



TOURISM ENHANCEMENT GRANT: ROUND 8

Applications due on August 22, 2025

Grant at a Glance:

- Eligible grantees include a non-profit entity, e.g. non-profit unincorporated community such as a historic village, or a Tennessee local or a quasi-governmental entity.
 - Historic Village means a settlement or collection of buildings that are preserved to represent a specific period in history.
- Up to \$100,000 grant with a grantee participation commitment based upon the grantee's economic status.
- Approximately 25-30 grants will be awarded, depending on available funds
- Project must be completed on applicant-owned property, or property leased by the applicant from TVA or the US Army Corps of Engineers that has a remaining term of at least the useful life of the project
- Prior Tourism Enhancement grantees (Rounds 6 & 7) with completely, officially CLOSED grants will be eligible to submit an application. Tourism Enhancement grantees with OPEN grant projects are automatically ineligible.
- More than one application within a county may be submitted

Application Checklist:

- ☐ Application – document fully completed and emailed to Andi.Grindley@tn.gov
- ☐ Two letters of support from local/regional partners (minimum). One must be from official local tourism entity as defined by TN Dept. of Tourist Development (see [FAQ](#) for definition)
- ☐ Letter of commitment from organization providing matching funds
- ☐ If match commitment must be approved by legislative body, please have approval completed prior to application deadline
- ☐ Project property map - PDF map of area with project property marked, showing street address, and certifying ownership from the local Tax Assessor's office or by going to www.assessment.cot.tn.gov and searching for the property map
- ☐ Images of the overall site as well as specific areas of work (1 page max)

Grant Overview:

Tourism is one of the largest industries and most important economic drivers in Tennessee. The purpose of this grant is to support Tourism Development projects by eligible grantees to allow for the creation or expansion of physical attractions, facilities, or events that are available and open to the public, that improve the appeal of the destinations to tourists, and that enhance tourist experiences that are primarily promoted to or used by tourists.

Grant Review Board Members:

TN Dept. of Tourist Development, TN Dept. of Economic and Community Development, TN Dept. of Agriculture, TN Dept. of Environment and Conservation, TN Dept. of Transportation and TVA and/or the US Army Corps of Engineers (where applicable).

TDTD Tourism Grant Program Manager:

Andi Grindley
Andi.Grindley@tn.gov
(615) 487-5867

Reimbursement-based Grant:

Maximum request \$100,000. No other state or federal funds or in-kind contributions may be used for the match requirement. Grantees will be reimbursed for eligible expenditures.

Grantee Participation:

Match amount for a county is determined by tier level designation at the time of application submission. Please see the [TN Jobs Tax Credit map](#) for your designation.

Tier 1: 50/50 match – Tier 2: 70/30 match – Tier 3: 90/10 match – Tier 4: 95/05 match

FAQ:

Frequently asked questions may be found [here](#).

Grantee Eligibility:

- Eligible:
 - A non-profit entity, e.g. non-profit unincorporated community such as a historic village, or a Tennessee local or a quasi-governmental entity.
 - Historic Village means a settlement or collection of buildings that are preserved to represent a specific period in history.
 - Prior Tourism Enhancement grantees (Rounds 6 & 7) with completely, officially CLOSED grants will be eligible to apply.
- Not Eligible:
 - Attractions, festivals, Main Street organizations, regional tourism organizations, and non-governmental institutions. More than one application from within a county may be submitted. Tourism Enhancement grantees with OPEN (Rounds 6 & 7) grant projects are ineligible.

Administration Fees:

Grantee may request up to 5% of grant total toward administration costs. This must be included as a line item in the grant budget in the application.

Property Eligibility:

Property must be owned by the applicant or held in long-term lease / easement from TVA or the US Army Corps of Engineers. The lease term must be at least as long as the useful life of the project. If leased property, the grantee must meet all approvals through the appropriate federal agency. Lease confirmation must be submitted with application.

