



Supporting York County's Outdoor Recreation Ecosystem



York County, Pennsylvania, has an abundance of quality of place assets that contribute to its vibrancy and unique character. With large swaths of rural landscape and access to the Susquehanna River, the county boasts nearly 250 public recreational areas, including: county, state, and municipal parks; state game lands; trails, fish and boating property; and conservation land.

Bolstering support for York County’s outdoor recreation ecosystem builds from the directives of the York County Economic Action Plan, which was published in 2020 and cites a clear desire by the community to enhance and elevate the amenities that make York County a great place to live, work, and play. For more information, please see the companion full-report, “Supporting York County’s Arts, Culture, and Outdoor Recreation Ecosystem,” which combined data mapping and analysis as well as one-on-one interviews and surveys, to help guide York County stakeholders toward strategies to support these essential assets.

YORK COUNTY’S OUTDOOR RECREATION ASSETS

In the spring of 2022, the York County Economic Alliance and Cultural Alliance of York County distributed a survey to outdoor recreation and cultural entities throughout the county, to have them self report their organization name, contact information, website, location, geography served, service category, beneficiaries, audience reach, staff levels, budget levels, funding sources, and more. **80 organizations in total responded to the survey, 22 of which were primarily categorized as “outdoor.”**

Though most fit neatly into either overarching category – arts/culture or outdoor/recreation – many organizations serve a dual purpose, with service offerings blending beyond set boundaries. In some instances, arts organizations make use of outdoor recreation spaces like parks, public squares, or markets to display and perform, while some outdoor recreation assets highlight the region’s deep history and rich culture for their guests to experience.

For example, the Susquehanna National Heritage Area features trails, water access, and historic sites to preserve, interpret, and promote the abundant cultural and natural resources of the lower Susquehanna River region. **These instances show the interconnectedness of the outdoor recreation and arts and culture sectors in creating a robust place-based experience for those in York County.**

While 80 outdoor and cultural organizations completed the survey, nearly 200 more were identified through stakeholder groups and included on the map; desktop research enabled categorization and supplied basic information like website and organizational structure. Many of these identified organizations are outdoor recreation entities, which unlike arts and culture amenities, do not have a singular “owner” to fill out the survey, but rather are managed by an overarching entity, like County Parks. **Through this process, a total of 59 outdoor recreation assets were identified.**

The survey results and additional organizations were transposed onto an [ecosystem map](#), which displays each organization, as well as its relationship to other entities in the county. This map highlights the connectivity of the many quality of place assets and amenities of York County. It also provides the public a view of the many quality of place assets available in the county, as well as contact information and websites for people to plan their visit or learn more.

Total Survey Responses

80
22 Outdoor

Responses included at least one of each outdoor recreation feature or subcategory of offerings:



- historic sites or buildings
- heritage sites
- hiking or walking
- bicycling
- camping
- fishing
- hunting
- motor sports
- snow sports
- trail sports
- water sports
- wildlife viewing
- parks
- trails
- gardens
- nature preserves
- marinas
- game lands
- agritourism
- farmers markets
- outfitters
- plant nursery or landscaping
- trail-oriented hospitality
- amateur sports league or playing facilities

Of the 22 Outdoor Recreation Assets surveyed:

Location

(4) are located in Hellam Township; the City of York, East Manchester Township, Hanover Borough, and Railroad Borough each contain (2) assets; and (1) each are located in Hanover Borough, Franklintown Borough, Hellam Township, Jackson Township, Lower Windsor Township, Manchester Township, New Freedom Borough, and Peach Bottom Township, and Dover Township

Service Area

(15) respondents serve a local borough, municipality, or neighborhood; (14) serve York County; (9) serve the South Central PA region; Only (3) respondents each reported a statewide or national reach

Minority Ownership

(5) organizations surveyed are minority-owned or managed

Employment

The height of the pandemic in 2020 saw a [20% increase in outdoor recreation across the United States](#), according to a recent study by Penn State's Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management. Given the landscape of York County and abundance of outdoor assets, it is safe to assume that outdoor recreation increased locally during the pandemic period, which would account for steady or slightly increased employment levels.

Most organizations surveyed maintained full-time staffing levels during the pandemic, and several appear to have added employees gradually through 2020, 2021, and 2022.



Part time/ seasonal/ temporary employees:

The hiring of part time/seasonal/temporary employees **has increased** following the pandemic:

- 10 used part time, temporary, or seasonal employees prior to the pandemic (2019).
- 12 currently use/anticipate utilizing part time, temporary, or seasonal employees in 2022



Volunteers

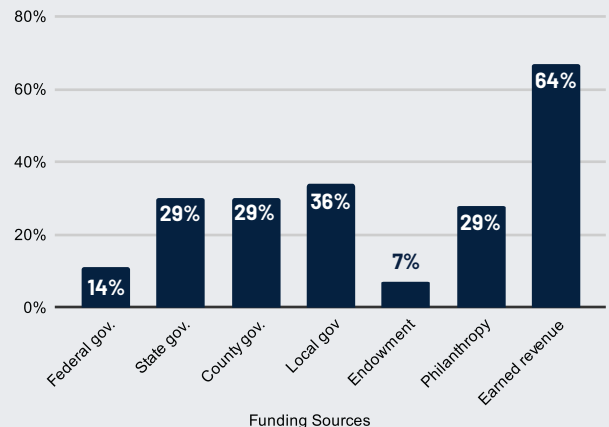
Volunteering decreased during the pandemic, likely in part to protect public health and safety. However, **volunteerism rebounded in 2022**, to pre-pandemic levels.

- 9 used volunteers prior to the pandemic (2019), which decreased to 5 during the pandemic (2020 and 2021)
- 9 use/anticipate utilizing volunteers in 2022

Budgets & Funding Sources

Most organizations surveyed operate on a budget of under \$500,000

The organizations surveyed rely on a variety of funding sources, with the **majority bringing in some form of earned revenue**, indicating a level of self-sustainability and ability to augment grant and governmental funding.





York County Economic Alliance

The York County Economic Alliance (YCEA) is a 501(c)6 organization founded in 2012 through an affiliation between York County's chamber and economic development organizations.

YCEA is the county's primary business resource for facilitating expansion, funding, redevelopment, networking, business-to-business promotion, advocacy and workforce development among many other services.

yceapa.org

