



ARKANSAS
OFFICE OF
OUTDOOR RECREATION

GREAT STRIDES/ TRAILS FOR LIFE



**FY27
APPLICATION
GUIDE**

OUTDOOR RECREATION GRANTS PROGRAM

This guide is designed to assist you through the application process. All Great Strides/Trails for Life Grants are administered by the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact us.

Office of Outdoor Recreation

Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism

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Program Overview

The Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant is a program of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, & Tourism (ADPHT) administered through the Office of Outdoor Recreation's Outdoor Recreation Grants Program (ORGP). This application guide is designed to provide communities with a clear, detailed understanding of how to navigate the grant process—from determining project eligibility to submitting a competitive application aligned with statewide outdoor recreation priorities.

Outdoor recreation plays an essential role in Arkansas' identity, economy, and quality of life. Communities with strong recreation assets experience measurable benefits: healthier residents, more vibrant downtowns, stronger tourism economies, improved workforce retention, and greater stewardship of natural landscapes. This application guide provides an overview of the Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant, eligibility requirements, and documents necessary to complete your grant application. Also included are explanations of required forms, procedures, and processes related to your application, and the selection process for awarding grant funds to successful applicants.

Applicants who demonstrate strong need, meaningful community involvement, robust planning, measurable economic impact, and alignment with statewide outdoor recreation priorities will be the most competitive for funding.

What Is the Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant?

The Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant is a no-match grant that is intended to help communities in Arkansas develop smoke-free trails or other public outdoor recreation facilities that encourage physical exercise for health reasons. Funding for this grant is provided through a portion of Arkansas' Master Tobacco Settlement Award.

How Does the Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant Work?

Great Strides/Trails for Life grant applicants who receive a grant award are referred to as grantees in this guide. Grantees are responsible for adhering to procurement laws for their jurisdiction including local ordinances. Grantees may use grant monies only for facilities and improvements identified in their application. Grantees may use their own funds to cover costs that exceed the grant award, but grant funding is final and cannot be increased once awarded.

Before any grant funds are released and before any grant-funded construction may begin, the mayor or county judge will be required to sign a Contract Agreement with our agency. Prior to receiving a fully-executed Contract Agreement, the applicant may, at their own expense, complete any site preparations for which grant funds will not be involved. The Contract Agreement will be based on funding recommendations from the Committee and approval by ORGP staff.

Projects should be completed within one year of contract date. Failure to complete a project within this time frame may affect Grantee's eligibility to be awarded future grants from ORGP. Upon completion, the grantee will send ORGP staff proof of all expenditures and ORGP Staff will verify that the project was completed as outlined in the Contract Agreement.

Who Is Eligible to Receive a Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant?

Funding assistance through the Great Strides/Trails for Life grant is available to all incorporated municipalities and counties in Arkansas. Unincorporated communities must apply through the county. Applications must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer – Mayor, City Manager, or County Judge – of the local government unit applying for assistance.

Community partners such as nonprofit groups, friends-of-parks organizations, civic clubs, and foundations may provide donations or volunteer labor; however, all reimbursable expenses must be paid directly by the eligible local government, and applications must be submitted by the municipality or county that will receive funding.

Consultants may assist with application development but cannot serve as the applicant.

How Much Funding Is Available?

Applicants may request up to \$250,000 in grant funding based on cost estimates and/or quotes for facilities included in the application. However, it is important to note that the total grant pool is \$250,000.

What Kinds of Projects are Eligible for Funding?

The Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant can be used for development projects for recreational trails, specifically walking trails. Development projects include the construction, renovation and/or replacement of eligible outdoor recreation facilities. The ORGP staff will review all design drawings and specifications submitted by each grantee to determine project eligibility. If you have any questions about the eligibility of your project, please contact the Outdoor Recreation Grants Program.

Projects receiving the highest consideration are those deeply connected to Arkansas' natural environment and capable of offering year-round, multi-use public benefit. These projects include:

- Construction of new walking trails
- Expansion or renovation of existing walking trails
- Trail signs and markings if included as part of a construction or renovation project

Ineligible Projects

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Enclosed structures including restrooms
- Purchase or lease of park property
- Regular maintenance of existing trails
- Lighting (of any kind)
- Removable equipment or facilities
- Purchase of tools and construction equipment
- Work done by public officials and/or city workers
- In-kind equipment use or in-kind labor

How Do I Get a Grant?

