

The Path to Developing New Trails





The Path to Developing New Trails

Define the Vision

Describe the future successful state once the project is complete. What is it? What needs will it address? Who will benefit from it? A clear vision is the foundation of any successful project.

Resource: [Rails-to-Trails - Route of the Badger](#) ↗

Form a Team

Rally your champions into action. Recruit representatives from stakeholder groups. An effective team builds momentum and moves the project forward.

Resource: [Rails-to-Trails - How to Create a Friends Group](#) ↗

Engage the Community

Gain community support, including from elected officials, to make the project relevant. Establish good working relationships or partnerships with the land managers and understand the property master plans. Provide intentional opportunities to hear the community's wants and needs and keep them informed throughout the process.

Resource: [Find Your Elected Officials](#) ↗

Establish Roles

Define roles and responsibilities of partners to ensure a well-managed project as it unfolds with clear assignments for future management, programming, and stewardship.

Resource: [Rails-to-Trails - Management Basics](#) ↗

Seek Funding

Develop a budget and pursue funding support through public-private partnerships, grants, individual donations, and events. Fundraising often occurs in phases throughout the project timeline and beyond.

Resource: [International Mountain Bicycling Association - Trail Accelerator Grant](#) ↗

Plan & Design It

Consider engaging trail professionals through a "Request for Proposal" advertisement to lead the planning and design process. Select professionals that will continue to engage the public and land managers and ensure the design reflects the community's interests and needs while considering funding, phasing, construction approach, permitting, and maintenance requirements.

Resource: [International Mountain Bicycling Association - Trail Labs](#) ↗

Build It

Determine a construction approach that utilizes professional trail builders, volunteers, youth conservation corps, and in-kind services. A construction manager or client representative may be needed to oversee contracted services if those management skill sets are not on your team.

Resource: [International Mountain Bicycling Association - Trail Solutions](#) ↗

Maintain It

Carry out the operations and maintenance plan developed during design and construction. Engage partners, volunteers, and the community in this work to develop a sense of ownership and pride.

Resource: [American Trails - Building Trail Stewards](#) ↗

Promote It

Work with local organizations and tourism entities to promote the trail to both residents and visitors to increase economic activity. Events and programs will drive community engagement.

Resource: [Travel Wisconsin - Travel Promotion](#) ↗