



NYS Canal System Tourism Infrastructure & Event Grants

OVERVIEW

The New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor offer competitive grant funding to support recreation and tourism along the New York State Canal System, including canal waterways and Canalway Trails. The program prioritizes support for tourism infrastructure, amenity improvements, and events. Funding is open to counties, municipalities, units of local government, not-for-profit organizations, and federally recognized Native American tribes.

Applications can be made in the following categories:

1. Event Support, see pages 3-4
2. Tourism Infrastructure & Amenity Support, see pages 5-10

See page 11 & 12 for a list of useful resources when planning a tourism infrastructure project or event.

Projects submitted should demonstrate how they will achieve one or more program objectives:

- Facilitate recreation and/or tourism, enhance visitor amenities, and/or improve the visitor experience
- Commemorate the history, heritage, and/or culture of the canals
- Encourage overnight stays
- Make recreational and tourism assets more accessible for people with and without disabilities and expand audiences served; see the [grant resources page](#) for inclusive events and infrastructure project guidance.
- Improve and/or promote connectivity between recreation areas and communities, and/or between waterways and land trails

For 2027, the grant program will prioritize projects and events that are accessible to people of all abilities, incorporate universal design principles, and address gaps in services and amenities.



**APPLICATION
PROCESS**

Applicants may apply by completing an online application at: [NYS Canal System Tourism Infrastructure & Event Grants](#)

TIMELINE

Application Opens: October 13, 2026

Applications Due: November 20, 2026

Awards Announced: February 2027

**AWARD
NOTIFICATION**

This is a competitive grant program. Members of the review team and the evaluation criteria remain confidential. Applicants will be notified of decisions by email and all successful applicants will be posted online at www.canals.ny.gov and www.eriecanalway.org and announced through a joint press release.

NYSCC and ECNHC have full discretion in the amount of funding available for the program and individually awarded to applicants.

CONTACT

The Program Manager will not answer any project or event-specific questions after the application period has opened. Only eligibility and technical questions will be answered from October 13, 2026, through November 20, 2026. All questions must be submitted via email. Questions and answers will be documented and periodically posted to the grant page on the Erie Canalway website.

Support and Questions:

Mary Abbruzzese

Program Manager

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Phone: 518-316-8931

mary_abbruzzese@eriecanalway.org



Event Support

OVERVIEW

This program supports public events and festivals that encourage exploration and enjoyment of the wealth of cultural, heritage, nature, and recreational offerings within New York State’s canal corridor.

USES OF FUNDS

Events may be, but are not limited to:

- Major events such as system-wide or regional celebrations focused on the NYS Canal System (Canal Waterways and Canalway Trails)
- Events that focus on the history, heritage, and culture of the canals
- Events that promote recreation, especially when they encourage use of the NYS Canal System (Canal Waterways and Canalway Trails) – e.g., races, bicycling and paddling tours, cross-country skiing, rowing, birding, camping/glamping and fishing, and consider four-season uses
- Events that actively include or serve people of all ages and abilities
- Events that draw a wide and diverse audience to the canal, including new users and people from underrepresented populations
- Events that promote performance-based art, including theater and music
- Events that support the Canalway Challenge and 1st Mile Challenge
- Events that support overnight stays
- Events that highlight the canals as unique linear recreational assets

AWARD RANGE

\$500 to \$3,000

Funding will be advanced upon receipt of the signed agreement.

ELIGIBILITY

- Events must occur in 2027.
- Funding is open to counties, municipalities, units of local government, not-for-profit organizations, and federally recognized Native American tribes located within the [National Heritage Corridor boundaries](#)
- Proposed events may include reasonable fees



INELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS

- Applicants who are not in good standing for other projects funded by the NYS Canal Corporation or ECNHC are not eligible for funding
- Staff time
- Food and beverages
- Advertising expenses for the organization, though advertising expenses specific to your event or festival are allowed.
- Regular education programs, e.g., school programs and summer camps

