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MADE X MTNS Announces \$125,000 Investment in Equity in the Outdoors

Outdoor Equity Fund empowers community-led initiatives that address identified barriers to outdoor recreation access and opportunity.

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA (March 27, 2023) – MADE X MTNS has established a \$125,000 [Outdoor Equity Fund](#) to help empower community-led initiatives that address identified barriers to outdoor recreation access and opportunity, and help close these gaps in Western North Carolina.

The Fund will help ensure that these populations – including BIPOC, Latine/x, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ populations – have the tools and connectivity to benefit from the outdoor economy by providing micro-grants via an equitable process. Fund guidelines and all applications will be overseen and scored by a locally-formed Outdoor Equity Working Group, led by professional Facilitator, Iliana Hernandez, with operational assistance from MADE X MTNS Partnership staff.

“There is no doubt that Western North Carolina's beautiful outdoors attract folks from all around. Yet, there are people who have been systemically marginalized and have not been able to take advantage of the local environment or the outdoor economy.” says Working Group Facilitator, Iliana Hernandez.

“This Fund is a step in the right direction, and with equity at its forefront, we hope to distribute resources to people who are likely already doing the work and/or deserve the opportunity to explore how they can benefit from the outdoor economy, especially when it can honor their community's connections to nature,” Hernandez adds.

The Application period for the Outdoor Equity Fund will be open April 17th through May 17th, 2023. Funds will be awarded in June and July, 2023. A recorded information session will be hosted the week of the Fund launch. An [information packet](#) provides details regarding eligibility and vital information.

A [2018 U.S. Forest Service visitor use survey](#) showed that of the nearly 6 million visitors to the national forests in NC, including Pisgah and Nantahala, 96% were white, 4.7% Hispanic, 1.5% Black/African American, 1.4% Asian and .8% were American Indian/Alaskan. A [2022 Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Participation Trends Report](#) concluded that if the outdoor participant base does not become more diverse over the next thirty years, the percentage of outdoor recreation participants in the population could slip from 54% today to under 40% by 2060.

“We want all populations to enjoy Western North Carolina's natural assets and feel welcomed across the region. The future of the outdoor recreation industry and the health of our public lands relies on inviting and engaging new and returning allies into the outdoor community,” says MADE X MTNS Director, Amy Allison.

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About WNC: MADE X MTNS Partnership

The WNC: MADE X MTNS (Made By Mountains) Partnership is working to expand the outdoor industry and economy across North Carolina's Appalachian region and catalyze rural development by building vibrant outdoor communities, growing outdoor businesses, and amplifying outdoor culture. For more information, visit madexmtns.com or [@madexmtns](https://twitter.com/madexmtns)