Great Trails State Program (GTSP)

The Great Trails State Program provides funding for the new trail development and extension of existing trails within the state of North Carolina. This includes paved trails or greenways, natural surface trails, biking trails, equestrian trails, and any other type of trail recognized by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Eligible trails do not include a series of tourism attractions related to a particular theme that are jointly marketed based on that theme and are interconnected only by vehicular roadways. There will be one grant cycle distributing the full $25 million dollars in non-recurring funds.

Eligible Applicants:

- A municipality or county.

- A regional council of government created pursuant to G.S 160A-470.

- A public authority, as defined in G.S. 159-7.

- A nonprofit entity provided the entity demonstrates in a manner acceptable to the Department that the unit or units of local government where the eligible trail project will be conducted have been notified of and support the trail project.

Eligible Projects include:

- **Planning & Feasibility:** The intent of Planning & Feasibility studies for the GTSP funds is an in-depth corridor study for a trail alignment, not an overall comprehensive trail plan for an area (town, county, etc.). Planning & Feasibility will include assessments of all elements of the trail project including trail class (paved / natural surface), target users, design aspects, trail corridor / land needed, and partners to maintain the trail, ensuring the overall feasibility of a trail and/or trail location from a technical, financial, and operational aspect. The conclusion of this effort will be able to lead directly into Design & Engineering of the trail.

- **Design & Engineering:** D&E projects will create a set of design drawings that build upon the/a Planning & Feasibility study considering all assessments completed. This effort will provide technical details to construct sustainable trails and typically include surveys, geotechnical study (if needed), design drawings, construction specifications, and maintenance agreements. The conclusion of this effort will be a set of construction documents that can be used to bid out the project for construction or construct the project.

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- **Acquisition:** GTSP can be used to acquire land or easements for trail projects.
    - Acquisition projects may include Planning & Feasibility, Design & Engineering, or Construction.

- **Construction:** GTSP funds can be used to construct trails or trail structures. Trail structures include bridges, boardwalks, retaining walls, and other structures that are necessary for visitors to use the trail to travel from one location to another. For paddle trails, trail structures include waterway access points and watercraft launch structures. Trail amenities are also an eligible project expense, and these include markers, signage, benches, water fountains, restroom facilities, bathhouses, campsites, docks, boat ramps, parking facilities, picnic facilities, equipment rental facilities, and other improvements or structures intended to enhance visitor experience for trail users.

- **Maintenance:** Maintenance projects for the GTSP funds includes any activity to maintain the usability and sustainability of trails. This can include ensuring trails are passable by the users for which they are managed, preventing environmental damage resulting from trail deterioration, protecting public safety, and averting future deferred maintenance cost.

Project Minimums:

- $100,000 minimum for Planning & Design, Acquisition (all types), Construction of natural surface trails, and Maintenance of natural surface trails
- $250,000 minimum for Maintenance of paved trails
- $300,000 minimum for Construction of paved trails

Project Maximum:

- Grants made under this program shall not exceed five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000) per project.

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Matching Grant Summary:

- Eligible applicants receiving a grant under this program shall provide matching funds based on the tier ranking of the county where the project is located. In the case of trail projects in more than one county, the match shall be based on the lowest county tier. The required match is as follows:
  - Tier 1: in the amount of one non-State dollar ($1.00) of matching funds for every four dollars ($4.00) of State funds.
  - Tier 2: in the amount of one non-State dollar ($1.00) of matching funds for every two dollars ($2.00) of State funds.
  - Tier 3: in the amount of one non-State dollar ($1.00) of matching funds for every one dollar ($1.00) of State funds.

- The match may include cash, fee waivers, in-kind services, the donation of assets, the provision of infrastructure, or a combination of these. Non-cash matches must be quantifiable and documented. Additional information will be provided in the application guide.

Award Timeline:

Notification of Funding: March 1, 2024

Application Deadline: September 3, 2024

Awards Made: Early 2025

Project Period: TBD

Award timeline and project period will be updated here in the coming weeks.

Application Support:

- An application guide will be published by March 15, 2024.
- A launch webinar will be held on March 26 at 11am. Registration information will be posted on the DPR website, in WebGrants, and shared via email.

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Selection Criteria:

- Readiness (60 possible points)
    - Clear objectives
    - Secured match
    - Proven record with trail projects
    - Sustainable design

- Impact (20 possible points)
    - Connections to daily destinations and/or existing trail networks
    - Increases access
    - Eliminates trail gap

- Partners and Community Support (10 possible points)
    - Support from community where trail will be built
    - Support from other partners or organizations
    - Public support

- Management and Maintenance (10 possible points)
    - Long-term maintenance plan
    - Emergency management plan