



The Intersection Of ***Economic Development & Outdoor Recreation***

Thursday, May 7th ***2026 NRPC Annual Forum***



Janel Lawton
Outdoor Recreation Industry Dev.



Eric Feldbaum
Bureau of Community Recreation



Heather Corbett
Universal Design Toolbox



NRPC Foundation pursues funding to support and enhance the work of NRPC and its member communities.



Funding Priorities:

- Greater Nashua Community Rides Pilot Program
- Universal Design of Outdoor Spaces
- Household Hazardous Waste

[Nashuarpc.org/foundation](https://nashuarpc.org/foundation)



BEA

New Hampshire Department of
**BUSINESS AND
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

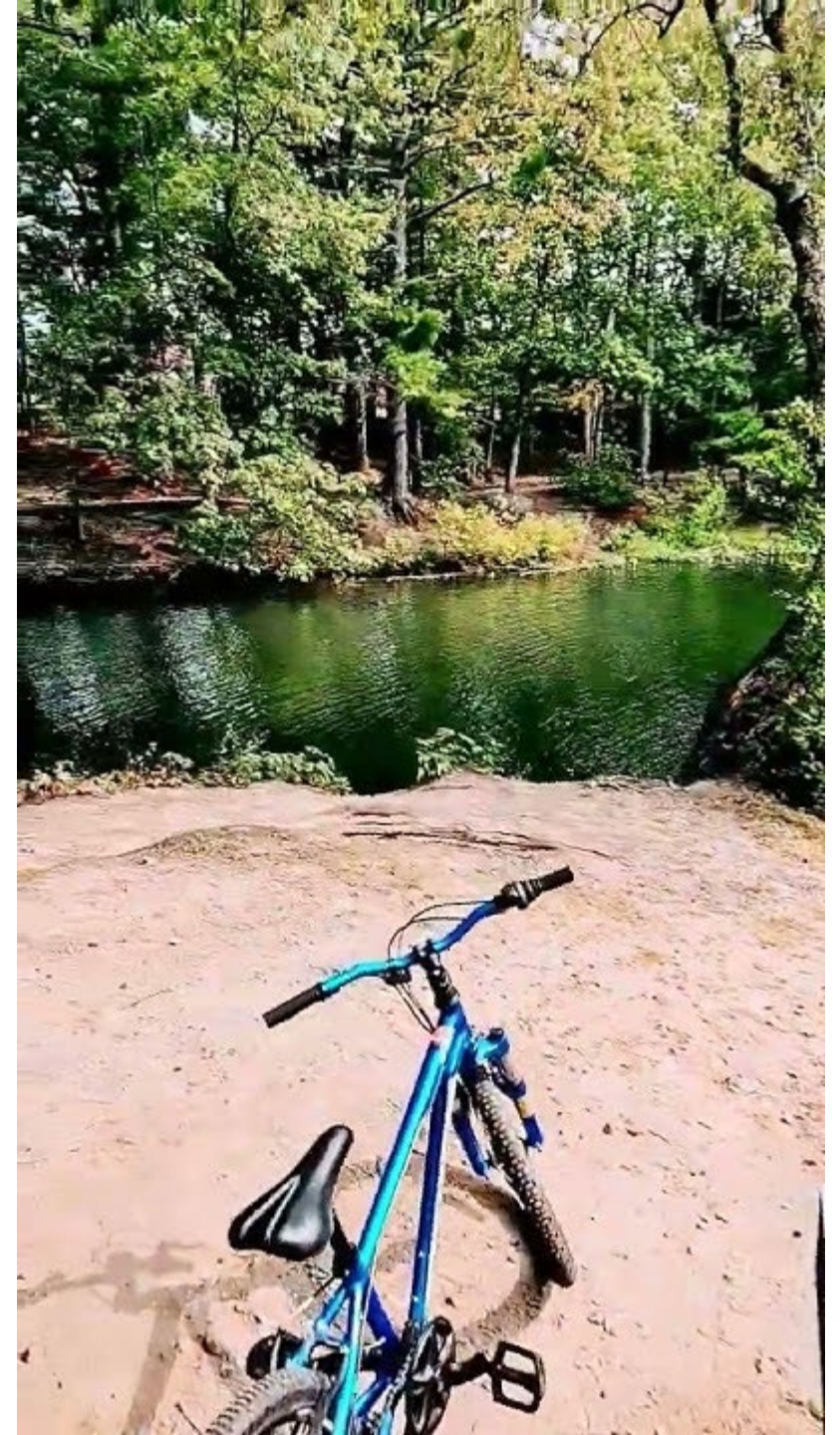
Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development
Janel Lawton, Director

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

- 33,313 direct jobs
- \$1.8 billion wages and salaries
- \$4.2 billion total outdoor recreation value added

WHY it is important...

