Before You Ask

Private Funding Starter Worksheet for Parks & Trails

Seven questions to answer before approaching a foundation, business, or individual donor.

How to use: Type into the boxes or print and write. Start with estimates; mark unknowns clearly. Keep secured funds separate from conditional commitments and prospects.

1 What exactly is the project?

Project name

Community / location

What will you build or improve? Define the first phase if the full vision is larger.

2 Who benefits, and why now?

Describe the people served, the community benefit, and what makes this project timely.

Be specific about the need and the difference the project could make.

Useful detail: who will use it, which gap it fills, and one fact or local observation that supports the need.

Know the gap. Check the basics.

A clear funding request starts with a credible scope, budget, and responsible project team.

3 What is the funding gap?

Total project / phase cost	$	
Less: secured cash funding	$	
Remaining secured funding gap	$	

Gap = total cost minus secured cash funding. Do not subtract conditional pledges, pending requests, or prospects.

Conditional commitments or pending requests (amounts and conditions; tracked separately)

Budget source / date and key assumptions. What still needs a reliable estimate?

4 What is ready, and what is still unresolved?

Mark one status for each item.	Confirmed	In progress	Unknown
Land or site control	○	○	○
Permissions and project scope	○	○	○
Credible cost estimate	○	○	○
Owner and maintenance plan	○	○	○
Recipient for private gifts identified	○	○	○

Most important gap to resolve next (include the gift recipient or fiscal sponsor, if needed)

Match the project to the people.

Private support grows from a credible fit, clear commitments, and relationships built over time.

5 Which types of private supporters might fit?

Consider local businesses or employers, foundations, individual or family donors, and nonprofit partners.

Check geography, giving priorities, eligibility, and relationships. A possible fit is not a confirmed funding opportunity.

Category or organization	Why does this project fit?	Relationship / research needed

6 What support is already in place?

Name people or organizations, the support offered, and whether it is confirmed, conditional, or still a conversation.

Person / organization	Support offered	Status / conditions

Keep volunteer time and in-kind help separate from cash. Record permissions before naming a supporter publicly.

Who could make an introduction or strengthen the project team?

Choose the next conversation.

A useful first ask may be advice, an introduction, a site visit, or permission to submit a proposal.

7 Who will you approach, and what will you ask?

Person / organization and why this is the right next conversation

Your specific request - what response or action would move the project forward?

Next action and who will take it

Target date

Bring it together: your project introduction

Use the structure below, then write a natural version in the box. Replace estimates with confirmed figures when available.

We are [organization] working on [project] in [place] to [community benefit]. The estimated cost is [$], with [$] secured and a remaining gap of [$]. We would welcome [specific next conversation or action] because [reason for the fit].

- [ ] Estimates and secured funds are clearly labeled.
- [ ] Supporters and commitments are described accurately.
- [ ] The next request is specific and realistic.

Want to identify your biggest funding obstacles? Take the free readiness assessment.
accelparks.com/readiness-assessment