Definitions:

“Tourist” or “Visitor” means an individual who travels more than fifty (50) miles from their primary residence or travels from an out-of-state primary residence to a destination for the infrequent purpose of leisure, entertainment, business, or recreation and whose spending contributes to the state’s tourism economy.

“Tourism development” means the creation or expansion of physical attractions, facilities, or events that are available and open to the public, that improve the appeal of destinations to tourists, and that enhance tourist experiences that are primarily promoted to or used by tourists.

Project Eligibility:

Eligible projects should improve or create facilities and destinations visited by in-state and out-of-state tourists, with the goals of increasing visitation, enticing repeat visitation, and increasing the direct and indirect economic impacts of the tourism industry in all regions of the state. Extra consideration will be given to innovative, cost-effective projects with robust partnerships. Projects must be completed within an approximate 12 -18-month timeframe. Additional requirements may apply for specific projects, depending on their nature.

- **Examples of eligible projects:**
 - Stages such as music, theatre, etc. if used for tourism events
 - Lighting/electrical for tourism-related public spaces
 - Boat ramps with public access

- Historic preservation of tourism property or facility
- ADA compliancy resources for tourism assets
- Wayfinding signage (with proper approval from TDOT as needed)
- **Examples of ineligible projects:**
 - Projects that target local community infrastructure, with limited tourism-related programming
 - Any project on private property
 - Marketing, advertising, or billboards
 - Office supplies or basic operating costs
 - Entertainment, food, or and beverages
 - Travel expenses, medical, accounting, legal fees, or salaries
 - Prizes or prize money, scholarships, awards, plaques, t-shirts, uniforms, certificates, or any other promotional items

TDTD reserves the right to reject any project inconsistent with the program goals. For consideration of a project outside of the definition or if you have any questions about eligibility, please contact Andi.Grindley@tn.gov.

Scoring Algorithm:

- Building on existing historical, cultural, recreational, scenic, or natural resources/assets (max 20)
- Number and quality of public/private, public/public, or regional/local partnerships (max 15)
- Degree of innovation (max 10)
- Project potential for economic impact – quality and viability of project metrics (max 30)
- Level of need based on TNECD tier levels / economic status (max 10)
- County population – 2020 census (lowest population receives highest points) (max 15)

Guidelines for Funding:

In order to score the maximum points possible, the project proposal must include information describing how the project meets eligibility requirements with detailed goals for measuring project metrics and increasing tourism revenues.

This is a reimbursement-based grant. Guidelines and templates for reimbursements will be provided to awarded projects. No work done outside of the final approved contract period will be eligible for reimbursement.

Grant monitoring by TDTD may include ownership verification for five years. Grantee must meet with TDTD twice per year to report on the status of the project. Properties enhanced or improved through this grant may not be transferred from the approved grantee within five years of project completion. If property does change ownership outside of program scope within that timeframe, the grantee may be responsible for returning grant funds to the State, up to the full amount of the grant.

Tourism Enhancement Grant Timeline – Round 8

Jul 14, 2025	Applications open
Aug 22, 2025	Applications due
Aug 25 – 27, 2025	Application review/score period
Aug 28, 2025	Group application review/discussion/finalize awards
Sep 5, 2025	Award notifications and contracts
Oct 31, 2025	Signed contracts due
Jun 30, 2026	Reimbursement request paperwork due for work completed within fiscal year 2026
Sep 30, 2026	Annual reports due
May 29, 2027	Project completed, reimbursement request paperwork and final reports due

Tourism Enhancement Grant: Round 8
Application

Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

Organization Name as it Appears on W-9: **The City of Kingsport**

County: **Sullivan**

Person Authorized to Sign Grant Contract:

Name: **Paul Montgomery**

Title: **Mayor**

Email: **paulmontgomery@kingsporttn.gov**

Person Administering the Grant:

Name: **Michael Price**

Title: **Community Planner**

Email: **michaelprice@kingsporttn.gov**

Organization Mailing Address: **415 Broad St**

City: **Kingsport**

State: **TN**

Zip: **37660**

Office phone: **423-224-2877**

Mobile phone of grant administrator: **423-530-5416**

Use the checklist on Page 1 to verify all requirements. Application must be typed and emailed to Andi.Grindley@tn.gov. Answer all questions completely and label each answer with the corresponding question number. All fields must be completed for submission.