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

1. **Permitting:** Awardees are responsible for identifying and obtaining the necessary required permits. Events taking place on NYSCC property require a permit. Anticipate a 4-week minimum time frame for the NYSCC permit process. Please plan accordingly to allow time for permit review and approval.
2. **Matching Funds:** The requested grant amount must be at least equally matched and be clearly demonstrated in the project budget. NYSCC CFA grants cannot be used as a match. Matching funds may include cash and in-kind services or donations, including volunteer hours (the name of each volunteer, tasks performed, work hours, and signature must be recorded on a separate document and sent with the final report). The current estimated value of volunteer time may be found [here](#).
3. **Recognition:** Sponsorship must be recognized on the event website and promotional materials. Guidelines supplied for the use of logos must be followed. Recommended credit: ***This event is funded in part through the generous support of the New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.***
4. **Final Report:** Awardees must submit a Financial Report (provided by the Grantors) within 30 days of the festival or event's conclusion. Public attendance numbers, photos, and copies of event materials that document proper recognition must be included. Awardees who fail to submit timely reports will be ineligible for future funding.

Tourism Infrastructure & Amenity Support

OVERVIEW

This program supports capital improvement projects and the purchase of equipment that enhance recreational amenities and tourism along the NYS Canal System (Canal Waterways and Canalway Trails).

PROGRAM CATEGORIES

1. Enhancements which include new or restoration of existing waterway and trail features, including trail construction, trail resurfacing, parking areas, access sites, and crosswalks.
2. Construction and/or improvements to the condition of recreational and visitor amenities. Improvements may include the construction or restoration of pocket parks, boat launches, docks, storage facilities, rest stops, and other amenities (e.g., plazas, gardens, amphitheaters, visitor centers, and canal-related tourism sites). **Universal design principles must be incorporated** with special attention to ADA standards (resources linked on page 12).
3. Purchase, installation, and maintenance of equipment, machinery, and materials designed to create or enhance visitor experiences, such as grounds maintenance equipment, bike racks, potable water, restrooms, porta-johns, showers, benches, WIFI, and security upgrades. *(Requests for site furnishings on NYS Canal Corporation property must follow [Canal Design Standards – Guidelines for Public Space Improvement](#) and receive written approval(s) by the Grantor during the design stage.)*
4. Purchase and installation of wayfinding signage. *(Requests for wayfinding signage on NYS Canal Corporation property must follow [NYS Canal Corporation Signage Guidelines](#) and receive written approval(s) by the Grantor during the design stage.)*
5. Preservation, conservation, or enhancement of canal-specific historic, cultural, or natural resources.
6. Enhancements that improve access and connection to the NYS Canal System.
7. Contracted services including garbage removal, porta-johns, bike and paddle craft rental services (*third-party rental services on NYS Canal Corp. property aren't permitted at this time), and maintenance crews.



Applicants may request up to 10 percent of the grant award amount for project management (unless staff salary is used to meet the match requirements). If requested, 10 percent must be included in the project budget as part of the total grant request (not in addition to the grant request).

AWARD RANGE \$5,000 to \$24,000

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Projects led by counties, municipalities, units of local government, not-for-profit organizations, and federally recognized Native American tribes located within the National Heritage Corridor. Applications for infrastructure projects located on land owned by NYSCC are open only to federal/state/local governments, unless a not-for-profit applicant is currently named as a permittee on an existing Canal Corporation Use and Occupancy Permit.
- Applicants must be able to demonstrate project site control.
- Applicants must include a resolution or similar documentation demonstrating the governing body's support for the project.
- NYSCC is subject to the [State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Act](#) (Chapter 433 of the Laws of 2010) and must, to the extent possible, make funding decisions consistent with the provisions of that Act.
- **Ineligible applicants** include private individuals, for-profit businesses, not-for-profit organizations applying for projects on NYSCC-owned land without a Use and Occupancy Permit, political or religious-based organizations, and certain special-purpose units of government, such as schools or fire districts.

