



## Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) Program

### Training and Technical Assistance Support for Local Government Participants

#### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

##### **About the Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) Program**

In January 2023, the N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division, announced that 34 local governments from across the state would participate in the Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) program. The CORE program, which is funded by a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) State Tourism Grant, offers strategic planning and technical assistance to help rural North Carolina communities leverage the state's abundant outdoor recreation assets to support local economic growth.

The CORE program will provide training and technical assistance to help participating communities implement their strategies. This includes funding for participating communities to attend training and receive technical assistance which helps them gain skills and knowledge to continue advancing outdoor recreation related economic development.

All training and technical assistance must adhere to the standards and guidelines outlined in the following document:

<https://www.commerce.nc.gov/core-guidelines-training-and-technical-assistance-support-local-government-participants/open>

➤ **What type of training and technical assistance opportunities are eligible?**

The CORE program will provide participating local governments (CORE communities) with financial support to access and attend training and/or to receive outside technical assistance which helps them gain skills and knowledge to continue advancing outdoor recreation related economic development.

Such training and technical assistance may include webinars, conferences, courses, or workshops; group site visits to learn best practices from communities that have created successful outdoor recreation economies, host a speaker or expert that helps to advance outdoor recreation-oriented economic development, and other similar activities.

Training may be related to trail development or other outdoor recreation infrastructure asset development, business development, tourism, or outdoor recreation product manufacturing. In certain instances, training on topics such as grant management, downtown redevelopment or similar subjects which advance community and economic development related to outdoor recreation.

➤ **What are some examples of training and technical assistance opportunities for communities that are eligible for financial support from the CORE program?**

Training and technical assistance may include webinars, conferences, courses, or workshops; group site visits to learn best practices from communities that have created successful outdoor recreation economies, and other, similar activities.

Examples include conferences, such as the [Outdoor Economy Conference](#), [The Great Trails State Conference](#), or the [North Carolina Main Street Conference](#), or other training courses, such as those offered by the UNC School of Government, North Carolina League of Municipalities, or North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. Additional training opportunities are available and all must be pre-approved by CORE program administration.

When applicable, courses related to recreational trail development are available for assistance. One example of this is the [McDowell Technical Community College's Trail Construction and Sustainability Program](#).

➤ **Who is eligible?**

Currently, there are 34 local governments who applied and are eligible to gain access to services associated with the CORE program. These local governments are listed within the following press release:

<https://www.commerce.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2023/01/30/north-carolina-selects-34-communities-creating-outdoor-recreation-economies-core-program>

To receive support for training, including reimbursement for training or technical assistance, a local government must have adopted a resolution requesting CORE strategic planning services and entered into a memorandum of understanding with the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division, Main Street & Rural Planning Center and/or its Rural Planning Program.

➤ **How will the costs associated with attending these training activities be paid?**

Costs associated with training or technical assistance will only be paid to the local government engaged in the CORE program (see previous question, "Who is eligible?") in the form of reimbursements. Any expenses to be reimbursed must be reasonable and necessary, as determined by CORE program administrators, and adhere to standards of the N.C. Department of Commerce Travel Expense Policy.

**Local governments must receive prior approval from CORE program administrators to determine if the expenses they expect to incur from the training and/or technical assistance are eligible for reimbursement.** To obtain prior approval of anticipated training and/or technical assistance expenses, a local government must submit a CORE Training/Technical Assistance Support Pre-Approval Request form to CORE program administrators.

<https://www.commerce.nc.gov/core-trainingtechnical-assistance-support-pre-approval-request-form/open>

➤ **How do you submit the pre-approval form?**

Completed pre-approval forms must be sent via email to **both** of the following CORE administrators email addresses for review. Please include the following information in the email subject line: "CORE Training Pre-Approval - Town/County Name".

**CORE Administrators:**

David McRae

Appalachian Regional Commission Assistant Program Manager

North Carolina Department of Commerce  
[david.mcrae@commerce.nc.gov](mailto:david.mcrae@commerce.nc.gov)

Karen Smith, AICP  
Rural Planning Program Manager  
NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center  
[ksmith@commerce.nc.gov](mailto:ksmith@commerce.nc.gov)

➤ **What expenses will be reimbursed?**

- Registration fees for in-person and/or virtual conferences, workshops, courses, and other training events and activities.
- Passenger vehicle mileage for travel to and from the training site as measured from the CORE community's local government administration office ("duty station"). Reimbursement shall be at the business use standard mileage rate set by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service that is in effect when the travel occurs.
- Overnight lodging at commercial lodging establishments when the training site is located at least 35 miles from the CORE community's duty station.
- Meals in accordance with the standards and at the rates specified in the Commerce Travel Policy in effect when the expenses are incurred. The cost of lunch is not reimbursable unless an overnight stay is involved.
- Fees charged by trainers, instructors, guest speakers, or other professionals with advanced knowledge in a CORE-related field that a local government hires to train, teach, present, consult, and/or provide technical assistance on CORE-related topics and/or projects, in person or virtually, to the local government, specific groups, and/or the community at large.

All expenses that a local government intends to be reimbursed for must be documented and receipts and other documentation must be provided to CORE Administrators at time of reimbursement request.

➤ **When can we be reimbursed for hotel/lodging?**

- Overnight lodging at commercial lodging establishments can be paid for **when the training site is located at least 35 miles from the CORE community's duty station.**

➤ **What is the process to receive reimbursement for training or technical assistance?**

Once a local government completes the training and/or receives the technical assistance for which it received prior approval, it may request reimbursement from the CORE program for actual expenses incurred. To do so, the local government must submit the documents and supporting information requested below.

- An invoice issued by the local government to the N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division, that references the Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) program and includes the total reimbursement amount requested.
- A CORE Training/Technical Assistance Expenses Reimbursement form.
- Documentation of actual expenses, as outlined below and in accordance with the Commerce Travel Policy. The types of expenses must be eligible for reimbursement and coincide with those shown on the approved CORE Training/Technical Assistance Support Request form.

All invoice and all required documentation to support reimbursement must be sent by email to the CORE program administrators within 30 days of the completion of the training and/or technical assistance.

Please note, If a local government is not set up as a payee in the North Carolina Financial System (NCFS), it will need to submit a State of North Carolina Substitute W-9 Form and a Supplier Electronic Payment Form to the North Carolina Office of the State Controller (OSC) by email at [ncfsepay@osc.nc.gov](mailto:ncfsepay@osc.nc.gov). To obtain the forms, see Appendix 2 of the "Guidelines" or visit the State Suppliers section of the OSC website, <https://www.osc.nc.gov/state-suppliers>. *Please note that it may take up to 30 days for the forms to be processed once they are submitted to the OSC.*

➤ **Can non-government staff attend these training opportunities and be eligible for reimbursement?**

Yes, but the local government will have to pay the upfront costs for these individuals to participate and then be reimbursed by the CORE program. Any non-governmental individual that receives this training must be involved with the CORE planning process and/or vital to helping the community advance the plan forward.

➤ **How long is this training and technical assistance support available?**

All training and technical assistance must be completed, and reimbursements finalized, before December 31, 2025.

We do not anticipate approving any new training or technical assistance that will require payment after the end of the 3rd quarter of 2025.