



Sunflower Foundation Trails: Kansas Trail Town Pilot Project Benchmark Overview

This document provides an overview of the benchmarks for the Sunflower Trails: Kansas Trail Town Pilot Project. It includes benchmark requirements, due dates, definitions, and helpful information to support communities in successfully completing each step of the process. The benchmarks are designed to guide

grantees in building strong trail town infrastructure, partnerships, and programming while preparing their communities for long-term trail-based economic and community development.

Trail Town grantees that successfully complete the required benchmarks and submit all benchmark deliverables to Kelli Mark at Kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org by the due dates listed below will be eligible to receive Kansas Trail Town certification. This certification recognizes communities that have demonstrated a commitment to supporting trail users, enhancing trail-related amenities and experiences, and creating welcoming, vibrant trail towns across Kansas.

The benchmark due dates have been intentionally established to keep your project moving forward and because each benchmark builds upon the work completed in the previous one. Meeting these milestones will help ensure your community stays on track throughout the grant period.

We also understand that community projects don't always go exactly as planned. If you anticipate falling behind on a benchmark, please reach out as soon as possible. As long as your team is actively working toward the benchmark, communicating openly about your progress and any challenges you're facing, and continuing to move the project forward, we are happy to work with you to identify a path forward. Our goal is to support your success, not to penalize communities that encounter unexpected obstacles.

While we encourage flexibility through open communication, the benchmark due dates are important milestones that help keep your project progressing and ensure each step is completed in the right

sequence. Our goal is to work alongside you to help your community succeed. By the end of the grant period, all required benchmarks and deliverables must be completed in order to receive Kansas Trail Town certification.

Benchmark Summary Table

<u>Benchmark</u>	<u>Deliverable</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Trail Town Committee Formation	Submit an executed Trail Town Committee resolution, charter, or official letter from the city, county, or other governing body recognizing the committee as a formal advisory or working body supporting the Trail Town initiative.	February 28, 2027
Trail Town Assessment and Baseline Data Report	Complete a Trail Town Assessment and Baseline Data Report	November 15, 2026
Placemaking Workshop	Host a placemaking workshop and submit summary report	January 31, 2027
Promotions & Branding	Complete at least one promotional	January 31, 2027

	item or brand and submit it	
Action Plan	Complete an Action Plan with measurable goals and submit it	March 31, 2027

Benchmark #1 – Trail Town Committee Formation

Tied to Virtual Session #2 – Resources from this session can be found in the [Paving the Way Learning Library](#), including the recording of session #2, which discussed the formation of Trail Town Committees.

Definition:

A Trail Town Committee is a designated group of community partners responsible for guiding, coordinating, and supporting the development of the Trail Town initiative. The committee should include representatives from key sectors that influence trail experiences and community readiness, such as local government, trail organizations, economic development, tourism, businesses, community organizations, land managers, and trail users.

Formal recognition of the committee establishes shared ownership, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and demonstrates community commitment to advancing Trail Town goals throughout the pilot project and beyond.

Deliverable:

Submit an executed Trail Town Committee resolution, charter, or official letter from the city, county, or other governing body recognizing the committee as a formal advisory or working body supporting the Trail Town initiative.

Due Date: February 28, 2027

Submit deliverable documentation to Kelli Mark at Kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org.

Helpful Notes:

- The Trail Town Committee should represent a broad range of community stakeholders and include individuals who can help advance trail development, community engagement, economic opportunities, and long-term sustainability.
- Communities may use an existing committee or advisory group if it meets the intent of the Trail Town Committee and is formally recognized for this purpose.
- The committee does not need to be a new governmental entity or nonprofit organization. Formal recognition through a resolution, charter, memorandum, or letter of support is sufficient.
- Consider identifying a committee chair or lead contact, establishing meeting expectations, and documenting member roles to support effective collaboration.
- The committee will serve as an important foundation for completing future Trail Town benchmarks and implementing strategies identified throughout the pilot project.

Benchmark #2 – Assessment & Baseline Data

Tied to Virtual Session #3 – Resources from this session can be found in the Library, including the recording of session #3, which discussed trail town assessments and baseline insight reports.

Definition: Conduct a comprehensive assessment of your community's current trail assets, amenities, visitor experience, barriers and gaps. The assessment should identify existing strengths, gaps, opportunities, and challenges while establishing baseline data that will help measure progress throughout the grant period and inform future planning.

Deliverable: Completed Trail Town Assessment and baseline insight report.

Due Date: November 15, 2026

Submit deliverable documentation to Kelli Mark at Kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org.

Helpful Notes:

- Use the Trail Town Assessment and Baseline Insight Report templates provided in the Learning Library.
- Engage your Trail Town Committee and community partners and/or a partner community in completing the assessment.
- The findings from this benchmark will directly inform your Placemaking Workshop and Action Plan.

Benchmark #3 – Host a Placemaking Workshop

Tied to Virtual Session #4 – Resources from this session can be found in the Library, including the recording of session #4, which discussed placemaking workshops.

Definition: A Trail Town Placemaking Workshop is a collaborative planning session that engages community members, local leaders, businesses, and trail stakeholders in identifying placemaking opportunities that strengthen the connection between the trail and the community. The workshop results in a shared vision and a prioritized list of projects that enhance the visitor experience, celebrate community identity, and encourage economic activity and community pride.

Deliverable: Summary report from a placemaking workshop held in your community.

Due Date: January 31, 2027

Submit deliverable documentation to Kelli Mark at Kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org.

Helpful Notes:

- Invite a broad range of stakeholders, including local government, businesses, trail users, tourism organizations, community organizations, and residents.
- Document attendance, key discussion points, identified opportunities, and next steps.
- The workshop results should be incorporated into your Trail Town Action Plan.

Benchmark #4 – Promotion and Brands

Tied to Virtual Session #5 – Resources from this session can be found in the [Paving the Way Learning Library](#), including the recording of session #5, which discussed promotions, marketing and branding.

Definition: Develop at least one promotional or branding asset that helps market your community as a Trail Town and encourages residents and visitors to explore your trail system and community amenities.

Deliverable: Complete and submit at least one promotional item or brand.

Due Date: January 31, 2027

Submit deliverable documentation to Kelli Mark at Kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org.

Helpful Notes:

- Examples include a Trail Town logo, brochure, rack card, trail map, social media campaign, website page, promotional video, event branding, or other marketing materials.
- Promotional materials should reflect your community's unique identity and Trail Town brand.

Benchmark #5 – Action Plan Development

Tied to Virtual Session #6 – Resources from this session can be found in the [Paving the Way Learning Library](#), including the recording of session #6, which discussed forming an action plan.

Definition: Develop a Trail Town Action Plan that outlines your community's priorities, goals, and implementation strategy. The plan should build upon the findings from the Trail Town Assessment, Baseline Insight Report, and Placemaking Workshop, and identify specific action steps, responsible partners, and timelines for implementation.

Deliverable: Submit a completed Trail Town Action Plan (based on your assessment, insight report and placemaking workshop) with specific action items and timeframes to complete those items.

Due Date: March 31, 2027

Submit deliverable documentation to Kelli Mark at Kmark@sunflowerfoundation.org.

Helpful Notes:

- Prioritize actions that can realistically be accomplished over the next one to three years.
- Identify lead organizations or individuals responsible for each action.
- Include measurable goals whenever possible to help track progress toward Trail Town certification.