Applicants must submit all required materials before the application deadline and have a sufficient score on the Priority Rating System (PRS), to be considered for a grant award. The highest scoring applications will be presented to the Great Strides/Trails for Life Grants Advisory Committee (Committee) for funding consideration. The Committee's funding recommendations will be submitted to the ADPHT Cabinet Secretary for review.

How Often Can I Apply for Funding?

Applicants are eligible to apply for a Great Strides/Trails for Life Grant only if they have not received this grant within the past five years. If an applicant is unsure when they were last awarded a grant, please contact the Outdoor Recreation Grants Program.

Application Process

Step 1: Access the Website

Visit OutdoorGrants.com to access the Great Strides application portal and resources.

Step 2: Create or Log In to a Foundant Account

Applicants must use the Foundant online system to create, submit, and track applications. Visit the website above to find the Foundant application link.

New Users

Please click on the “**Create New Account**” button to complete the registration process and create your login credentials.

Returning Users

Please log in using the email account associated with your profile.

Note: Only cities and counties are eligible to apply for our grants. Applications must be submitted by the city or county seeking funding. Consultants or other third parties may not submit applications independently. If a consultant or third party is assisting, the city or county must create an online account and add the third party as a collaborator.

A video tutorial about the Foundant application process can be found by clicking on the link available on the login page of the portal.

Step 3: Submit Your Application

All applications must be submitted online in the Foundant portal by the application deadline (see page 5). Applicants should keep a PDF copy for their records.

Step 4: Application Review and Scoring

After submission, ORGP staff will review each application for completeness or deficiencies. Staff then assign scores using the Priority Rating System on pages 21-22. Applications are ranked from highest to lowest.

Step 5: Committee Review & Recommendations

Committee members evaluate applications using the five scoring criteria from the Committee Guidebook. Recommendations then go to the ADPHT Secretary.

Step 6: Grant Award Announcements

Applicants are notified via the Foundant portal after final approval of committee recommendations.

Important Dates to Remember

March 9, 2026	Opening of Foundant Portal and Grant applications available on the website
June 30, 2026	APPLICATION DEADLINE
August 2026	Grant Hearings

Application Materials

This section will provide explanations of required materials for an application to be eligible as well as the additional items needed to earn Priority Rating System (PRS) points.

Applicants are only required to upload each document once in the Foundant system. There are some required and optional items that may be referenced in multiple scoring categories, but applicants should upload the file a single time in the application within the designated upload fields. ORGP Staff evaluate only what is clearly demonstrated in the materials uploaded once in the application.

Priority Rating System

The Priority Rating System determines which applications will be forwarded to the Committee for review, so these optional points are important.

Here is a brief checklist of all required and PRS items.

Required Materials

- Estimated Project Costs
- City Council Resolution
- Proof of Land Control
- Site Location Map
- Site Plan
- Project Boundary Map
- Letter from Licensed Design Professional

Priority Rating System Checklist

- Estimated Project Costs
- City Council Resolution & Documentation
- Proof of Land Control
- Site Plan
- Letter from Licensed Design Professional
- Grant History & Open Projects
- Volunteer Activity
- Maintenance Plan
- Project Timeline
- Priority Classification

Application Checklist

	Required for Application	Required for Points
Estimated Project Costs	✓	✓
City Council Resolution or Quorum Court Order & Documentation	✓	✓
Proof of Land Control	✓	✓
Site Location Map	✓	
Site Plan	✓	✓
Project Boundary Map	✓	
Letter from Licensed Design Professional	✓	✓
Volunteer Activity		✓
Grant History and Open Projects		✓
Maintenance Plan		✓
Project Timeline		✓
Priority Classification		✓

Required documents and other PRS items have been aligned to illustrate where they are listed under four scoring categories used by the Great Stride Grant Advisory Committee (Committee): **Project Need, Project Impact, Community Involvement, and Project Readiness**. This alignment has been provided to help applicants clearly understand how each document contributes to scoring by the Committee.

Committee Criterion

Criterion 1: Project Need

This criterion evaluates how clearly the applicant demonstrates a compelling community need for the project. Project Need scores are based on evidence of a documented recreational gap through local data, survey results, or planning documents. The evidence should illustrate city or county demand for a trails project as well as highlight current or potential safety, accessibility, and capacity issues.

