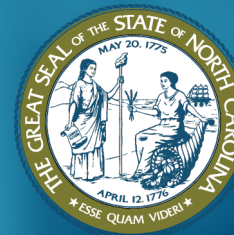


# CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES (CORE)

North Carolina Department of Commerce  
Main Street & Rural Planning Center



Funding for this program made  
possible by the US Economic  
Development Administration



NORTH CAROLINA  
**DEPARTMENT of  
COMMERCE**

# CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES (CORE)

Technical Assistance – Outdoor Recreation  
Economy Strategic Planning and Asset  
Development

Help rural communities leverage natural assets to  
increase economic opportunity through the outdoor  
recreation economic sector.

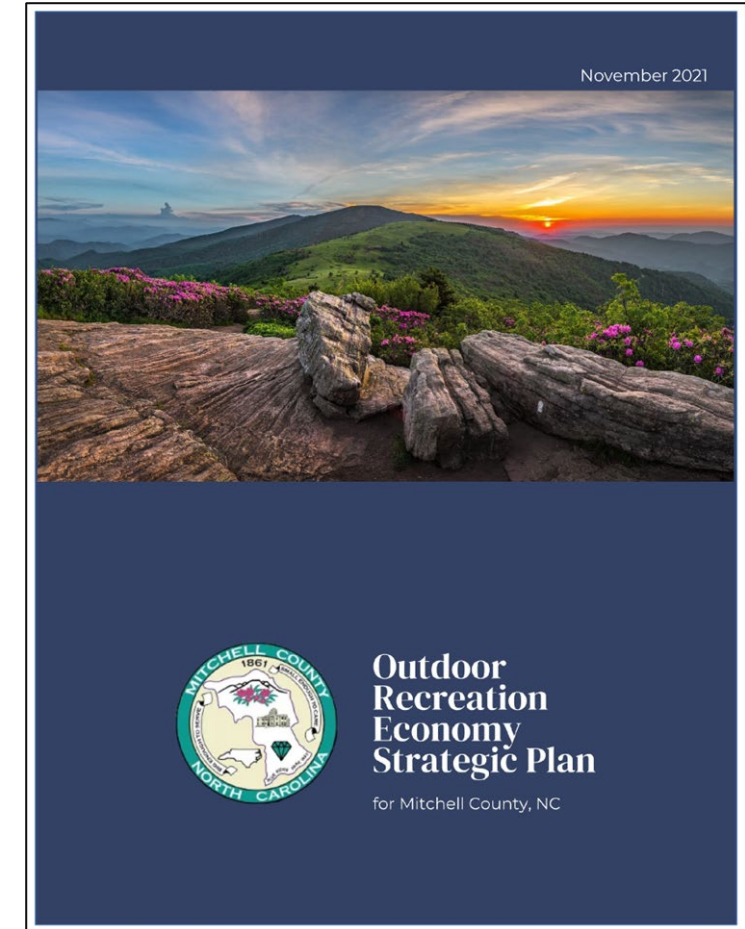


# Services Offered

- Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Planning
- Asset Mapping
- Asset Development Strategic Planning

## Forthcoming:

- Schematic/Conceptual Renderings
- Market Analyses or Feasibility Studies
- Other Technical Assistance and Training



# CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES (CORE)

## Eligible Applicants:

- NC local governments located in rural counties
  - County
  - Municipal
  - Unincorporated Areas (must be sponsored by the County Government)
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be approved by local governing board



# CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES (CORE)

Application Portal:

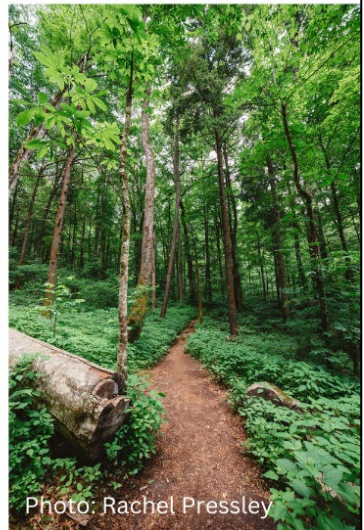
Opens: Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Deadline: Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Not the last opportunity to engage! Dependent upon demand the application window will reopen soon after the deadline for the next round of program participants. If you miss the deadline but would like to participate, please contact program leads.