1. Economic Impact
2. Recruitment Tool for a Diverse Workforce
3. Community Development and Vibrancy
4. Meeting Changing Workforce Demands



Leveraging the Outdoors to Attract & Retain Talent

WORKFORCE TOOLKIT FOR THE OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE

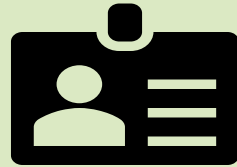
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WHY THE TOOLKIT?



The labor market is evolving—workers seek *purpose, flexibility, and quality of life.*



NH faces a **severe talent shortage**: only 28 available workers per 100 open jobs.



Businesses must rethink attraction and retention with modern, lifestyle-based strategies.



New Hampshire's **outdoor assets** can help recruit, retain, and inspire employees.



Embedding outdoor recreation into workplace culture **builds an authentic, attractive brand.**

New Hampshire's outdoor recreation industry contributes:

\$4.2 BILLION
to the state's economy

\$1.8 BILLION
in wages

3.4%
of New Hampshire's GDP

33,313
jobs



4.5%
of the state's workforce

8th
among states for industry growth

Data from the [Bureau of Economic Analysis](#), 2024

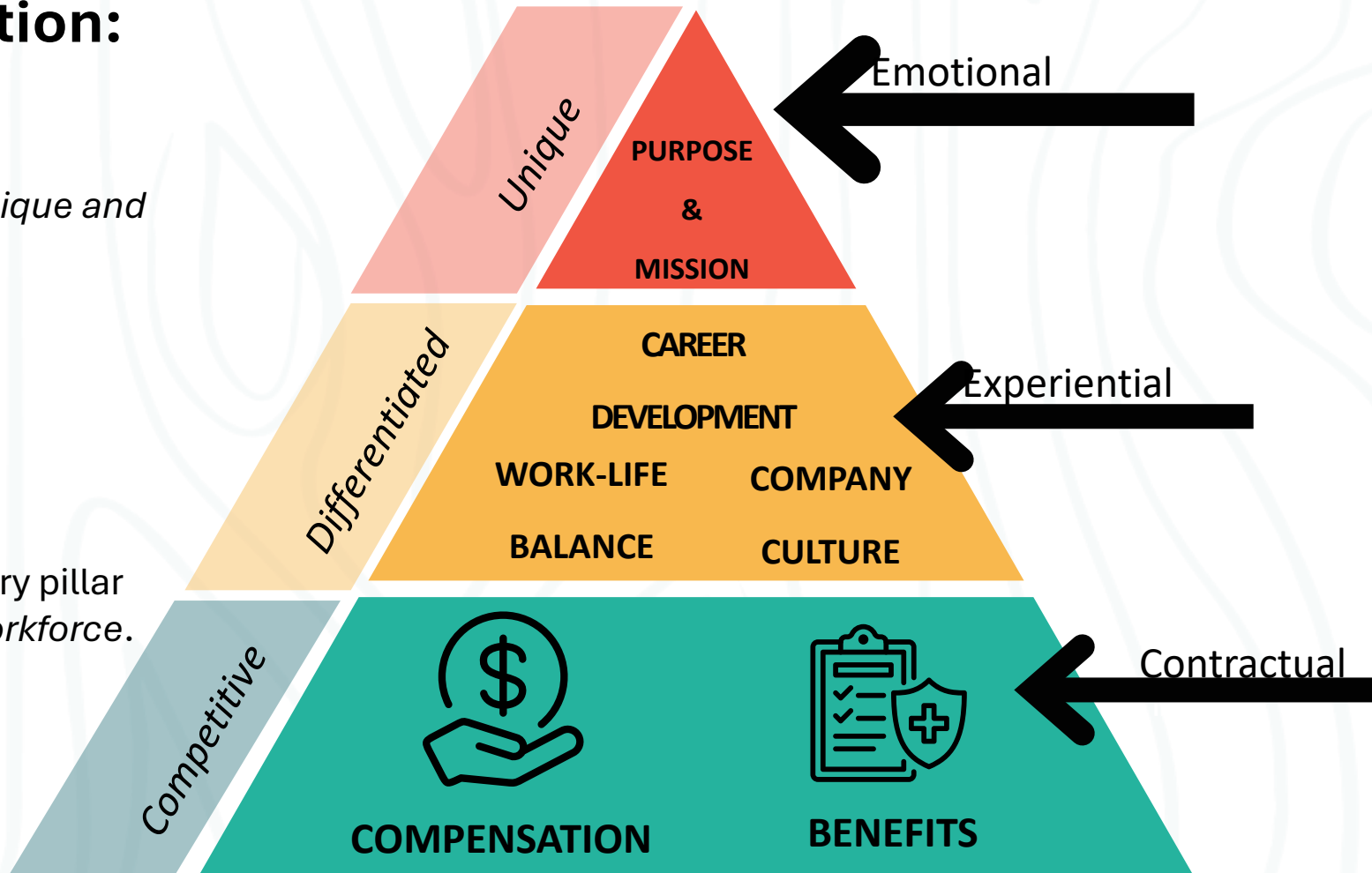
DEVELOPING AN EVP

Employee Value Proposition: Why Work Here?