Projects that address an urgent, well-documented need and provide broad natural-resource-based outdoor recreation access receive the highest scores.

ORGP Staff will score based on completion of the Site Location Map & Project Boundary Map and whether the project meets the alignment with high priority outdoor recreation types.

Committee will utilize the above items to score based on regional context, distance to other facilities, and service area. They will also score based on project narrative. Written sections of the application should describe:

- Existing recreation gaps or lack of comparable facilities
- Conditions of current facilities (undersized, inaccessible, failing, unsafe)
- Local data, survey results, or planning documents that show demand

Criterion 2: Project Impact

This score evaluates the anticipated benefits of the project, including increased outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, improved quality of life and public health, strengthening of community identity and local pride, potential economic benefits such as increased visitor spending, tourism growth, and workforce attraction. Projects that meaningfully impact community well-being and regional outdoor recreation economies score highest.

ORGP Staff will score based on completion of the Estimated Project Costs table.

Committee will utilize Estimated Project Costs table to evaluate feasibility. They will use the Site Location Map and Project Boundary Map to help understand the project's reach, connectivity, and potential regional influence. Committee will also score based on expected project impact narrative.

Written sections of the application should describe:

- Increased outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors
- Quality-of-life and public health benefits
- Revitalization of underused natural areas or key connections (e.g. trails)

Criterion 3: Community Involvement

This category evaluates the depth and quality of public engagement during project development, including community outreach meetings, documented volunteer involvement, public meeting transparency, and participation from parks committees or stakeholder groups.

Strong applications demonstrate that residents shaped the project and show commitment through input, volunteer effort, or local contributions.

ORGP Staff will score based on completed documentation of Community Outreach, Volunteer Activity, and City Council/Quorum Court Resolution & Documentation.

Committee will score based on additional contextual factors not captured in documents, such as:

- Whether local leaders show unified support
- Whether the project reflects local values and long-term vision

Criterion 4: Project Readiness

The readiness score reflects whether the project is feasible and planned. Readiness includes commitment to using a Licensed Design Professional as well as having a proportionally accurate, ADA-compliant advanced site plan with cost estimates, a clear implementation timeline and maintenance plan.

Projects that demonstrate strong planning and professional preparation earn maximum points.

ORGP Staff will score based on completed documentation of Land Control, Licensed Design Professional Commitment Letter, Maintenance Plan, Project Timeline, and Grant History.

Committee will score based on their assessment of the applicant's actual capacity to execute the project and whether the applicant demonstrates convincing readiness through leadership, planning competence, and long-term maintenance commitment.

Required Materials Checklist

Estimated Project Cost

Applications must include a cost estimate which should be based on quotes from an equipment vendor(s) and/or contractor(s). Facilities and project elements listed on the Estimated Project Cost form will be the basis of the Contract Agreement.

Applicants may use the following means to determine facility costs:

- A landscape architect, engineer, or architect may develop a cost estimate for the project
- Quotes or estimates for materials from local building supply vendors
- Quotes or estimates from local contractors
- Quotes or estimates from park equipment vendors

When the project is complete, the grantee may use residual grant funds to construct barrier-free access to existing facilities at the project site. Other expenditures of residual grant funds must have prior approval of department staff.

City Council Resolution or Quorum Court Order

All applications must be accompanied by a City Council Resolution or Quorum Court Order from the current application year authorizing the project application. Please include the wording as shown in the example on page 14.

Proof of Land Control

A copy of the deed, lease, or a letter of intent to lease or sell property for the project site must be included with the application. An example of a letter of intent is on page 15.

Site Location Map

A site location map should show the full extent of community boundaries and the exact location of the proposed project. The map should help staff and the Committee understand regional context, distance to other facilities, and service area. An example of a site location map is on page 16.

Site Plan

A site plan of the proposed project area is required with your application. The site plan should identify all application line items and ADA parking and associated pathway(s) providing barrier-free access to proposed facilities. Please identify all ADA parking and pathway(s) that will provide access to proposed facilities even if ADA parking and/or pathway(s) already exists. An example of a site plan is on page 17.

Project Boundary Map

The project boundary map is an outline of the full boundary of the proposed project area. If the site is located within an existing park, please include the entire park boundary unless advised otherwise. If awarded, the project boundary map will be used as a record to show that this proposed area will remain in outdoor recreation use for 25 years. An example of a project boundary map is shown on page 18.