1. Executive summary with budget overview: Include physical address or GPS coordinates of proposed project (no more than two paragraphs).

The City of Kingsport is applying for funding through the Tennessee Tourism Enhancement Grant to rehabilitate the floating bridge at Bays Mountain Park and Planetarium. The bridge is a vital pedestrian connector, linking the Nature Center area to the upper Lakeside Trail and reducing what would otherwise be a 2.5-mile detour. Used by over one-third of the park's 200,000 annual visitors, the bridge enables broader access to nature for hikers, families, and educational groups. The structure, located at approximately 36.5077° N, 82.6234° W, is over 25 years old and built of pressure-treated lumber that has rotted beyond repair despite years of temporary patchwork. It currently relies on outdated foam flotation, which must be replaced with modern plastic buoy systems to comply with TDEC standards by 2033.

The bridge has developed a severe tilt due to sun exposure, age, and storm debris, making it a growing safety concern. The park attempts maintenance, but a full rehabilitation is now essential. Replacing the bridge with updated, code-compliant materials will restore safe, direct access to the historic Lakeside Trail, a route in use for over 50 years, and protect the visitor experience in one of Tennessee's most visited nature destinations. This project aligns with the goals of the Tennessee Tourism Enhancement Grant to improve tourism infrastructure and preserve high-value outdoor assets.

2. Describe the process of how this specific project was chosen and why is it needed?

Bays Mountain Park & Planetarium is the largest city-owned park in Tennessee, encompassing more than 3,750 acres of protected natural land and serving over 200,000 visitors each year. Among the park's most used and iconic features is the Floating Bridge, which provides direct pedestrian access across the 44-acre lake to the upper Lakeside Trail. This bridge shortens a potential 2.5-mile detour and is used by more than a third of the park's guests annually. Without it, visitor access to the far side of the trail system would be significantly limited, particularly for families, persons with physical limitations, and school groups on structured programs. The bridge enhances both connectivity and the overall park experience by providing a scenic and efficient route to one of Bays Mountain's most beloved trail systems.

This project was identified through regular park maintenance assessments, visitor feedback, and input from Parks & Recreation staff during capital planning sessions. Park staff have noted the deteriorating condition of the bridge, including structural instability, aged flotation no longer compliant with future TDEC standards, and extensive wood rot as a top maintenance priority. Despite annual maintenance, the bridge now requires a full replacement to ensure long-term safety and functionality. Given its daily use, visibility, and role in providing equitable trail access, the Floating Bridge was selected as one of the park's highest-priority infrastructure upgrades. Its rehabilitation is necessary not only for public safety and regulatory compliance but also to protect the quality of the visitor experience in one of Tennessee's most visited public outdoor spaces.

3. How does this project relate to and support existing musical, historical, cultural, recreational, scenic, or natural resources and experiential assets?

The Floating Bridge at Bays Mountain Park & Planetarium plays a key role in connecting a wide arc of scenic, cultural, recreational, and historical elements that define the park's identity. Bays Mountain is a historic preserve rooted in Appalachian heritage: originally home to settlers in the early 1800s who farmed, built homes, and relied on the mountain's natural wealth. By 1916, the

dam and lake served as Kingsport's municipal water source, and after the city outgrew the reservoir in 1944, the area transitioned into the modern nature park officially opened in 1971. The park's nature center, Wolf habitat, planetarium, heritage farmstead museum, and miles of trails reflect this dual legacy of natural preservation and cultural heritage.