- Define what makes your company a *unique and rewarding* place to work.
- Built on 5 pillars:
 - Compensation & Benefits
 - Career development
 - Work-life balance
 - Culture
 - Purpose & mission
- Outdoor lifestyle benefits enhance every pillar and appeal to *today's values-driven workforce*.

FACTS & FIGURES

62% of jobseekers consider an employer's brand when job searching, according to [GlassDoor](#).



TOOLKIT



WILDLY RESPONSIBLE

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry
Development
Janel Lawton, Director



The Core Principles:

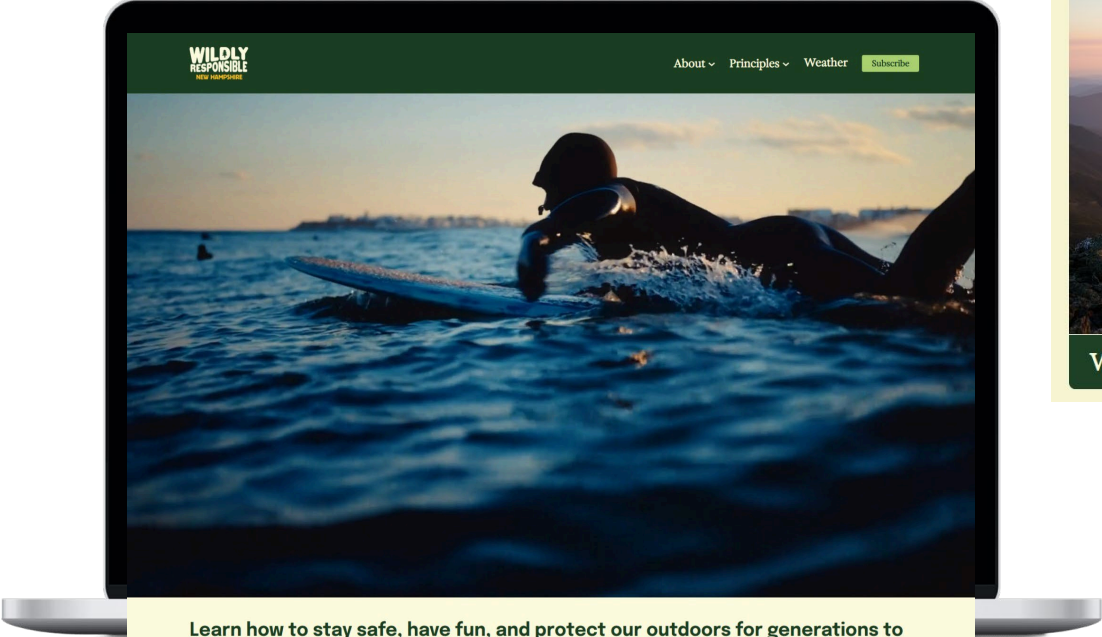
**PLAN, PACK
& PREPARE**

**CARE FOR
OTHERS**

**PROTECT &
PRESERVE**

**GO HAVE
FUN**

WildlyResponsible.com



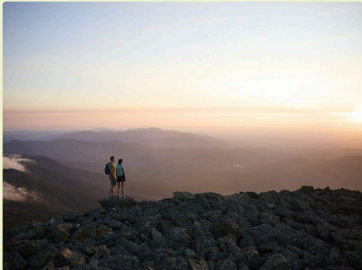
Learn how to stay safe, have fun, and protect our outdoors for generations to come.

PLAN, PACK
& PREPARE

CARE FOR
OTHERS

PROTECT &
PRESERVE

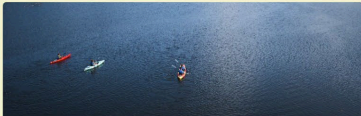
GO HAVE
FUN



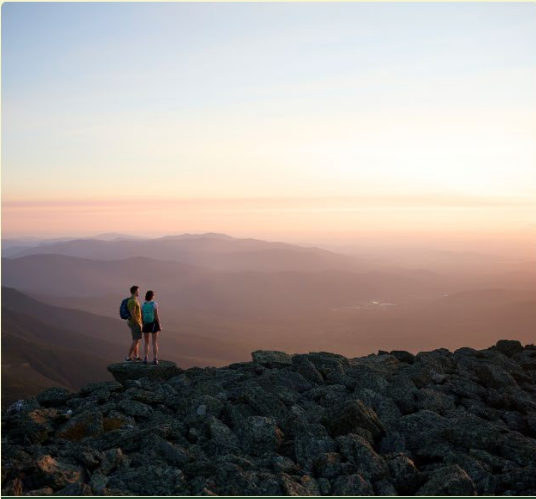
Weather



Industry Toolkit



Resources



Weather



Industry Toolkit



Resources



What should you do before exploring the outdoors?