Letter from Licensed Design Professional

Applicants are required to attach a letter from the Licensed Design Professional to state that they will assist with the grantee's project upon award. The letter must be on their company's letterhead. Additional information about a Licensed Design Professional is listed on page 12.

Required for Additional Points

Great Strides Priority Rating System

Please review the Great Strides Priority Rating System on pages 21-22 to see how applications will be scored.

City Council or Quorum Court Documentation

To receive PRS points for a public meeting of the governing body (City Council or Quorum Court), the application must include the following documents:

- Meeting agenda and minutes showing the project or intent to apply as a separate item
- Proof of meeting advertisement that includes publication date and advertisement method such as website, social media, or other standard media outlet.

In the case that the advertisement cannot be readily reproduced, there is an optional document that can be used to affirm method and date of advertisement, but a copy of the meeting agenda, minutes, and sign-in sheet are still required. A copy of this document is on page 19.

Volunteer Activity

A fully documented volunteer activity conducted after January 1 of the application year can earn PRS points. A volunteer activity is any organized workday involving community members assisting with park improvements or beautification. Examples of activities include trash collection, painting or light repairs, equipment maintenance, and tree planting or landscaping.

Documentation must include:

- Location, date, and type of activity
- Number of participants (minimum two participants)
- Sign-in sheet
- Signature of the applicant's Chief Executive Officer

All requirements for activity documentation may be met by using the template found on page 20.

The volunteer activity must take place in the park for which the application is being submitted. If applying for your first trail, you may conduct the activity on the proposed site—even if it is undeveloped or vacant. If that is not feasible, an outdoor volunteer activity elsewhere in the community will be accepted.

Maintenance Plan

The maintenance plan should describe how proposed project will be maintained with estimated costs and identified sources of funding for that maintenance.

Project Timeline

The project timeline should provide an estimated chronological listing of project milestones if grant project started in Spring 2027 (estimated June 2027).

Appendix A: Land Control (Scoring)

Land Control Scores

To be eligible for grant consideration, the applicant must demonstrate sufficient legal control of the project site through either ownership or lease. Land control ensures the applicant has the authority to develop, operate, and maintain the project site for the duration of the required grant obligation period.

Tier 1 (4 points): Ownership or Lease

Eligible forms of land control include:

- **Ownership:** The applicant holds legal title to the project site, demonstrating full control equivalent to sole ownership. A Warranty Deed is the preferred form of documentation. Alternative documentation, such as tax records or parcel records, may be accepted but is subject to review.
- **Lease:** The applicant holds a valid lease granting legal use and control of the project site. Lease agreements must clearly authorize the sponsor to develop, operate, and maintain the site for public benefit. Leases must remain in effect for the full 25-year Great Strides/Trails for Life grant obligation period or include an enforceable option for renewal sufficient to meet this requirement.

Tier 2 (0 points): Incomplete/Incorrect/No documentation

Applicants will receive no points if their application has incomplete, incorrect or no land control documentation of proposed project site.

Appendix B: Grant Rules and Guidelines

Proof of Land Control

The Applicant must own, lease, or have a written option to buy or lease property for proposed trail development. The project site must be of sufficient size, suitable for trail development, and convenient for local residents.

If the applicant does not presently own or lease the proposed site for development, they must submit a letter from the owner of the site expressing their willingness to sell or lease the property for a term of at least 25 years from the date of the application (See example letter on page 18). Applicants who presently own or lease the proposed site must include a copy of the deed or lease with their application. Applicants who submit a lease that is set to expire before the end of the 25-year grant period should include a letter of intent-to-lease reflecting the 25-year life of the grant.

Funds will not be released to grantee until a fully executed deed or lease is submitted. If the property is ever sold, the lease is terminated, or the site is abandoned or grossly neglected prior to the 25-year term, the grantee may be required to reimburse the State of Arkansas for the total amount of the grant.

Licensed Design Professional

Up to 12% of the Great Strides/Trails for Life grant may be used for professional design services. Applicants who receive a grant award will be required to retain the services of a landscape architect, engineer, or architect licensed to practice in the State of Arkansas. Applicants will receive additional points on their Priority Rating System if they include a letter from the design professional that they intend to use, on the design professional's letterhead, stating that they will assist with the project upon award.