# What activities are included in an outdoor recreation economy?

- Hiking
- Biking
- Fishing/Hunting
- Canoe/Kayaking
- Motorized Boating
- Birdwatching/Nature Viewing
- Camping
- SO MANY MORE!



# What is an Outdoor Recreation Economy?

Broad economic sector that includes:

- Consumer spending on guides, outfitters, and equipment.
- Fuels employment and consumer spending in other sectors such as manufacturing, retail, transportation, food service, tourism, travel, and more.
- Intangible, hard to quantify economic benefits
  - Improved physical and mental health
  - Attracting workforce talent and economic investment

# Outdoor Recreation Economic Statistics

## Outdoor Recreation Is A Big Economic Driver in NC

- **\$9.9 Billion** in total **Outdoor Recreation Value Added** economic impact within North Carolina (BEA ORSA 2020).
- **123,647 direct jobs** statewide in the Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account categories (BEA ORSA 2020).
- Resulted in **\$5.2 Billion in wages and compensation** for North Carolina workers.
- In 2017, Outdoor Recreation in NC resulted in **\$28 Billion in total consumer spending**.



# Outdoor Recreation Participation

- Nationwide, 7.1 million more Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2020 than in the year prior. General assumption this is due to COVID and alternative recreation options.
- 56% of North Carolinians participate in some form of outdoor recreation each year (2017).
  - This includes more than 22.8 million visitors to North Carolina State Parks in 2021 — three million more than any other year on record.
  - Many public parks, national forests, and other recreation areas report increased visitation as well.
  - Still room to engage more individuals in the benefits of outdoor recreation – underserved, underrepresented populations

# Demand and Overcrowding

Increased participation and demand led to overcrowding and recreation area management issues.

How can your community capture some of this demand AND benefit economically?



Photo: Great Smokey Mountains National Park

Huge crowds wait in line to visit Laurel Falls in the GSMNP. Many recreation areas across the state and country have experienced increased visitation and subsequent overcrowding and management issues. **Dispersal through offering alternative recreation locations is one key to addressing this management issue while still allowing people to enjoy the great outdoors.**

<https://wlos.com/news/local/roadside-parking-great-smoky-mountains-national-park-laurel-falls-trail-gsmnp-tourist-season>



# How can your community leverage outdoor recreation for increased economic opportunity and quality of life enhancement for residents????



Photo: Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

# What is an Outdoor Recreation Economy?

- Tourism and Hospitality
- Small Business Development
- Quality of Life Improvements for Residents
  - Improved Health
  - Workforce talent recruitment - People want to live and work in areas with recreational opportunities AND outdoor recreation businesses need employees!
- Manufacturing and Supply Chain
- Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Development (trails, facilities, amenities, etc.)
- Fostering an Outdoor Recreation Culture in your community
  - Placemaking; Branding; Culture
  - CATALYST!
- All components are interconnected – outdoor rec. economy planning focuses on an ecosystem approach where each component helps to strengthen the system



# Stakeholder and Public Participation

- Broad, and diverse stakeholder engagement and public participation is very important to our process



