

TELUS #StandWithOwners Grant Application

Contact & Organization Information

Name: <i>(First and Last)</i>	Wynn Holmberg
Email:	wynn@ctss.ca
Organization name:	Cowichan Trails Stewardship Society
Organization website URL:	https://www.cowichantrails.ca/
Number of employees:	0 - 19
Organization type:	Non-profit
How many years has your organization been operating?	13.0

Application Form

Instructions: Bring your organization's story to life with specific examples in your answers. Before you

begin, review the **Grant Application Tips** posted in D2L for guidance on crafting a standout application. Please note each response is limited to **4,000** characters.

Provide an overview of your organization and purpose. *Let your passion shine through.*

The Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society (CTSS) is a community-driven nonprofit focused on developing, maintaining, and promoting sustainable trail networks in the Cowichan Valley region of British Columbia. Our core mission is to create high-quality recreational trails that enhance outdoor experiences while protecting natural ecosystems and supporting regional tourism. The organization's vision is to transform the Cowichan Valley into a region that is known for having the most accessible and inclusive trail networks. (Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society, n.d.)

The CTSS works to design and maintain low-impact recreational infrastructure that aligns with long-term environmental stewardship goals in collaboration with First Nations and the North Cowichan Municipal Forest Reserve. The society uses sustainable trail building practices that minimize environmental damage, reduces erosion, and protects wildlife habitats. This approach reflects the organization's belief that outdoor recreation and conservation should function together rather than in conflict. (Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society-a, 2025)

CTSS also focuses on supporting sustainable recreational tourism. By developing "world-class" trail networks the society contributes to the region's outdoor tourism economy while ensuring that increased visitation does not harm the environment. Organized events and trail initiatives showcase the natural beauty of the Cowichan area and help position the region as a destination for hiking, cycling, and other trail-based recreation.

Overall, the Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society's focus can be understood as the integration of environmental stewardship, community participation, and recreation infrastructure development. By mobilizing volunteers and partners to build and maintain sustainable trail

systems, the organization aims to create outdoor spaces that enrich local quality of life, support tourism, and preserve the natural landscapes of the Cowichan valley. (Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society, n.d.)

What makes your organization unique from others in your industry/market?

Environmental responsibility is embedded in the organization's operational principles. CTSS follows responsible trail-building standards and actively reduces unauthorized trails to promote trail user safety and respect for landowners. We are also proactively minimizing user conflicts and ensuring that trail systems are safe for multiple types of users by educating trail users through social media and information kiosks. The CTSS's past projects demonstrate the organizations values by respecting wildlife, ecosystems, and a commitment to ethical land use and long-term environmental sustainability. (Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society, 2025-b)

Another major component of our organization is community engagement and volunteer participation. The organization operates through strong volunteer involvement, drawing on the efforts of local residents and trail users who contribute time and expertise to expand and maintain the trail network. CTSS is actively building a strong and dedicated community by training volunteers, organizing events, and fostering shared responsibility for local outdoor spaces. (Facebook, n.d.) Through these activities, we help create both recreational opportunities and a sense of stewardship among community members. (Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society, 2025-b)

Describe the project you are proposing, including what opportunity it presents or problem it solves for the organization, a detailed budget, and implementation timeline in weeks/months. Make sure you describe it in a way that aligns with the contest purpose and criteria.

The Cowichan valley trail networks currently have inconsistent way finding, limited accessibility information (grade, surface type, distance, width, difficulty rating), and signage that is not meeting universal design standards. Trails at Mt. Tzouhalem, the regions most popular and developed trail area currently displays only a limited amount of this essential trail information. Distances are indicated on physical trail signs at Mt Tzouhalem and TrailForks has subjective physical ability ratings (easy, moderate, hard) listed on their website. (TrailForks, n.d-b.) Complete accessibility information is vital for trail users with diverse abilities that rely on accurate and complete trail details to determine whether a route is suitable for them. For example, if an adaptive mountain bike rider visited Mt. Tzouhalem they would be forced to make the decision of either not using the trails or to use them with limited information and risk getting stuck on a trail that is too narrow or steep for them to safely ride. Enhancing trail signage within our trail networks will strengthen the regions reputation as an inclusive outdoor recreation destination committed to equitable access for all trail users. (CRD Parks, 2003)

This project will implement a universal design signage upgrade designed to reduce barriers through the integration of digital and on-site trail accessibility information. New signs will include QR codes that link users to established trail platforms (e.g., TrailForks, AllTrails) providing detailed trail descriptions, accessibility ratings, wayfinding guidance, and trail status updates. By collaborating with these trail platforms we will also give trail users the ability to report accessibility issues or barriers via the QR codes.