After applicants are notified of a grant award, the grantee shall retain a design professional to develop a site layout plan clearly showing proposed facility locations. Construction drawings and specifications will be required. The design professional will oversee construction of the project and assure that the development is being constructed in accordance with plans and specifications.

Administrative Services

Up to 10% of the Great Strides grant may be used for administrative services. This is an optional expense.

Barrier-Free Access

Plans must clearly show provisions for barrier-free access, consistent with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act - Accessibility Guidelines(ADA), for all grant-funded facilities. A person confined to a wheelchair should have the ability to travel unassisted from a designated accessible parking space in the parking lot to each of the grant-funded facilities. Accessible walkways and ramps shall be paved and follow the general contours of the site with consideration given to slopes, cross slopes, surfaces, widths, and distances.

Post-Completion Responsibilities

Upon completion of the project, the Grantee must submit copies of invoices and canceled checks documenting that all grant funds were spent and that those expenditures were for project facilities and design expenses itemized on the Contract Agreement. A permanent Great Strides program acknowledgment sign will be provided to the Grantee for placement in a prominent location in the park.

Park Use

Great Strides grant-funded facilities must be open to the general public at all reasonable times and consistent with guidelines outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act - Accessibility Guidelines (ADA) as amended. Park facilities may occasionally be reserved for special events or closed for limited periods for security purposes. Grantee shall make reasonable rules governing park use.

Facilities developed with assistance from the Great Strides grant program must be kept in good condition for public use and kept open for public use at reasonable hours of the day and times of the year. If the facilities are ever to be locked, the grantee must post a sign in a prominent location indicating the times the facilities are available for public use.

RESOLUTION No. _____

WHEREAS, _____, Arkansas recognizes the need to provide public recreation facilities for its local citizens and visitors, and

WHEREAS, the **City or County** wishes to apply for Great Strides grant funds through the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to develop a smoke-free public trail at the following location:

_____ ; and

WHEREAS, the **Mayor or County Judge** and the **City Council or Quorum Court** understands that if granted funds for park development, they must provide land, by lease or ownership, on which to develop park facilities; and

WHEREAS, _____, Arkansas will sign a contract agreeing to provide the necessary resources to maintain this park and facilities for a period of 25 years;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the **City Council or Quorum Court** of _____ Arkansas hereby authorizes the **Mayor or County Judge** to submit an application for grant funding to the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to develop a public trail.

Passed this _____ day of _____, 2026

APPROVED: **Mayor or County Judge**

Clerk

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

June 30, 2099

The Honorable Mayor or County Judge's name
P.O. Box 1234
Sampleville, Arkansas 72960

Dear Mayor or County Judge's name

I am hereby submitting this letter confirming my intent to sell or lease for a term of 25 (minimum) years to the City of Sampleville, a -acre parcel of land located at street address. The execution of this sale or lease is contingent on the City of Sampleville receiving a FY 2027 Great Strides Grant from the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to develop a public trail.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at (123) 456-7890.

