



Landscaping and Scenic Beautification

The federal Transportation Enhancements (TE) program funds 12 different types of transportation-related activities. Through the “Landscaping and scenic beautification” activity, communities enhance the unique character and beauty of travel corridors. Since the TE program began in 1992, approximately 17 percent of available funds have been programmed for landscaping and scenic beautification projects.

Eligible Projects

Working within Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, each state Department of Transportation (DOT) determines the eligibility of TE projects for funding. Examples of projects that may be considered eligible include improvements along streets, historic highways, trails and interstates, waterfronts, and gateways such as:

- Landscaping, including planting native wildflowers;
- Light fixtures;
- Public art;
- Street furniture such as benches, trash receptacles, and bus shelters;
- Enhanced roadside vegetation management, restoring native plants and controlling invasive species.

Examples of Successful Projects

Streetscape Improvements, Rhode Island. After years of economic decline, the once elegant Victorian neighborhood of West Broadway in Providence began a turnaround with the help of TE funds. The West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA) used more than \$1 million in TE funds to repair sidewalks, install street lights, and landscape on their historic main street. Contact: WBNA, 401-831-9344.

Cultural Corridors Project, New Mexico. The Cultural Corridors Project used nearly \$1 million in TE funds to enhance and celebrate the communities along historic Route 66, "The Mother Road" (I-40), and El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (I-25). Artists built unique public sculptures along these popular travel routes. The various pieces have become popular as rest stops and encourage travelers to visit local communities. Contact: New Mexico Arts Division, 505-827-6490.

Wildflower Program, North Carolina. North Carolina’s roadsides are some of the most attractive in the country thanks to the Wildflower Program of the North Carolina DOT. NCDOT provides approximately half a million dollars in TE funds each year for wildflower plantings along federal-aid highways throughout the state. Each of the 14 NCDOT divisions receive additional TE funds for local roadside beautification projects. Contact: NC DOT roadside environmental unit, 919-733-2920.



Public art in New Mexico



Wildflowers in North Carolina

Visit www.enhancements.org/examples.asp for additional project examples.

Federal Guidance



Projects that use TE funds must qualify as one or more of the 12 designated activities and relate to surface transportation in order to meet basic federal eligibility requirements. Sponsors should clearly explain the project's relationship to surface transportation in the proposal.

For landscaping projects, sponsors are encouraged to employ environmentally sustainable practices such as planting native species; avoiding invasive species and excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers; conserving water resources especially in arid climates; and using lighting that minimizes light pollution. Federal law requires using not less than 1/4 of 1 percent of landscaping funds to plant native wildflowers (23 U.S.C. 319(b)). Visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/TE for a full copy of the FHWA TE Guidance.

Financing TE Projects



Most states require TE project sponsors to provide at least 20 percent of project costs, also referred to as “matching funds.” In many states, the value of donated property, materials, and services; the labor of state and local government employees; and the costs of preliminary engineering may count towards the matching requirement. Federal, non-DOT funds can often be used as matching funds. Check with your state TE manager whether these “innovative financing options” are available in your state.

Additional funds for this activity may come from private businesses or developers interested in financing streetscape improvements around their real estate or from community garden clubs. Landscaping along highways may be funded by state programs such as Adopt-A-Highway. Other federal agencies, state agencies, local governments, local chambers of commerce, and main street organizations may also provide funds. Visit www.enhancements.org/fundingsources.asp for links to specific grant programs.

Related Resources



- FHWA Roadside Vegetation Management Web site: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/vegmgmt/
- National Main Street Center: www.mainst.org or 202-588-6219
- International Downtown Alliance: www.ida-downtown.org or 202-393-6801
- American Society of Landscape Architects: www.asla.org or 202-898-2444
- University of North Carolina Center for Craft, Creativity and Design: www.craftcreativitydesign.org

To Get Started



Inquiries about the TE application process should be directed to the TE manger at your state DOT. Visit www.enhancements.org/contacts.asp for TE manager contact information.