**INELIGIBLE USES
OF FUNDS**

Applicants cannot request funds for:

- Payments for previous activities and projects
- Continuation of projects funded in prior grant rounds
- Reduction of existing debt
- Indirect costs (e.g., administrative salaries, operating and maintenance costs, expenses associated with the general operation)

- Purchase of real property
- Political or religious activities
- Additions to reserve funds or endowments
- General organizational marketing (including websites)
- Projects or programs that will re-grant the funds received
- Festivals or events (funded separately through the Event Support grants)

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

1. **Matching Funds:** The requested grant amount must be at least equally matched by the applicant and clearly demonstrated in the project budget. Sources of Matching Funds may include:
 - **Cash Match:** Private or public sector grants (except NYSCC CFA grants), private contributions, or income from fees or services.
 - **In-Kind Match:** Donated goods and services to the proposed project, including staff and volunteer time. Staff time may only be used as a match if the applicant is not requesting staff time (up to 10% of the grant request) as part of the grant award. If volunteer hours are used as a match, then the name of each volunteer, tasks performed, work hours, and signature must be recorded on a separate document sent with the final report. The current estimated value of volunteer time may be found here: [Value of Volunteer Time — Independent Sector](#).
 - **Unacceptable matches** include operating costs of the site/organization, routine repair and maintenance costs, and staff and volunteer costs/time unrelated to the project.
2. **Site Ownership or Control:** Applicants must clearly identify who owns and maintains the subject site and describe who is responsible for site control and long-term maintenance.
 - a. Applicants who do not have site ownership must submit (1) proof of site control (e.g., a lease), and (2) a letter of support from the property owner demonstrating support for the proposed project.
 - b. Those applying for projects on Canal Corporation property must reach out to Canal Corporation's Real Property Department to ensure the site is eligible for such a project. Correspondence should be submitted as part of the application. Regional Real



Property Coordinator contact information is available here: [Real Property Permits](#).

3. **Historic Preservation Compliance:** Most projects will require a formal review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to determine compliance with historic preservation laws and regulations. Successful applicants will be advised of obligations to meet this requirement upon award notice.
4. **Permits:** Work on NYS Canal Corporation land requires both a *Use and Occupancy Permit* AND a *Work Permit* specific to the requested activities. All permits, including other required federal, state, and municipal permits, must be secured prior to implementing grant-funded activities, including those activities related to the match. All applicants should anticipate a minimum of 4 weeks for initial review of their application by the NYSCC. Applicants must reach out to the NYS Canal Corporation's Real Property Department at (518) 449-6000 to ensure the site is eligible for the proposed project in advance of the grant application. Regional Real Property Coordinator contact information is available here: [Real Property Permits](#).
 - a. If your project includes any disturbance below the mean high-water mark, US Army Corps of Engineers and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation permit(s) will be required.
 - b. Project work that advances without obtaining all required permits may result in retraction of the grant award.
5. **Insurance:** Grantees, at their own expense, will provide and maintain insurance as follows:
 - a. Workers' compensation and disability benefit insurance are required under New York State Law.
 - b. Commercial general liability insurance including protective and contractual liability with a single combined limit of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$1,000,000 aggregate for bodily injury, including death and property damage.

Grantees will furnish ECNHC with a certificate of insurance evidencing the coverage and providing thirty (30) days prior written notice in the event of cancellation or material change in coverage. Additional insurance requirements for projects on NYSCC property will be addressed as part of the permitting process.
6. **Design Guidelines and Artwork Approval:** Applicants are required to follow NYS Canal Corporation and/or Empire State Trail and Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) design guidelines for



wayfinding signs and trail amenities. The Grantor reserves the right to review and comment on any infrastructure or signage produced through the grant. Projects such as interpretive signs and murals must receive written approval on final designs by the Grantor during the design stage prior to final design and production. Designs not meeting stated design standards will not be reimbursed.