The floating bridge enhances visitors' park experience by providing direct access from the Nature Center and lake to the historic Lakeside Trail, a route used for more than half a century by both residents and visitors. When fully functional, the bridge enables guests, including school groups, families, and naturalists, to efficiently explore the park's full interpretive value. Without the bridge, visitors face an additional 2.5-mile trek, fragmenting access to habitats, scenic overlooks, and the cultural layers represented along the trail. Its rehabilitation would improve connectivity within the park's 44-acre lake, scenic wooded ridge, and educational assets, including the Farmstead Museum and animal exhibits. Thereby, supporting the park's mission of service, nature education, and stewardship throughout the region.

4. Describe any partnerships leveraged and what their specific role will be in the project.

The City of Kingsport is the lead applicant and will oversee project planning, procurement, and implementation, working in collaboration with Bays Mountain Park & Planetarium staff who provide day-to-day operational and technical support for the bridge structure. The Sullivan County Government, through its support and regional planning coordination, helps ensure alignment with broader infrastructure and tourism goals that benefit all residents and visitors.

Visit Kingsport will promote the completed project as part of its regional tourism marketing strategy, using digital platforms, visitor guides, and social media campaigns to attract both in-state and out-of-state visitors. The Kingsport Chamber of Commerce will support economic impact efforts by engaging with local businesses and highlighting the bridge's impact on attracting outdoor enthusiasts and family tourism.

Additionally, the United Way of Greater Kingsport and its network of nonprofit partners support the project's broader community value, emphasizing equitable access to nature and public space. These organizations will help promote the park's improved infrastructure as a healthy, inclusive recreational resource for all.

Together, these partners reflect a collaborative commitment to enhancing the region's natural tourism assets, expanding accessibility, and supporting sustainable economic development through outdoor recreation.

5. Who will be the primary user of / beneficiary from this project?

The Floating Bridge rehabilitation project directly enhances the appeal of Bays Mountain Park, a premier outdoor destination in Northeast Tennessee, by improving access, safety, and the overall visitor experience. Tourists from across the region and neighboring states regularly visit Bays Mountain for its unique combination of natural beauty, wildlife habitats, planetarium programs, and over 40 miles of hiking and biking trails. The Floating Bridge is a key part of this experience, offering a scenic, shortcut connection along the Lakeside Trail. Especially for tourists with limited time, families with children, and educational groups on day trips, the bridge provides critical access to the less-traveled upper trail loop and expands opportunities for outdoor recreation and exploration.

Currently, the bridge's deteriorated state is a safety concern and a barrier to accessibility. Rebuilding it with compliant, modern flotation standards and improved structural integrity will not only restore access but also enhance the visual and experiential quality of the trail system. The bridge itself becomes a destination, a place where visitors can stop and take in panoramic lake views, wildlife, and seasonal foliage. Tourists are expected to be the primary beneficiaries

of this improvement, as many make a full-day or weekend trip to the park as part of their travel itinerary. With over 200,000 visitors annually this infrastructure project will directly support regional tourism by increasing trail access, encouraging return visits, and enhancing Bays Mountain Park's reputation as one of Tennessee's most treasured nature destinations.

6. How is this project an innovative or creative approach?

The Floating Bridge rehabilitation project takes an innovative approach by combining environmental sustainability, regulatory modernization, and tourism-focused infrastructure design. Rather than simply replacing the deteriorated structure, the project proposes an upgraded floating system that aligns with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) 2033 standards, shifting from outdated foam flotation to environmentally responsible, modern plastic buoy systems. This not only ensures long-term compliance and reduced maintenance but also reflects a forward-thinking model of sustainable outdoor infrastructure.

