



Sunflower Foundation

*Paving the Way: From
Blazing Trails to
Building Community*



Trail Blazer Learning Series

Supports communities that are exploring the creation of their first public trail. Through a structured virtual learning series and early planning funds, it strengthens local leadership, fosters community engagement, and lays the groundwork for a sustainable, well-designed trail.



Session 4: Funding & Resources

All about who's going to be using your trails — how to build and support a trail that will welcome them and help them have a great experience.

- American Trails resources
- Overview of federal and state grant programs (TAP, RTP, foundations)
- Public–private partnerships and local fundraising
- In-kind donations and volunteer support
- Developing a realistic budget for construction and maintenance
- Wrap-up and next session



Joining us today



Michele Archie,
Harbinger
Consultancy



Mike
Goodwin,
Kansas
Trails Inc.



Mike Passo,
American Trails



Kelli Mark,
Sunflower
Foundation



Maureen
Crist, Marshall
County
Connections



Candace
Gallagher,
American Trails



A few details

- American Trails membership and resources - Reminder!
- Trail Exchange Day - Registration now available!
- Special Evening event with Amy Camp - Registration now available!
- Trail Exchange Day - Poster Presentations as your report
- We're all friends here. Please turn your camera on, but mute your audio. Questions? Jump in, unmute yourself or raise your hand. Use the chat if you have a question on a different topic.



American Trails



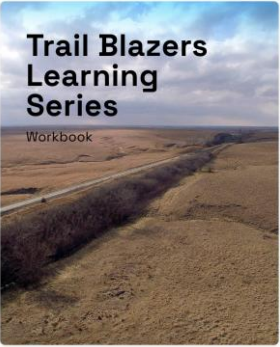
Connecting and transforming communities through the power of trails.



Mike Passo, Executive Director
Candace Gallagher, Director of Operations



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Workbooks

Quick check-in on your “next 60 days challenge” from Session 2

3. Which kinds of partners are most important to your trail’s next step? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ City or county government
- ☐ School district
- ☐ Private landowner(s)
- ☐ Another trail group or nonprofit
- ☐ Local law enforcement
- ☐ Local newspaper / radio / media
- ☐ Businesses
- ☐ Trail volunteers
- ☐ Other...

4. Next 60 Days challenge

Focus on the partner you checked in the previous question that feels least developed or needs the most work. What's a first/next move you could make in the next 60 days?



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National & Federal Resources and Programs

The graphic is divided into two main sections. The top section, titled 'TRAILS CAPACITY PROGRAM', has a yellow background and includes the text 'APPLY TODAY!' and 'DEADLINE MAY 15'. It features logos for 'AMERICAN TRAILS' and 'Ford', and a 'BRONCO WILD FUND' logo. Below these are icons for 'Trail maintenance' (a wheelbarrow), 'Stewardship training' (a group of people with a lightbulb), and 'Research' (a graduation cap). The bottom section, titled '2026 Trail Grants*', has a light beige background. It contains the text: 'The 2026 Trail Grants application window is now closed. All applications were due by May 10.' followed by a paragraph: 'For the 2026 Trail Grants funding cycle, only projects that support the planning, construction, improvement and maintenance of trails and trail networks in the U.S. will be considered.' and another paragraph: 'Join the TrailNation Collaborative for updates on the Trail Grants application window and other funding opportunities.' At the bottom of this section is a green button that says 'Review Eligibility Requirements'.

TRAILS CAPACITY PROGRAM
APPLY TODAY!
DEADLINE MAY 15

AMERICAN TRAILS Ford BRONCO WILD FUND

SUPPORT FOR

Trail maintenance Stewardship training Research

2026 Trail Grants*

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For the 2026 Trail Grants funding cycle, only projects that support the planning, construction, improvement and maintenance of trails and trail networks in the U.S. will be considered.

Join the TrailNation Collaborative for updates on the Trail Grants application window and other funding opportunities.

[Review Eligibility Requirements](#)

- Two ways federal support reaches your trail:
 - Direct — national organizations & federal programs you approach yourself
 - Through the state — federal dollars administered by Kansas agencies (Kelli will talk about these next)





American Trails: Trails Capacity Program

American Trails - Trails Capacity Program - grant program that was started in 2022.

- Grants for stewardship, training, research & maintenance
- Categories: trail maintenance · stewardship training · research/education

Projects should be inclusive, engaging, and educational, and foster improved trail user behavior. Open to trails on federal public lands, as well as state, local, and private lands accessible to the general public.

Applications usually open in mid-December.



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Rails to Trails Conservancy Trail Grants

Rails to Trails Conservancy Trail Grants - funds organizations and local agencies that are working to develop and connect equitable trail networks. Follows the TrailNation Playbook (free download).

