



Mercer County Trail Assistance Program

Process Checklist

- **Pre-Application Meeting (Optional):** The County urges applicants to schedule a pre-application meeting. If deemed warranted, the County will conduct a site visit to the project area.
- **Application:** Potential grant recipients will submit one of three applications dependent on project type (available here: [\[link\]](#)), which will be checked for completeness by the County.
- **Open Space Preservation Board (OSPB) Review:** Once the application is deemed complete by staff, it will be presented to the OSPB to review. The OSPB provides a recommendation to County Administration on whether to fund the application. Meetings take place every other month on the first Tuesday. After OSPB approval, the application must be approved by the County Administration.
- **Grant Agreement:** Following approval by the Mercer County Administration, a Grant Agreement will be sent to the applicant. Three copies of the agreement must be signed and returned for the review and approval of the Mercer County Board of Commissioners.
- **Commissioner Resolution and Final Approval:** When the Grant Agreement is approved by the Board of Commissioners and signed by the County Executive, the applicant will receive a final approval letter, fully executed Grant Agreement and Commissioner Resolution, and Purchase Order.
- **Invoicing:** Grant recipients can invoice to receive 50% of grant award at the start of the Grant Agreement, 25% of funds when the project is 50% complete, and the remaining 25% when the project is 100% complete and has undergone Final Review.
- **Final review:** A final review of the project is required to receive the remaining funding and differs by project type:
 - For Feasibility Studies: a final feasibility study report will be sent to the County.
 - For Design & Permitting: all finalized designs, permits from necessary parties, and any required right of way acquisition will be sent to the County.
 - For Rehabilitation & New Construction: construction or rehabilitation of the trail project in question must be complete. A final site visit will be made to ascertain completeness of the project.



Mercer County Trail Grant Program – Application Instructions 2026

The Mercer County Trail Grant Program provides funding support for municipalities and eligible organizations to plan, design, and construct trails that enhance recreation, mobility, and connectivity across the county. Eligible applicants include Mercer County municipalities and 501(c)(3) nonprofits engaged in trail development. Projects must be located on public land or private/nonprofit land with permanent public access (not required for feasibility studies).

Applicants must submit one of three application types depending on project scope: 1) Feasibility Study, 2) Design & Permitting, or 3) Construction.

Choosing the Right Application Type

1) Feasibility Study Application – For early-stage projects to determine the viability of new or expanded trails, including route analysis, environmental screening, cost estimation, and public engagement.

2) Design & Permitting Application – For projects in the design phase, including preliminary and final engineering, environmental permitting, and right-of-way acquisition.

3) Construction Application – For projects that are construction-ready with final design, permits, and cost estimates in place.

- Eligible for new trail construction or rehabilitation

Common Requirements for all Applications

- Provide the name of the project and the contact of the head of organization.
- Letters of commitment must be attached for all matching contributions.
- All applications must demonstrate alignment with Mercer County planning and open space priorities.

1. Feasibility Study Application – Instructions

This application should be used for projects at the preliminary stage. Applicants must:

- State the project purpose, goals, anticipated trail users, and community need.
- Define the scope of the study (route analysis, environmental screening, ROW review, cost estimation, outreach).
- Identify whether the area is part of existing county or municipal plans.
- Deliverables must include a final feasibility report, maps/alternatives, cost estimates, and public engagement summary.

2. Design & Permitting Application – Instructions

This application should be used if your project is in the design phase. Applicants must:

- Describe goals, connectivity, and anticipated users.
- Identify scope of work (engineering, permitting, ROW acquisition, final design deliverables).
- Document existing plans or studies.
- Provide anticipated permits and timeline.
- Deliverables must include preliminary and final design plans, permit approvals, and ROW documentation.

3. Construction Application – Instructions

This application should be used if your project is ready for construction. Applicants must:

- Provide complete project description including goals, access, diversity, connectivity, and consistency with planning initiatives.
- Submit design intent and standards, including trail class, use, surface, and design features.
- Submit required maps, site photos, and construction documents (signed/sealed plans, specifications, permits).
- Demonstrate readiness including environmental considerations, permitting, and stormwater management.

Submission Instructions

- Applications must be submitted electronically and will be accepted on a rolling basis from January 1st to September 1st 2026.
- Applicants should ensure that all required attachments are included.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Questions may be directed to Mansi Shah, Assistant Planner, Mercer County Planning Department - mshah@mercercounty.org