# FOCUS AREA: Small Business Development

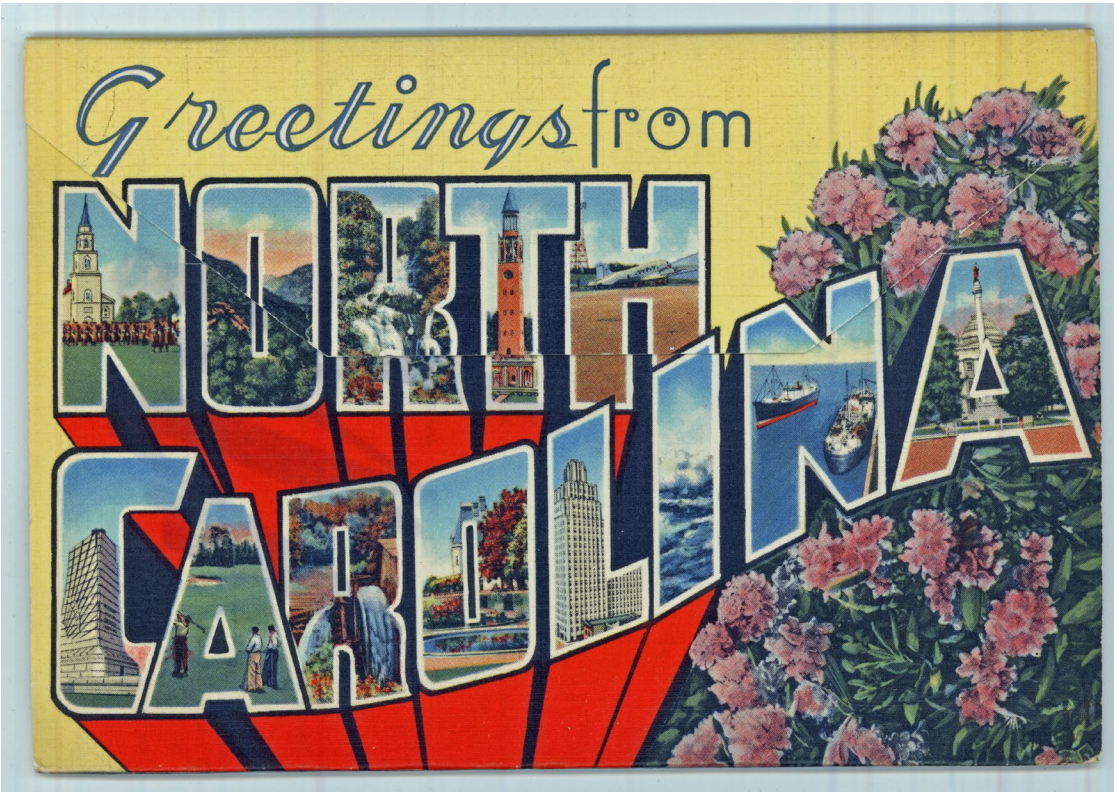
- How can you support new and existing businesses?
- How can your community make it easier for someone to start a small business?
- How can you encourage business creation?
- What services or amenities are not available in your community (retail gap)?



Photo: Cape Fear River Adventures



# FOCUS AREA: Tourism & Hospitality



## 2021 Visitor Spending Increased in all 100 NC Counties<sup>1</sup>

- Large increases seen in many rural counties not in the mountains, on the coast, or metro-areas.
- How to strengthen and increase locally owned small businesses centered around, or complementary to, the local outdoor rec. assets?
- How to increase the Economic Value of Your Community's Tourism Sector

## FOCUS AREA: Quality of Life

- Not just for tourists! – these outdoor recreation opportunities *should* serve local residents as well.
  - Health and Wellness
  - Workforce/Talent Recruitment
  - Placemaking
- Encourage Participation



# FOCUS AREA: Quality of Life

Workforce/Talent Attraction

Declining Population? - Can help attract new residents as well

Ex. Transylvania County's  
“Natural Advantage”  
Economic Development  
Campaign



Source: Transylvania Economic Alliance  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzzMzmvzkek>

# FOCUS AREA: Quality of Life

Physical activity can improve health outcomes. Even short periods of physical activity can improve health.