- \$10,000–\$25,000** — feasibility, mapping, design, construction + can be used as a match for state/federal grants
- 2026 cycle closed; 2027 opens ~early April
- Plus: free tools including the TrailNation Playbook & trail-building resources





National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

- Free technical assistance from the National Park Service — not money, but expertise and budget-reducing services
- Helps you plan, engage the community, build partnerships, map routes
- Eligible: community groups, nonprofits, tribes, local/state agencies
- Read about [the application process](#) — timing varies; contact the [Midwest Region](#) NPS program manager (currently David Thompson, MWR_RTCA@nps.gov)





International Mountain Bicycling Association

IMBA Trail Accelerator grants specifically for mountain biking/natural surface trails

- Two grant rounds in 2027:
 - The first grant window will award professional trail planning and design consultation services.
 - The second round of grants will provide educational support through IMBA's other programs
- Trails must be public & free; govt agency, 501(c)(3), or IMBA local group
- Applications likely open in early 2027. Tons of resources on the IMBA website.



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National Recreation Trail designation

National Recreation Trail & National Water Trail recognition for existing, quality trails — part of the National Trails System

- You get: listing in a national searchable database, NRT logo + free signs, press coverage, letters of support for fundraising, a national network
- Some state grant programs give designated trails extra weight
- A credibility & visibility tool — pursue once your trail is built and open



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22 in Kansas!

Also worth knowing about

- PeopleForBikes has a [list of grant ideas and opportunities](#) (and offers community grants by invitation only)
- [AARP Community Challenge](#) — quick-turnaround grants; often fund walkability/trails
- [REI Cooperative Action Fund](#) — nonprofit outdoor-access grants for organizations with a track record of connecting historically excluded people to the outdoors. [Make a recommendation here.](#)
- USDA Rural Development — community facilities financing for rural Kansas. Contact the [Kansas office](#) to explore opportunities.





Kansas Trail Grant Funding Resources

- Explore grant opportunities supporting trail development, enhancement, and access
- Learn about funding sources available to communities and trail organizations
- Identify resources to help move trail projects from vision to reality



Kansas Department of Transportation

The KDOT Transportation Alternatives Program provides federal pass through funding to promote and enable use of active transportation and for certain scenic and historic improvements such as:

-  Pedestrian/Bicycle/Non-motorized transportation infrastructure
-  Abandoned railway corridors to trail conversion
-  Safe Routes to School - construction and non-construction (planning) 
-  Historic transportation facility preservation and rehabilitation
-  Scenic and environmental Improvements

KDOT TA is a 20% cash match program with eligible entities of: cities, counties, tribes, schools, nonprofits and small MPOs



Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

The **Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP)** administers two main federal pass through grant programs that support outdoor recreation and trail development.

Key Grant Programs

Recreational Trails Program (RTP): Provides 80/20 matching, reimbursement-based grants for the development, maintenance, and acquisition of motorized and non-motorized trails.

Qualifying projects include new trail or trailhead construction, maintenance or reconstruction of existing trails, enhancements or upgrades to existing trails/trailheads, development and planning, or land acquisition and easements.

Applications typically open in the fall - contact Riston Landwehr at riston.landwehr@ks.gov for more information



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Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

The **Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP)** administers two main federal pass through grant programs that support outdoor recreation and trail development.

Key Grant Programs

- **Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**: Offers 50% matching grants for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas, including parks and trails.

Applications Open NOW until 07.31.26 for LWCF

From new playgrounds and restrooms to expanded trail systems and community parks - LWCF projects help build vibrant and healthy communities!

For more information about LWCF contact Riston Landwehr at riston.landwehr@ks.gov



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Kansas Tourism Grants

The [Attraction Development Grant Program](#) supports the creation of new or enhancing sustainable, market-driven travel experiences in Kansas. Trail systems that connect to broader visitor experiences, feature interpretive signage, or bring significant out-of-county visitors are highly competitive.

Applications will open on **August 17th, 2026** - deadline **October 16th, 2026**.

The [Tourism Marketing Grant Program](#) is designed to assist organizations in new, innovative, dedicated tourism advertising and marketing.

Applications are NOW OPEN! - Deadline **August 31st, 2026**.

For more information, reach out to Babette Dixon at Babette.Dixon1@ks.gov



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Kansas Office of Rural Prosperity Grants

Strategic Economic Expansion and Development (SEED) Grants:

These grants provide capital for “quality of life” and economic revitalization projects for rural cities with populations under 5,000. Trail initiatives could fit in the Community Vibrancy category which is projects that refresh, re-energize and unlock the attractiveness of a rural community.

Projects require a 10% match and must be completed in 12 months.

Contact SEED@ks.gov for more information



Sunflower Foundation *Sneak Peek from KDOC - Applications should open August 1, 2026!