A) Check the weather

B) Pack for your activity

C) Eat candy

D) A&B





RecReady^{NH}

Building Stronger Communities:
A Guide to Outdoor Recreation and Economic Growth

REC READY NH MODULES

MODULE 1

**Assess Inventory
and Existing
Conditions**



MODULE 2

**Perform
Stakeholder and
Public Engagement**



MODULE 3

**Manage Natural
Resources and
Education**



MODULE 4

**Develop Recreation
Plan and
Documents**



MODULE 5

**Implement and
Construct Project**



MODULE 6

**Review Economic
Impact and Build
Community**



How to Use

RecReady^{NH}

Through the
RecReadyNH.com
you can access the
modules:

Step by Step:
Modules 1-6

By Project Type:
Modules grouped
by project needs

Resources and Tools

- **Worksheets:** Download worksheets to assess and gather public feedback, conduct your own trail user counts, estimate the economic impact of outdoor recreation in your community, and more.
- **Resources:** Links to best practices compiled by partners across the state and national outdoor recreation industry.
- **Guides:** Download step-by-step guides to perform asset assessments, turn public feedback into actionable strategies, ensure your project minimally impacts the natural ecosystem, and more.
- **Databases:** Download spreadsheet databases to access clearly compiled information on grants, funding opportunities, cost estimations, and more.



Thank You!

Janel Lawton,
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Get started at
RecReadyNH.com

BEA

New Hampshire Department of
BUSINESS AND
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS



Land & Water Conservation Fund

New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
Division of Parks and Recreation
Bureau of Community Recreation

Land & Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965

Positive Law 54 U.S.C. § 200301 et seq.



- Signed by President Johnson
 - *Originated under President Kennedy*
- Purpose: to preserve, develop, and assure accessibility of an adequate quantity and quality of public outdoor recreation resources for present and future generations.
- Funds from offshore oil and gas leases via USDOl
- Establishes the LWCF State Assistance Program, and federal land acquisition program.
- Annual apportionments to the States for program purposes via National Park Service.
- Permanently reauthorized under the Great American Outdoor Act of 2020

State Participation



Three primary requirements:

1. Establishment and maintenance of a 5-year Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
 - The Recreation Experience
 - Recreation and the Environment
 - Recreation for All
 - Health and Wellness
 - Economic Vitality
2. Designation of a State Liaison Officer (SLO)
3. Open Project Selection Process

Federal – State – Local Partnership



A Cooperative Outdoor Recreation
Project for All and Forever



United States Department of Interior,
National Park Service



State of New Hampshire Department
of Natural and Cultural Resources,
Division of Parks and Recreation

Permitted Uses of Funds:

- Direct project grants to the State.
 - Sub-grants to Local Governments via DNCR.
 - All grants approved by NPS
- Acquisition and/or development of State or Local public **OUTDOOR RECREATION** lands.
- Eligible acquisitions: *fee-simple property or permanent easements.*
- Eligible development/facilities: *camping, athletic, aquatic, trails, support, land management, sheltered (limited), infrastructure, hunting, natural areas, passive parks, etc.*

Eligible Project Types

Outdoor Recreation Opportunities including Support facilities



Grant Funds

1:1 Minimum Matching Reimbursement

- Local Level Appropriations
 - Capital Dollars
 - Local Bonds
 - Dedicated Park Funding
 - Pre Planning Costs (Up to 3 years)
 - In Kind
 - Donations
 - Volunteer Time (Skilled and Unskilled)
- Other Federal Programs*



Pre-Planning Costs

Up to 3 year's prior to grant submission

- Park Master Development Plans
- Public Visioning Sessions
- Project design elements
 - Architecture
 - Engineering
 - Permitting
 - Application Development



Final Concept Design
Riverfront Commons



*Pre-planning costs related to acquisition projects are not eligible



Compliance and Stewardship

Required of all funded State and Local project sponsors and properties

- Maintained in good, inviting condition
- Open and accessible to the public
- No “exclusive” non-public uses
 - i.e., residency or membership restrictions
- No significant changes in allowable uses without prior review and approval
- No non-outdoor recreational uses
 - Temporary Non-Conforming Uses limited to 6-months with NPS approval.