Sincerely,

Owners signature

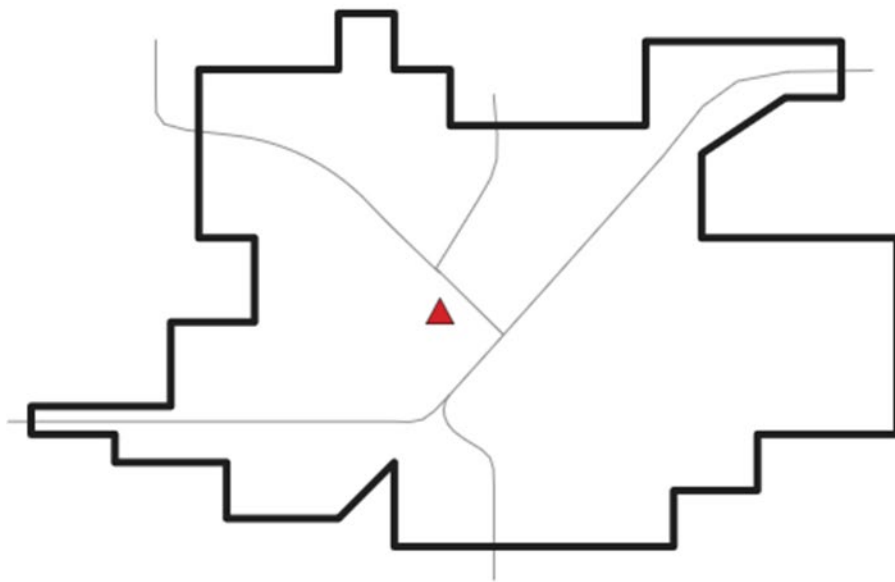
Owner name

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

SITE LOCATION MAP

City of Sampleville

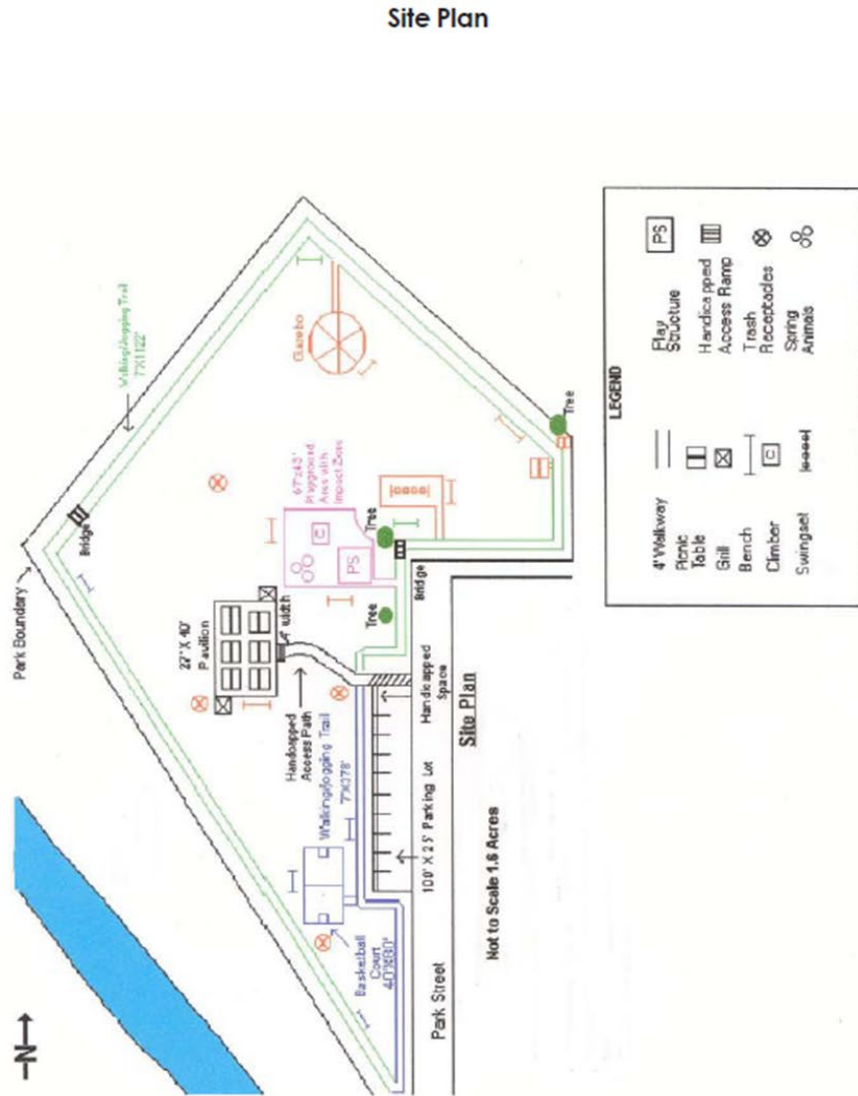


- City Limits
- Major Highways
- ▲ Sampleville City Park

EXAMPLE

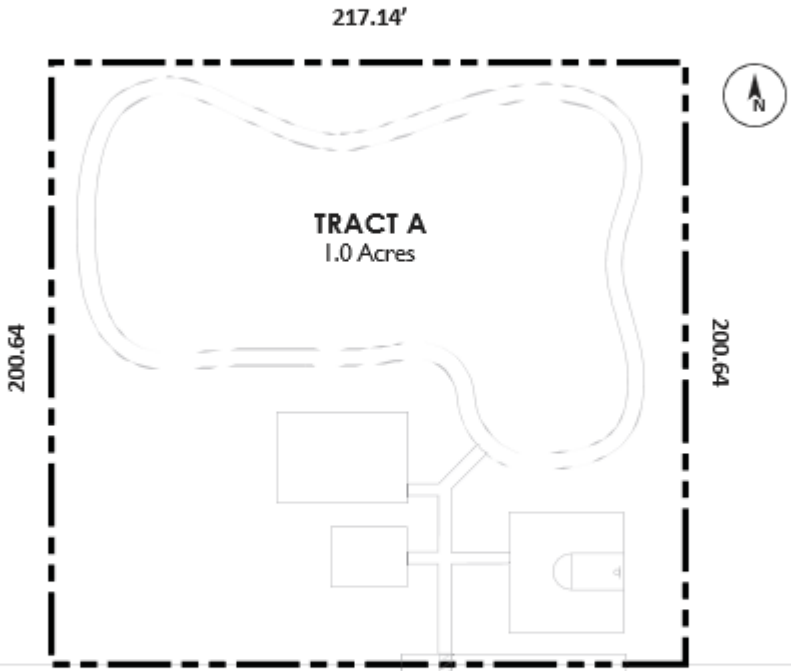
EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE



EXAMPLE

PROJECT BOUNDARY MAP
Sampleville City Park
Not to Scale Date: March 1, 2099



EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE



June 30, 2099

I am hereby submitting this letter confirming this grant proposal was a dedicated agenda item at the June 7, 2099 monthly meeting of the City of Sampleville City Council / Sample County Quorum Court. I also certify that the meeting was open to the public, was advertised in advance of the meeting, and that the grant proposal was explicitly noted in the advertisement, the method of which was as follows:

METHOD OF ADVERTISEMENT: Posted Notices

LOCATION: Sampleville Hardware Store, Sampleville Post Office, Sampleville Grocery Store

DATE: Posted on May 30, 2099

A copy of the official meeting agenda is included with this application. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at (123) 456-7890.

Sincerely,

Mayor/County Judge signature

Mayor/County Judge name

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

June 30, 2099

I am hereby submitting this letter confirming the **City of Sampleville** completed a volunteer activity pursuant to this grant application.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY: Trash Pickup

**LOCATION: Sampleville City Park, 1234 Park Rd,
Sampleville, AR 77777**

DATE: June 27, 2099

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 9

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at **(123) 456-7890**.

Sincerely,

Mayor/County Judge signature

Mayor/County Judge name

EXAMPLE

EXAMPLE

Appendix D: Priority Rating System

Documents submitted after the application deadline will not be scored