Kansas Office of Rural Prosperity Grants

TOWNS Grant - Communities with a population of 5,000 or less that have not received funding since 2019 from KDOC are eligible for the towns grant. Funding up to \$10,000 (10% match requirement) for one-time project expenses. Previous awarded projects have included trails and park improvements.

Applications are not open currently, but looks like they will open around the middle of December.

contact towns@ks.gov for more information!



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Kansas Office of Rural Prosperity Grants

Rural Champions Grant - program designed to create a network of grassroots individuals who possess the necessary tools to resolve critical community needs. Rural champions receive strategic training, compensation and are connected to resources.

Program is meant to remove the funding gap for rural volunteer champions by covering salary costs of up to \$20,800 for the champion, plus an additional \$25,000 implementation grant to support the identified project.

Trail projects have been successfully funded. Applications currently closed, but should be open again in early 2027. Contact Kelli Hansen at kelli.hansen@ks.gov for more information



Kansas Department of Commerce

Signing up for the [Kansas Community Empowerment program](#) can unlock access to the [Kickstart Grant and the Impact Grant](#).

KCE supports volunteer-led efforts to revitalize, inspire, strengthen, and elevate communities across Kansas! The program provides tools, training, and funding that help local leaders turn great ideas into lasting impact.

Small grants (1:1 match that may be 100% in-kind) to strengthen quality of place and enhance local pride!

Applications open until December 04, 2026 or until funds are gone!

Kansas Department of Commerce Grants

Community Development Block Grant - provides funding for projects that help low to moderate income neighborhoods thrive. Projects can be trail related such as sidewalks, visitor centers, trail heads, etc.

Community Facilities is probably the best fit - allows cities and counties to propose any CDBG eligible facility project without needing to fit within any specific subcategory. Local match of 10% is required.

Applications open till October 16, 2026. LMI (low to moderate income) restrictions apply. Use the checker tool on the site to see if you are eligible. Contact Tim Parks at Tim.Parks@ks.gov for more information



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Additional Opportunities

Walmart Spark Good - Grants from \$250 to \$5,000 designed to address needs of communities that have a Walmart, Sam's Club or Distribution Center.

Must sign up for a Spark Good account at Walmart.com/nonprofits

Application cycles are Feb. 1 - April 15; May 1 - July 15; Aug. 1 - Nov. 30. Can submit up to 25 applications per organization

Additional Opportunities

Clif Family Foundation - Inclusive outdoor access grants that catalyze solutions that expand access to safe places to enable healthy physical activity and improve mental health

Open Call application deadlines are March 1 and August 1. Typical grants range from \$5,000 - \$50,000 (one year grant period)

Priority given to applicants in the USA or unincorporated territory, has an operating budget under \$8M, operates at the grassroots level to implement change at the local level.



Additional Opportunities

American Academy of Dermatology Sun Shade Program - awards funds to schools, day-cares, parks and other nonprofit organizations for installing permanent shade structures where children learn and play (great for a trail head!).

Maximum award is \$8,000 and includes cost of sun shade structure and installation. AAD will also place a permanent sign next to the shade structure featuring sun-safety tips.



Additional Opportunities

America Walks Community Change Grant Program - Grants for up to \$2,000 for projects related to creating healthy, active and engaged place to live, work, and play.

Applications closed for 2026 but should be open in January of 2027.

Priority given to projects that center the concerns of the most underfunded communities, reach across demographics of communities to build coalitions and/or create unique civic partnerships with new perspectives.



Additional Opportunities

Check out this
American Trails
webinar for more
information about
funding trails!

[American Trails - Grants for Trails
Webinar](#)



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Public–private partnerships and local fundraising

Community Foundations - Local Match Day!
Maureen Crist - Guest Speaker!



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Budgets, budgets, budgets



Mike Goodwin

Developing a realistic budget for construction and maintenance

Kansas Trails Inc. is a good resource for helping you think about this.



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Budgeting Tips

Trail Construction Costs

Maintenance - Seasonal, As Needed



Trail Construction Budgets

What will it cost?

- Contractor quotes – timing?
- Park manager – dated information
- KDWP – applications, public meeting
- KDOT - applications
- Completed trail projects

Trail Maintenance Budgets

Building a trail is more *fun*.....

- Ownership, creativity, contribution

- One time effort

- Easier to fund

Maintaining a trail is *forever*....

- It's continuous....weekly for years

- Monotonous....mowing, trimming, repeat

- Hard to fund – ongoing operations

Trail Maintenance Budgets

- Purchase equipment – up front grant
- Equipment upkeep – service, repair
- Labor – seasonal, current staff?
- Materials – fuel, supplies, chemicals

Seasonal Maintenance

Grasses

Weeds

Shrubs (Honeysuckle, etc.)