Monitored by SLO

In Perpetuity

54 U.S.C. § 200305(f)(3)

(Previously referred to as '*Section 6(f)(3)*' per original legislation)

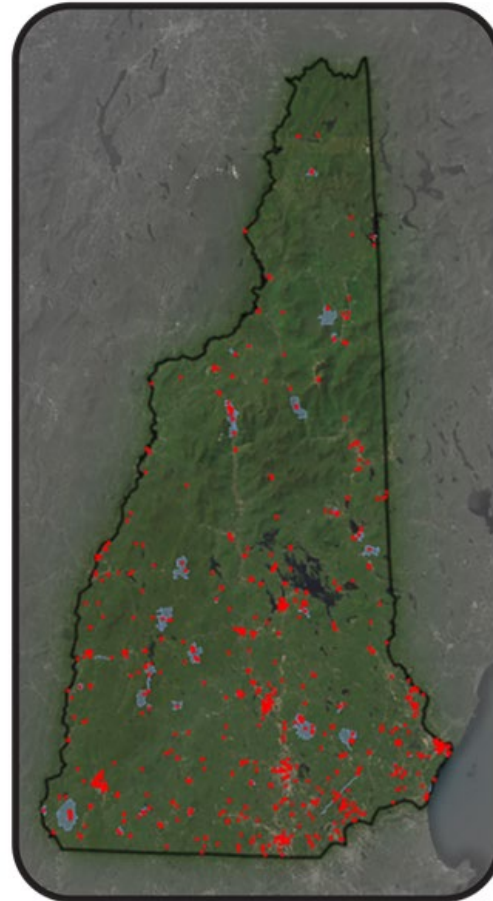
CONVERSION TO OTHER THAN PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATION USE.

No property acquired or developed with assistance under this section shall, without the approval of the Secretary, be converted to other than public outdoor recreation use. The Secretary shall approve a conversion only if the Secretary finds it to be in accordance with the then existing comprehensive statewide outdoor recreation plan and only on such conditions as the Secretary considers necessary to ensure the substitution of other recreation properties of at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness and location.

LWCF Project Mapper

New Hampshire Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF)
State and Local Assistance Inspection/Encumbrance Map

Click the map below to go to the interactive NH LWCF Project Map:





www.nhstateparks.org

Community Recreation Bureau
Land and Water Conservation Fund
lwcf@dn-cr.nh.gov



A COMMUNITY *by* DESIGN

APPLYING THE TENETS OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN TO ADAPT OUR
PARKS AND OPEN SPACES FOR OUR COMMUNITIES



WASHINGTON DC, 1990

The Capitol Crawl

This is what “It can wait”
“it’s too hard”
“it costs too much”

...and every other excuse in the book looks like.

It’s true that the changes will probably not come for free, but if they do not come at all- *someone* is going to pay *that* price as well.

So let’s consider this concept as a sliding scale.
The Capitol Crawl represents “0”... no action taken.

NOW, before we start thinking that we are revamping the entire community to meet the entire ADA guidebook- I would like to take a moment to talk about what it means to be disabled. And what it means to be disabled
***here*.**



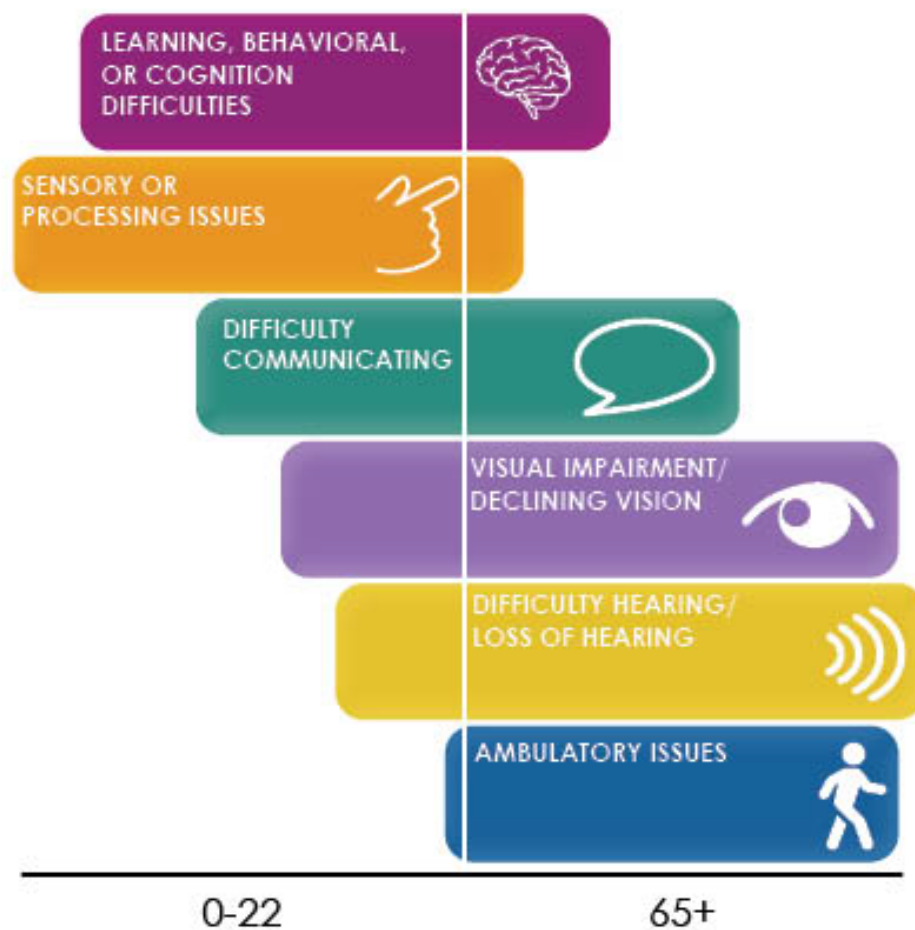
Honoring the Capitol Crawl - 36 Years Later