1. Applicant has received a Great Strides grant from ORGP within the past:

Never received a grant	3
11-21+ years	2
5-11 years	1
1-5 years	ineligible

2. Applicant provided a site plan that identifies all application line items and ADA parking and associated pathway(s) providing barrier-free access to proposed facilities (Identify all ADA parking and pathway(s) that will provide access to proposed facilities even if ADA parking and/or pathway(s) already exists):

Yes	6
Site plan shows some elements	3
No site plan	0

3. Applicant provided documentation that the proposed project was presented as a dedicated agenda item at a City Council /Quorum Court monthly meeting.

Fully documented	4
Not fully documented	2
No documentation or no public meeting	0

4. Applicant provided documentation of volunteer activity.

Fully documented	2
Not fully documented	1
No documentation	0

5. Applicant provided price quotes from **vendors and/or contractors** for facilities or elements of the proposed project:

** Price quotes created & submitted by A/E do not need vendor sheets*

All facilities and elements	4
Some facilities and elements	2
Did not provide price quotes	0

6. Land control - Applicant provided documentation affirming land control in the following manner:

Site is owned or leased	4
Incomplete/Incorrect/No documentation provided	0

7. Applicant provided a signed letter from a licensed design professional stating they will assist with the project upon award:

Yes	4
No	0

- 8. Priority Classification** – Defines priority level of the proposed projects as described by priority definitions listed in the guide.

High Priority Project	8
Mixed Priority Project (includes high priority & low priority items)	6
Low Priority Project	4

- 9. Project Timeline** – Applicant provided estimated timeline of project milestones if project started in Spring 2027 (estimated June 2027).

Yes	4
No	0

- 10. Maintenance Plan** - Applicant provided description of how proposed project will be maintained with estimated costs and identified sources of funding for maintenance.

Yes	4
No	0