What makes the project especially creative is its dual function: the bridge is not just a passageway. It is also a recreational and safety-enhancing feature that transforms the park experience. The redesign includes stable, weather-resistant decking and railings for improved visitor safety, particularly for families, seniors, and school groups. It also improves access for emergency personnel, shortening response time by providing a direct route across the lake, an essential factor for a park that hosts over 200,000 annual visitors. By enhancing both safety and experience, the bridge becomes a scenic and functional destination in itself, complete with interpretive signage and panoramic lake views. This innovative approach makes Bays Mountain Park more accessible, engaging, and secure for tourists, helping it stand out as a premier travel destination in Northeast Tennessee.

7. Following project completion, who will be responsible for the maintenance/accountability of the project? Provide contact information for the responsible entity. Who will manage programming, if needed? Project sustainability will be monitored by TDTD.

The Park, owned by the City of Kingsport is maintained by the City of Kingsport Parks and Recreation department and City maintenance.

Programming and Accountability will be managed by Megan Krager, Bays Mountain Park Manager.

megankrager@kingsporttn.gov
423-229-9490

8. Are there plans for marketing related to the proposed project once completed? If yes, please describe.

The City of Kingsport will actively promote the Floating Bridge Rehabilitation Project through a coordinated marketing campaign led by Visit Kingsport, the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce, and the City's own Public Information Office. Upon completion, the project will be featured in a high-visibility ribbon-cutting ceremony at Bays Mountain Park, which will include city officials, tourism partners, park staff, and local stakeholders. This event will be open to the public and covered by the Kingsport Times News, which regularly features regional tourism developments, outdoor recreation, and community infrastructure projects.

Marketing efforts will also include digital and print campaigns through Visit Kingsport, which has a strong social media presence and website traffic from tourists seeking outdoor destinations and weekend getaways in Northeast Tennessee. The Kingsport Chamber of Commerce will promote the project through its member network, newsletters, and media channels, encouraging regional travel and community engagement. Signage and informational materials on-site will celebrate the project's tourism impact and provide historical and

interpretive content about the bridge and trail system. Collectively, these efforts will ensure the bridge's reopening is celebrated widely and effectively marketed to both residents and out-of-town visitors as a revitalized attraction at one of Tennessee's premier municipal parks.

9. Describe how this project will improve the county's tourism economic impact. Use the most recent [2023 County Snapshot](#) numbers for your baseline. Include intended objectives and outcomes and describe how project metrics will be measured. **See examples below for guidance on developing project metrics.

In 2023, Sullivan County ranked 11th among Tennessee's 95 counties in direct visitor spending, with \$340,057,800 in total tourism-related expenditures. Earlier data also indicated nearly \$330 million in domestic visitor spending in 2022, supporting more than 2,580 local jobs and contributing tax relief equivalent to \$501 per household. Bays Mountain Park is a key driver behind this regional economy, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors annually.

By restoring this critical trail connector, the Floating Bridge Rehabilitation Project expands visitor access, enhances safety, and increases park programming opportunities. The resulting uplift in visitation and spending supports Sullivan County's position as a strong tourism destination, aligned with county snapshot data. This project will not only preserve existing tourism value but also catalyze growth in visitor-driven revenue, local business engagement, and regional economic development.

Output Measurement Examples:

- Asset created or improved:
 - Describe how this project will increase tourism capacity in the county.

The project will fully rehabilitate the Floating Bridge to restore safe and reliable pedestrian access to the upper Lakeside Trail. Within one year of reopening, the objective is to improve accessibility for approximately 60,000 to 70,000 park users, representing nearly one-third of Bays Mountain Park's 200,000 annual visitors.

- Costs reduced:
 - Costs reduced, as a result of project activities, within one year of project implementation.

Eliminate the current \$5,000/year in maintenance expenses spent on patch repairs.

- Programs implemented:
 - The number of new programs or the number of ongoing activities related to the defined goals that are implemented as a result of the project. If possible, use with other measures that will indicate the results of the project.