“On March 12, 1990, over 1,000 disability-rights advocates marched from the White House to the U.S. Capitol, demanding passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In a dramatic moment that captivated the nation.”...**Read the rest of the blog on our website or click the link in our caption!**

RE-FRAMING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF “DISABILITY”



1 in **4**
INDIVIDUALS
IN THE UNITED STATES
LIVE WITH A DISABILITY



AS A GROUP AGES, THERE IS A SHIFT IN THE PREVALENCE AND SEVERITY OF LIMITATIONS

DISABILITY IN OUR OWN COMMUNITIES

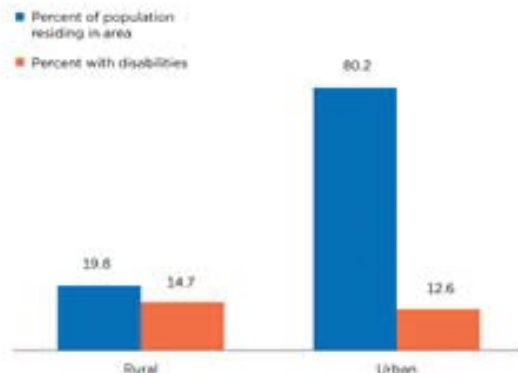
The American Communities Survey of 2021 reported the following...

Rural residents — less than 20% of the U.S. population — were more likely (14.7%) than their urban counterparts to experience disability.

The ACS considers people to have a disability if they have difficulty with one or more of the following:

- Seeing.
- Hearing.
- Concentrating or remembering (ages 5 and above).
- Walking or climbing stairs (ages 5 and above).
- Dressing or bathing (ages 5 and above).
- Doing errands alone such as buying groceries or going to the doctor (ages 15 and above).

Figure 1.
Share of Total Population and Population With a Disability in U.S. Rural and Urban Areas: 2021



Note: Includes civilian noninstitutionalized population. For more information, visit www.census.gov/acs.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates
www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs.

Experts say this could be attributed to an array of factors, but the overall favorite explanations are:

We are a “self selecting” population.

*Suburban and rural places do not cause disability by birth or life event, rather people *with* disabilities elect to relocate for the perceived slower pace of life.*

OR



You become fully disabled when you come up against an obstacle that you cannot surmount. Being in a wheelchair is not limiting until you are in a place where there are no curb cuts, ramps, or elevators.

Suburban and rural areas simply do not have the budgets or man power to bring about every change in the ADA handbook to meet the needs of every person in their community all at once.

So how do we, as “Small Town New Hampshire” start retro-fitting our communities to meet the needs of our residents? (As of yesterday)





UNIVERSAL DESIGN

...as a process, not a product.

THE PRACTICE IS SIMPLE...

FORM A DIVERSE COMMITTEE
OF STAKEHOLDERS- INCLUDE
RESIDENTS AND MAKE SURE
THAT THE PEOPLE WHO WOULD
BE IMPACTED THE MOST ARE
CONSULTED...