- 7. Recognition:** Grant funding must be recognized in press releases, websites, and other promotional materials. Guidelines supplied for use of logos must be followed. Recommended credit:

This project is funded in part through the generous support of the NYS Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

- 8. Interim and Final Reporting:** Grantees must submit interim project updates every six months and a final report with actual expenses compared to original project budget and matching funds documentation using forms provided. Reports will include a summary of the project and results achieved, copies or examples of documents or other products produced, and photographs of the project. Grantees who fail to meet reporting requirements may be ineligible for future funding.

CONSULTANT SERVICES

Support requested for consultant services (e.g., planning, engineering, architectural, graphic design or other professional services) shall summarize the contractor selection process and the contractor's qualifications. If a consultant is to be selected after a grant commitment, the Grantees must submit the proposed consultant's qualifications to the Grant Manager for review and approval prior to finalizing grant funding. The use of NYS-certified minority and women-owned business enterprises and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses is strongly encouraged. For additional guidance, please contact the Program Manager.

AWARD DISTRIBUTION

Funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis at project conclusion, contingent upon receipt and approval of the Grantee's final report. Only fully documented (e.g., copies of checks, bank statements, contracts, etc.) and approved expenses will be reimbursed. Matching funds must also be fully documented. *Requests for advances will not be considered.*



Recipients will negotiate a reasonable project completion date with the Project Manager based on current project status, overall complexity, and the types of permits required. Requests for contract extensions will be considered only if received in writing; the NYS Canal Corporation and ECNHC have sole discretion to approve any extension requests. Failure to begin the project as originally proposed may result in cancellation of the award.



RESOURCES

GENERAL

[Canal Recreationway Plan 2050](#)

The Canal Recreationway Plan 2050 is a vision statement for the Canal System's future, aiming to further enhance the System's impact on tourism, recreation, and economic development while expanding its focus to include environmental stewardship, accessibility, and strategic land use.

[ECNHC Preservation and Management Plan](#)

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan outlines strategies to preserve the Corridor's unique sense of place, balance sustainable economic growth with heritage development, and position the Corridor as a premier destination for regional, national, and international visitors.

TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE & AMENITIES

[2025 Erie Canal Amenities Study](#)

Designed to help canal municipalities, counties, and non-profits create a consistent and predictable experience for all types of recreational users.

[Canal Design Standards – Guidelines for Public Space Improvement](#)

For use on Canal Corporation property or by those with permits to enhance such property, this document provides specifications for benches, tables, lighting, bicycle fix-it stations, drinking fountains, garbage receptacles, play structures, and more. The package of standards includes approved vendors, installation details, and accessibility considerations.

[NYS Canal Corporation Signage Guidelines](#)

Signage guidelines provide required graphic standards, fonts, layouts, colors, materials, and installation details for wayfinding and interpretive signs along Canal waterways and trails, and at all NYSCC locations.



[Empire State Trail Design Guidelines for Signage](#)

Guidelines for Canalway Trail wayfinding signage on property that is owned by any entity outside of NYSCC.

[Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways](#)

Guidelines for on-road wayfinding signage.

[Hand-Launch Facility Design Guide](#)

Best practices and guidelines for design, construction, and operation of paddle craft launches on the NYS Canalway Water Trail.

[Universal Design Principles](#)

Guidelines to maximize access for everyone.

- [Best Practices for Parks and Rec Areas](#)
- [Best Practices for Playgrounds](#)
- [Best Practices for Toilet Rooms](#)
- [Best Practices for Fishing and Boating Facilities](#)

EVENTS

[Adaptive Cycling Along the Erie Canalway: TRAIID on the Trails](#)

Fitness Inclusion Network (Fit-IN)'s guide to adaptive cycling and planning an inclusive recreational event along the Canalway Trail.

[Guide to Planning a Paddling Event](#)

[Rochester Accessible Adventures Inclusive Event Guide](#)

Rochester Accessible Adventures guide to planning an event through a lens of inclusion.

[Person-First and Identity-First Language Glossary](#)

A valuable communications resource for marketing inclusive events that champion equity, diversity, and inclusion in the spaces where people live, work, and play.