

Request for Proposals (RFP)
Contract Support for Vermont Trail Accessibility Hub
Vermont Trails and Greenways Council

Date Issued: 12/6/24

Application Deadline: 12/20/24

Introduction

The Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (VTGC) is seeking proposals from qualified independent contractors to support the Vermont Trail Accessibility Hub (TAH). This person will collaborate with TAH partners on several projects including: 1) Lead the process to research and write a long-term sustainable operating model; 2) Produce a final report with recommendations to the State of Vermont Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation; 3) Develop a Trails Accessibility Advisory Council, and 4) support TAH communications and events.

Background

The VTGC is dedicated to the preservation, development, and promotion of trails and greenways in Vermont. Our mission is to connect communities and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors through sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities.

Thanks to funding from the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Program (CGP), in June 2024, VTGC collaborated with Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports (Vermont Adaptive), Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA), Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA), Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT), and Community Geographics (CommGeo) to launch the [Vermont Trail Accessibility Hub](#). Together, we are:

- Developing web-based resources for trail managers to find the information they need to establish accessible and adaptive mountain bike, aquatic, and pedestrian trails for people with physical disabilities;
- Providing technical assistance to trail managers through webinars as well as in-person and on-call support;
- Conducting more than 50 pedestrian, aquatic, and adaptive mountain bike trail assessments to identify opportunities for building and redesigning trails and water access points to make them more accessible;
- Hosting an accessibility-themed conference on October 8 and 9, 2025 for trail managers and advocates for people with disabilities to increase skills and knowledge and provide networking opportunities;
- Conducting field assessments of state trails in order to make the state-supported Trail Finder website the go-to resource for discovering accessible and adaptive trails statewide;
- Directly engaging people with disabilities in order to capture their feedback about trails around the state as well as their experiences recreating in the outdoors;

- Providing networking opportunities for people and organizations that haven't always worked together: trail managers + organizations that advocate for people with disabilities;
- Developing a sustainability model to continue the program beyond the life of the grant; and
- Providing a set of recommendations on how to continue to expand access to the outdoors to the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation (FPR).

Contractor Support

VTGC seeks a qualified contractor to both help guide and provide hands-on support on four specific components of the project. They include the following:

1. Identify potential sustainability models for continuing the TAH beyond the life of the grant, and leading the TAH partners to craft a preferred approach that will be published as a final report. (30%)
2. Lead the development of a project report, including recommendations on how to continue to reduce physical barriers to trails-based outdoor recreation. (30%)
3. Support the development of a Trail Accessibility Sustainability Committee, whose primary purpose will be to support the contractor's work. (10%)
4. Support the TAH partners in developing other aspects of the TAH, including website content development and support for our fall conference, depending on contractor skills and interest and evolving partner needs. (30%)

Scope of Work

During the calendar year 2025, the contractor will work closely with VTGC program manager and TAH partners to:

1. **Develop a sustainability model:** The TAH is being developed with \$640,000 in funding through a VOREC Community Grant, which will expire at the end of 2025. The contractor will develop a well-researched, practical, and professional sustainability model focused on how to continue to expand the development and stewardship of accessible trails. The report will include but is not limited to a budget, operating model, stakeholder map, identified ongoing needs, and recommended funding sources. A draft report is desired by September 2025, with a final version due by the end of the year. This report should be developed in close consultation with the TAH partners.
2. **Develop a report with recommendations to the State of Vermont:** The contractor will use conversations with TAH partners and focus groups with stakeholders, as well as evidence gathered from TAH events and activities, to develop a final report of TAH outcomes, including a detailed set of recommendations for how to continue to reduce physical barriers to trails-based outdoor recreation statewide. A draft report is desired by September 2025, with a final version due by the end of the year. This report should be developed in close consultation with the TAH partners.

3. **Support the creation of a Trail Accessibility Hub Advisory Committee.** TAH partners are committed to establishing an official group of thought-partners and decision-makers, including but not limited to trail managers and advocates for people with disabilities. This Advisory Committee shall be responsible for providing guidance on both the current work of the TAH and how to ensure its continuation and long-term sustainability after current funding is exhausted in December 2025. The contractor will help maintain communications with the committee, and host at least one meeting in 2025.
4. **TAH Communications support:** Produce high-quality, written content for TAH communications, which could include but is not limited to website and news content, press releases, and more, at the direction of the VTGC Program Manager.
5. **TAH event support:** The TAH partners will be hosting webinars, workshops, and a conference October 8 & 9; contractor support may include but is not limited to support developing with promotion and logistics at the direction of the VTGC Program Manager.

Qualifications

Applicants should demonstrate the following qualifications:

- Experience with program planning and management for non-profit organizations.
- Excellent research and writing skills.
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to professionally engage with stakeholders in one-on-one settings and focus groups.
- Proven ability to deliver high-quality plans and reports.

Application Guidelines

Interested consultants should submit a proposal by December 20, 2024 that includes:

1. Cover letter introducing yourself: who you are, why you are interested, and how you would approach this work with your skills and experience;
2. Proposal describing how you would approach each of the major deliverables (numbers 1-3 above), including timeline, methodology, and estimated budget;
3. Current resume;
4. Up to 3 references from previous clients;
5. Samples of relevant written work that is reflective of your experiences meeting this project's core deliverables
6. Desired hourly rate.

Timeline

- Proposal Deadline: 12/20/24
- Questions from applicants can be emailed by December 13th.

- Start date: on or before the Trail Accessibility Summit @ Bolton Timberline Lodge 1/14/25
- End date: December 2025

Contact Information

For questions or further information, please contact:

Sharon Plumb, Program Manager

Vermont Trails and Greenways Council

802-223-2190

Sharon@vermonttgc.org,