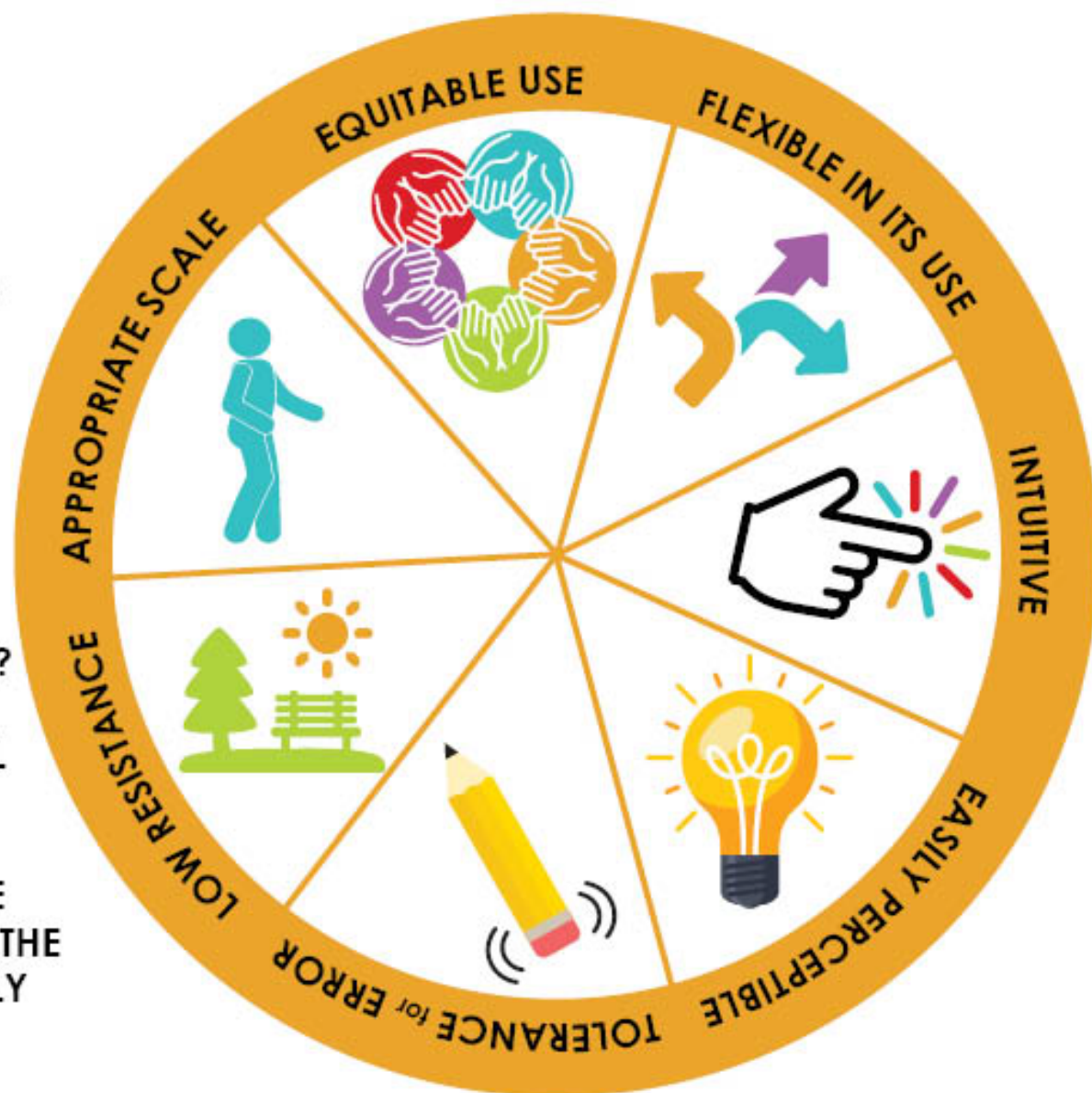
HOLD FAST TO THE MOTTO

Nothing about us without us.

TRULY LOOK AT YOUR DATA-
WHO IS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

TAKE STOCK OF YOUR CAPITAL
ASSETS

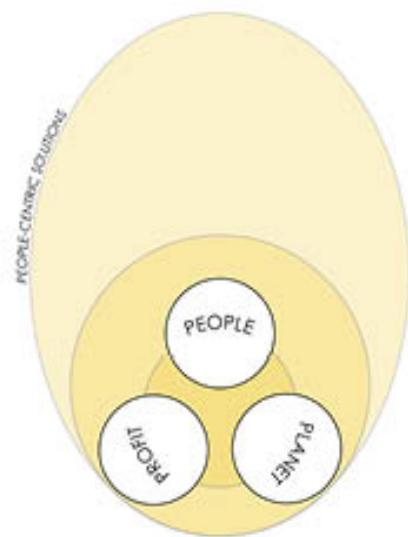
MAKE A PLAN. START WITH THE
CHANGES THAT WOULD HAVE THE
GREATEST IMPACT IMMEDIATELY
AND WORK FROM THERE.





KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

A MILLION SHINING POINTS OF DATA TO LEAD THE WAY...



ANALYSIS

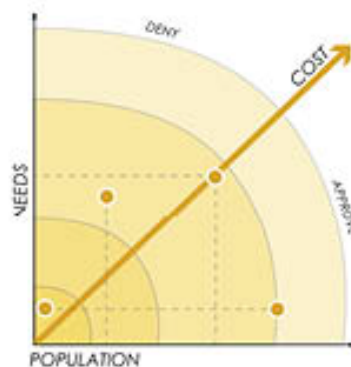
WHO IS HERE?

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR
POPULATION IS USING THE PARK?

WHY DO USERS USE IT?

WHY DO NON-USERS NOT USE IT?

WHAT DO THEY LOVE AND WHAT WOULD
THEY CHANGE?