The signage will be implemented at the Mt. Tzouhalem trail system, which is the most heavily used network in the Cowichan Valley with more than 70 trails of varying types and difficulty levels (TrailForks, n.d-a.). Because of its high visitation and diverse user base Mt. Tzouhalem offers the greatest opportunity to achieve immediate community impact while establishing an accessible trail signage standard for future accessibility upgrades across other regional trail networks. This project aligns with national standards for accessible recreation infrastructure and will significantly improve trail usability, visitor experience, and equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities. (Parks Canada, n.d.)

The following budget outlines the sign design, production, installation, and costs associated with collaborating with the trail platforms to integrate the new accessibility information on their websites.

Universal Design Signage Upgrade Budget

Item	Amount
Accessible sign design & consultation.....	\$20,000
Trail signage production (Banner Buzz, n.d.).....	\$23,000
Installation & materials.....	\$18,000
TrailFork and AllTrails Integration (QR-linked maps/info).....	\$14,000
Total.....	\$75,000

The project will require 6 months to complete as outlined in the project timeline below.

6 Month Project Timeline

Month 1 and 2:

- Contact all stakeholders to arrange meetings to discuss the project.
- Hire trail signage consultant.
- Contact TrailForks and AllTrails to discuss QR code and accessibility info integration.
- Meet with stakeholders and consultants to discuss signage details.

Month 3:

- Draft design signage.
- Gather feedback from CTSS board and other stakeholders.
- Make necessary changes to signage design.
- Continue collaborating with TrailForks and AllTrails.

Month 4:

- Finalize signage design and order signage.
- Hire contractor to install signage.

Month 5 and 6:

- Receive signage order.
- Install Signage.
- Complete QR code and accessibility info integration with TrailForks and AllTrails.
- Reveal new accessible signage to community.

How have you used technology in your organization? This could be computer technology and other forms of technology.

The Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society uses mobile trail applications and social media to help manage and maintain its trail network more efficiently. These technologies allow trail users to access up-to-date information about trail locations, conditions, and etiquette. This supports safer and more informed recreation activities while also helping the organization monitor how trails are being used and where there are opportunities to improve.

TrailForks is a mobile application that provides way finding information to trail users and facilitates communication between trail users and CTSS staff. The app allows riders and hikers to submit real-time reports identifying hazards, fallen trees, erosion, or other maintenance needs. These user-generated reports are reviewed by CTSS staff and volunteers, enabling trail crews to prioritize repairs, schedule maintenance work, and respond quickly to changing conditions, improving both trail safety and long-term stewardship. This approach aligns with CTSS's broader goal of building sustainable, community-supported trail networks that minimize environmental impact while enhancing recreational access. (TrailForks, n.d-a.)

The organization utilizes social media to engage with local trail enthusiasts, regional partners, and the overall outdoor recreation community. Social media allows us to update trail users about trail closures, volunteer days, events, and new projects coming soon. We also use these platforms to advocate for sustainable trail building practices, inclusive trail design planning, and equitable land use management. (Facebook, n.d.)

How is your organization making communities more sustainable, diverse, equitable and inclusive?

By developing new accessible signage that follows universal design principles the CTSS will enhance our local network and set a new standard for trail accessibility on Vancouver Island. The new signage will include braille, high-contrast visuals, and other universal design standards. (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, n.d.) Trail accessibility information such as length, width, and slope would also be clearly stated on all signage. (Parks Canada, n.d.)

All relevant stakeholders will be consulted before the new signage is implemented to ensure that the signage installed is effective and appropriate for all groups involved. This includes the First Nations, the Municipality of North Cowichan, the North Cowichan Municipal Forest Reserve, trail users, and other impacted members of the community. Approval for this trail signage upgrade will need to be approved by the CTSS board of directors. (Cowichan Trail Stewardship Society, 2025.)

By selecting this box, I agree that all the content provided in this document is written in my own words and is based on research I conducted myself. Source: *This application was adapted from the [TELUS #StandWithOwners Contest Application Form](#)*