deed restrictions will protect the highest conservation values of a property.

Eligible Costs

PTF grants may pay for any costs that are associated with the conveyance of an interest, right, or privilege in open space to VOF, a locality, or an approved eligible holder under the Open-Space Land Act including fee-simple acquisition, development rights, public access rights of way, leases, legal costs, and survey costs. Components critical for public use of the land may also be included in the grant request such as infrastructure and the associated necessary engineering, design, and planning. Although design costs may be included as part of a larger proposal, priority will be given to shovel-ready land protection projects with tangible, measurable results. While infrastructure is an eligible cost, impervious surface will be capped, and project sites that are currently predominantly hardscape or are intended to be predominately hardscape are not good candidates for PTF funding.

Federal Program Compatibility

The requirement for VOF or a locality to take a real-estate interest may complicate or prevent land from being eligible for federal sources of grant funding, federal ownership, or, in the case of a tribal applicant, to have ownership placed in federal trust for the benefit of the tribe. Grant applicants who may be considering federal partnerships of any kind should contact grant staff before applying.

Application Process

Applications will be accepted through an online process, which can be accessed at <https://www.vof.org/protect/grants/ptf/>. Interested applicants should check the website for updates. Please contact grant program staff at grants@vof.org with any questions about the application process or project eligibility.