SURVEY, DESIGN, REPEAT

(Surveys should be conducted in multiple avenues)

VENUE-SPECIFIC OUTREACH

- At town-wide events
- At the parks in question at peak-use hours and low-use hours
- Via a link on the Town's website

TARGETED OUTREACH

- Active community groups
- Senior citizens (COA, Seniors Center Events)
- Parent Groups
- Scouts
- Parks and Recreation

BROAD RANGE OUTREACH

- Specialty Coalitions and Advocacy Groups (MDA)
- Regional Publications or Newspapers
- Associations or Clubs
- VFW & Ladies' Auxiliary
- American Foreign Legion
- Scouting
- Meals on Wheels
- Religious and Charity groups



ANALYZE THE SITE

THE HARNIK ANALYSIS*

CLEAR PURPOSE STATEMENT	ONGOING PLANNING & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	SUFFICIENT ASSETS	EQUITABLE ACCESS	USER SATISFACTION	SAFETY FROM PHYSICAL HAZARDS & CRIME	BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY
DOES THIS PARK HAVE A COMMUNITY SOURCED, CLEAR AND CONCISE MISSION STATEMENT?	DOES THE COMMUNITY TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THIS PARK? WHAT IS THE RELATIVE LEVEL OF STEWARDSHIP IN THIS PARTICULAR PARK?	WHAT DOES THE PARK HAVE FOR CAPITAL ASSETS? ARE THE ASSETS SUFFICIENT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PARK? WHAT IS THE PROGRAMMING OF THE SITE? IS PROGRAMMING ADEQUATE FOR THE COMMUNITY?	WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO USING THIS PARK? DO THE BARRIERS AFFECT ONE GROUP MORE THAN OTHERS? WHAT COMPLIMENTS OR COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY?	IS THERE A MECHANISM FOR COLLECTING FEEDBACK? WHAT HAS THE FEEDBACK BEEN? IS THERE A PLAN TO ADDRESS THE FEEDBACK	WHAT IS THE RISK OF FLOODING? WHAT IS THE RISK OF WIND-DRIVEN STORM DAMAGE? WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR SHUTTING THE PARK DOWN IN DANGEROUS WEATHER? WHAT IS THE BREAK- IN RATE?	WHAT DOES THIS PARK BRING TO THE TABLE THAT OTHER PARKS DO NOT? IS IT UNIQUE? WHAT ARE THE REPORTED PHYSICAL SOCIAL MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS?

PHYSICAL SITE ANALYSIS

CONTEXT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

INVENTORY

CAPITAL ASSETS

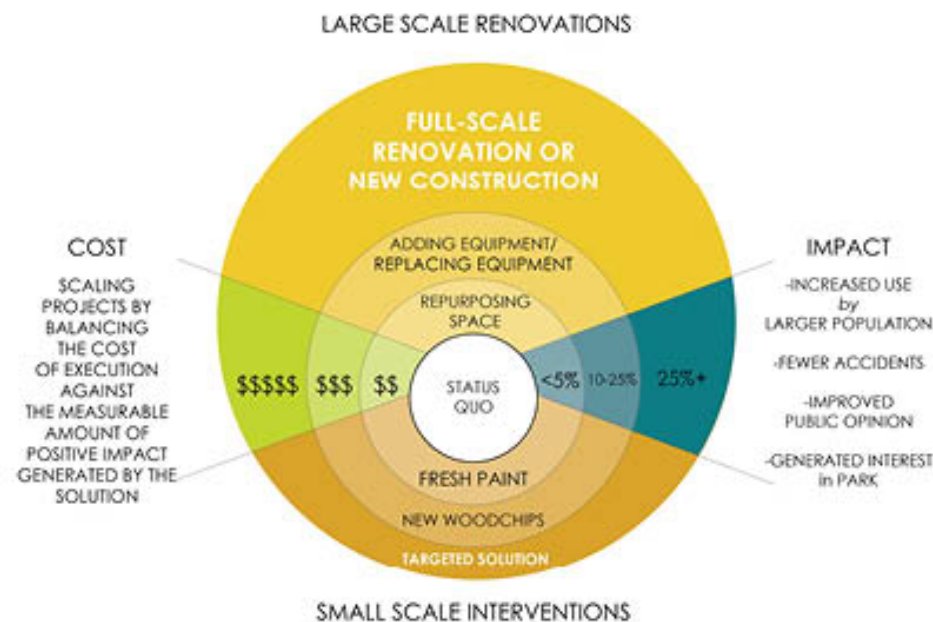
PROGRAMMING

MAINTENANCE

FUNDING



SCALING THE TENETS OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN TO THE SCALE OF *SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE....*



REMEMBER...

NO ONE IS EXPECTING PERFECTION STRAIGHT OUT OF THE GATE.
ABOVE ALL ELSE, UNIVERSAL DESIGN IS A PROCESS.

IF NO ONE IS COMING TO SAVE YOU, THEN NO ONE IS GOING TO STOP YOU, EITHER.

IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE
PERFECT
TO BE
EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEED.







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