Restoring the Floating Bridge will reconnect a vital section of the Lakeside Trail, making it safer and more accessible for guided groups, school field trips, and family-oriented programs. With improved access to the upper side of the lake and surrounding ecosystems, Bays Mountain Park staff will be able to launch new interpretive or educational programs, such as ranger-led nature hikes, wildlife observation walks, and curriculum-aligned outdoor learning experiences for visitors. These programs will be tailored to engage out-of-town visitors. By opening up this scenic and educationally rich area of the park, the restored bridge directly supports the development and success for new offerings.

- Leveraged private investment:
 - The dollar amount of private-sector financial commitments, outside of project costs, that result from a project, measured during the project period and up to three years after the project end date.

The increase in visitation will generate greater foot traffic to surrounding restaurants, hotels, gas stations, and retailers in Kingsport and Sullivan County. This rise in tourism activity supports private-sector investment by making the area more attractive for hospitality, recreational outfitters, and tourism-related services. This enhanced tourism infrastructure is expected to help leverage additional private-sector financial commitments to the region through new business development, event sponsorships, and marketing collaborations, ultimately contributing to sustained tourism revenue growth for the entire county.

- Revenue increase projections:
 - The projected increase in revenue that will be realized as a result of the project.

Based on the current annual attendance of approximately 200,000 visitors to Bays Mountain Park, it is projected that the rehabilitation of the Floating Bridge will lead to at least an increase in tourism-driven activity within the first year of reopening. This equates to additional visits directly tied to improved accessibility, programming, and visitor experience. Assuming an average regional economic impact of \$70 per visitor, consistent with travel and tourism industry benchmarks in Tennessee, this could generate approximately \$1.4 million in new tourism-related revenue annually for Kingsport and Sullivan County. This increase reflects not only higher park attendance but also greater visitor spending at local hotels, restaurants, retail shops, and gas stations, all driven by the enhanced appeal and functionality of the park as a result of this infrastructure investment.

- New visitor increase projections:
 - The number of new visitors to a tourism destination multiplied by the number of the days they visit, within one year of project implementation.

With the rehabilitation of the Floating Bridge, Bays Mountain Park is projected to receive new visitors within one year of project completion. Based on the park's historic attendance trends and the increased appeal and accessibility the restored bridge will provide. If each new visitor spends an average of 1.5 days exploring the park and the surrounding Kingsport area, visiting other attractions, dining, and potentially staying overnight, this would result in increased visitor-days added to Sullivan County's tourism economy.

These additional visitor-days will generate direct and indirect economic benefits through increased local spending, support for tourism-related businesses, and greater visibility for Kingsport as a regional destination. The improved infrastructure positions Bays Mountain Park as a more inclusive and accommodating experience for tourists of all ages and mobility levels, helping the region compete more effectively in Tennessee's outdoor recreation and heritage tourism markets.

Project Budget:

If the project you are submitting is part of a larger project, please only include expenses for the portion being requested.

Spending Category	Description	Full Cost
Planning/Feasibility		
Design/Engineering		
Review/Permitting		
Materials		
Labor		
Contingency		
Grant Administration		
Equipment (Any single item with a cost of \$10,000 or more and a useful life of more than 1 year)		
Other / Miscellaneous		
TOTAL BUDGET		

Provide line-item explanation, justifications, and/or notes, as needed:

Timeline for Completion:

Milestone	Start Date	End Date
Planning/Feasibility		
Design/Engineering		
Review/Permitting		
Bid/Contract		
Start Project		
25% Complete		
50% Complete		
75% Complete		
100% Complete		

I/We hereby certify that I/we have been authorized to file this application and to provide the information within and accompanying this application. I/we certify that the information provided herein is true and complete and that it reflects the applicant's intentions to the best of my/our knowledge. I/We understand that the information provided within this application will be relied upon by the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development in deciding whether to contract with the organization and that the state reserves the right to take action against the applicant organization or any other beneficiary if the state discovers that the applicant intentionally provided misleading, inaccurate, or false information. I/We make this certification under the pains and penalties of perjury.

Written Name: _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Written Name: _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____