Physical activity:

- Reduces the risk of many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes.
- Helps prevent unhealthy weight gain.
- Helps reduce feelings of anxiety and improves sleep quality.
- Improves cognitive ability and reduces risk of dementia.
- Improves bone and musculoskeletal health.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/physical-activity.htm>

# FOCUS AREA: Quality of Life

## Economic Benefits of Physical Activity

- “90% of the nations \$4.1 TRILLION in annual healthcare expenditures are for people with chronic and mental health conditions.”
- “Not getting enough physical activity comes with high health and financial costs. It can lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and obesity. Physical inactivity also costs the nation \$117 billion a year for related health care.”

# FOCUS AREA: Quality of Life

“Not everyone can afford to travel to Yellowstone, but everyone deserves access to nature — and the associated health benefits — somewhere close to home.”

- B. Derrick Taff, Pennsylvania State University, Associate Professor of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management



# FOCUS AREA: Quality of Life

## Mental Health and Wellness

American Psychological Association:

- “Psychological research is advancing our understanding of how time in nature can improve our mental health and sharpen our cognition”
- “From a stroll through a city park to a day spent hiking in the wilderness, exposure to nature has been linked to a host of benefits, including improved attention, lower stress, better mood, reduced risk of psychiatric disorders and even upticks in empathy and cooperation.”
- “...people who had spent at least two recreational hours in nature during the previous week reported significantly greater health and well-being. That pattern held true across subgroups including older adults and people with chronic health problems...”

Source: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature>



Photo: Made x Mountains



# Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Development

- What types of outdoor recreation infrastructure (trails, water access, facilities, amenities, etc.) are needed in your community?
- If your community would like to expand or improve the physical infrastructure of your outdoor recreation assets we can help develop recommendations, prioritize asset development, and identify funding opportunities.



# FOCUS AREA: Manufacturing and Supply Chain

Numerous outdoor gear manufacturing business across state.

From boat building at the coast to tents in the mountains, there is a wide range of manufacturing companies providing high quality gear for recreational pursuits.

- Homegrown Businesses
- Recruitment



# FOCUS AREA: Manufacturing and Supply Chain

How to increase potential for outdoor gear manufacturing in my community?

- Homegrown Businesses – many successful companies begin in garages and spare bedrooms



Photo: Shibumi Shade – Founded and Made in North Carolina



Rockgeist – Bikepacking Equipment company Based in Woodfin, NC – “Made in the Blue Ridge Mountains”



# FOCUS AREA: Manufacturing and Supply Chain

How to increase potential for outdoor gear manufacturing in my community?

- Recruitment – site inventory; building availability
- Supply Chain – do companies in your community make products that complement outdoor gear products – supply chain connections

# FOCUS AREA: Manufacturing and Supply Chain

**Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC** – recognizing a cluster of manufacturers making products for outdoor recreation in the western part of the state and understanding that by communicating and collaborating they could strengthen their industry.

OGB was founded in 2013 by a small group of gear manufacturers and now includes more than 75 members and is made up of businesses and organizations representing the entire outdoor industry in Western North Carolina.



# Fostering an Outdoor Recreation Culture in your community

Most successful outdoor recreation economies have a local culture where outdoor pursuits are engrained into the culture and fabric of the local people.

How do we help foster this culture?

- Creative placemaking and branding
- What makes your community special?
- Are there gathering spots for people to meet “after the ride”?
  - Give examples: WNC Outdoor Collective; Brewery; etc.



# Interconnected Economy

All components that make up an outdoor recreation economy are interconnected.

They support and build off each other.

A comprehensive perspective on fostering these activities can lead to improvements and opportunities in other areas.



# CATALYST!



Photo: Made x Mountains – Looking Glass Falls



How can your  
community  
benefit from this  
dynamic  
economic  
sector?

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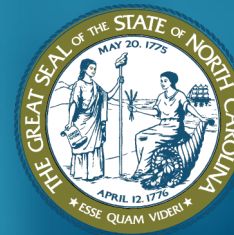
Photo by Rachel Pressley



# FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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