Seasonal Maintenance

Keeping it open



Seasonal Maintenance

Weekly

Mowing

Trimming

Park Staff?

Seasonals?

Volunteers?



“As Needed” Maintenance

Erosion

User damage

Surface aging

Easier to fund than ongoing maintenance

As Needed

Gravel

- Just like dirt
- cracks like asphalt



As Needed

Asphalt

- cracking
- buckling



Seasonal Maintenance Funding

Volunteers, local business, user group

Adopt a trail

Local guest taxes

Local sales taxes

Park budget allocation – scope of work

Seasonal Maintenance Funding

**Community
Foundation
QR for donations**



Did you enjoy our trail?

Do you want to make a difference? Donations can be made to the Benton Two Angels Trail Fund by scanning this QR code. All funds received are secure and will be used solely for trail repairs, ongoing maintenance and betterment of the trail.

Your kindness can help keep our community's trail beautiful for everyone!

*The Benton Two Angels Trail Fund is a component fund of Central Kansas Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit entity.
Checks may be mailed to: 400 S Main St, Suite 100, Newton, KS 67114*



In-Kind Donations and Volunteer Support

Powered by people

- Grants build trails. Volunteers & in-kind keep them alive.
- Volunteer hours + donated materials are often the local match that unlocks grants.
- A few numbers:
 - A volunteer hour is valued at ****\$36.14**** (2025)
 - 30 nationally designated trails are maintained ****entirely**** by volunteers — 1M+ hours/yr, ~\$24M of labor
- National parks: 300,000+ volunteers a year, ~\$179M in value
- You? (one hint = keep track!)



Where it matters most

Where volunteer hours & in-kind donations tend to show up:

- Building: volunteer build days · donated equipment + operator time (county road dept, farmers, contractors) · donated materials (gravel, culverts, lumber) · pro-bono survey/design
- Maintaining: adopt-a-trail · cleanups · invasive removal — the ongoing needs grants often don't cover
- Engaging: guided hikes/rides · events · trail counts · storytelling & social · wayfinding



What's on your mind?

Any questions or final thoughts?



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Workbook & what's next

Modules

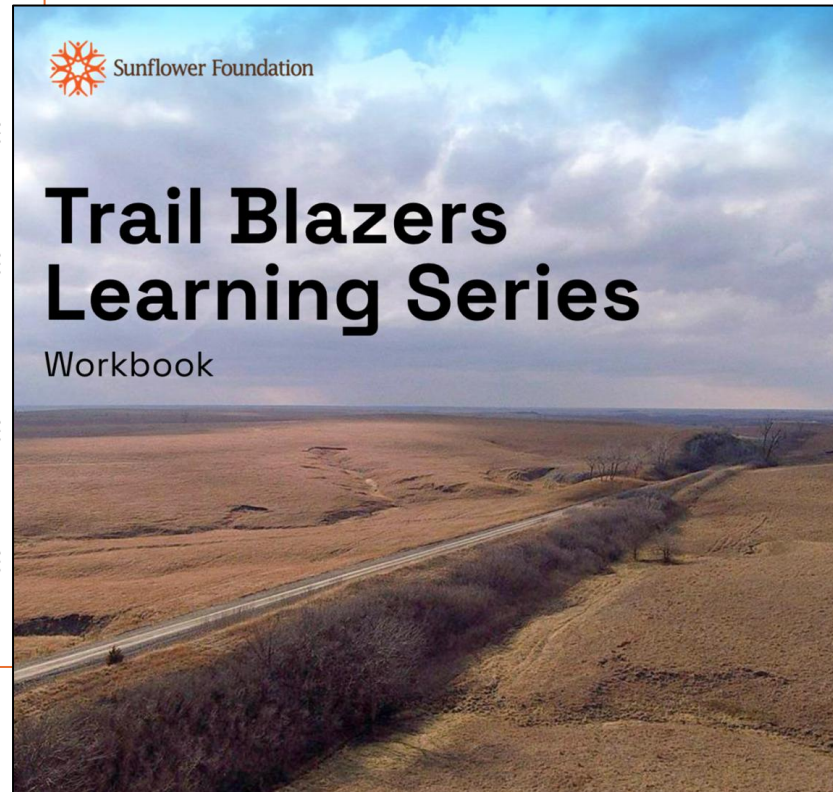
Workbook Cover Page

Session 1: Why Invest in Trails?

Session 2: Land, Routes & Partnerships

Session 3: Safety & Accessibility

Session 4: Funding & Other Resources



Open office hours —
September 01, 12-1 pm

Next session — Trail
Design & Public
Engagement
August 18, 12-1:30 pm

Loads of resources in
the Learning Library!

Thank you!



Sunflower Foundation

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