

Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival

Julie Boisseau-Craig

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Name of Initiative	Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival
Contact Person	Julie Boisseau-Craig
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Organization Type	Government
Organization Tax ID	566000310
Time of Year of Initiative	Off Peak (Dec - March) preferred

Describe the timing of the initiative in as much detail as possible (please list key project dates, milestones, timeframes, etc.)

Planning for the 2027 Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival has already begun following the successful inaugural festival in March 2026, with the goal of expanding the 2027 festival into a two-day tourism event. Extending the festival from one day to two days will provide visitors with more opportunities to experience the event while encouraging guests to spend additional time in Dillsboro and throughout Jackson County.

April–May 2026 – Evaluation and Expansion Planning
Following the 2026 festival, the Dillsboro Creative Arts Center have evaluated attendance, visitor response, artist participation, programming, and operational needs. This evaluation will guide planning for the 2027 festival, with a primary goal of expanding the event to two days and increasing its appeal as a regional tourism destination.

June–August 2026 – Artist Recruitment and Two-Day Program Development

The project team will recruit regional and visiting glass artists, demonstrators, vendors, food providers, and community partners. Programming will be developed specifically to support a two-day event, allowing for expanded glassblowing and lampworking demonstrations, hands-on activities, artist sales, educational opportunities, and other experiences. Additional programming will encourage visitors to attend both days rather than treating the festival as a single-day visit.

September–November 2026 – Tourism Partnerships and Event Development

Festival logistics, participating artists, vendors, demonstrations, and activities will be finalized. Outreach will be made to Jackson County lodging establishments, restaurants, retailers, tourism organizations, chambers of commerce, galleries, and other local businesses. The goal will be to create partnerships that encourage visitors to make the festival part of a weekend getaway and increase visitor spending throughout the community.

December 2026–January 2027 – Regional Tourism Marketing Launch

A comprehensive marketing campaign will begin approximately three months before the festival. Promotion will include social media, digital advertising, press releases, regional media outreach, tourism calendars, printed materials, email marketing, and partnerships with tourism-related businesses. Marketing will specifically promote the festival as a **two-day experience in the mountains of Jackson County**, encouraging visitors to stay overnight and explore the surrounding communities.

February 2027 – Intensive Promotion and Final Preparations

Advertising and public relations efforts will increase four to six weeks before the event. Final artist and vendor confirmations, schedules, signage, visitor information, parking plans, and event logistics will be completed. Promotional efforts will focus on reaching visitors within driving distance as well as travelers planning spring trips to Western North Carolina.

March 2027 – Two-Day Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival

The Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival will take place over two days in March 2027 at the Jackson County Green Energy Park/Dillsboro Creative Arts Center. Visitors will experience live glassblowing and lampworking demonstrations, meet and purchase work from glass artists, participate in hands-on creative activities, and learn about the unique connection between art, sustainability, and Jackson County's Green Energy Park.

Expanding the festival to two days is a key component of the tourism initiative. A longer event creates a stronger reason for visitors to travel to Jackson County, stay overnight, dine locally, shop in area businesses, and explore other attractions throughout the county. The festival will be promoted as a weekend destination experience rather than simply a single-day arts event.

April 2027 – Evaluation and Tourism Impact Reporting

Following the festival, the Creative Arts Center will collect attendance information, visitor feedback, artist and vendor participation, marketing results, and other available tourism indicators. The project team will evaluate the success of the two-day format and document its impact on visitation and the local tourism economy. This information will be used to refine and grow the festival in future years.

****Overall Project Period:** April 2026–April 2027**

****Festival:** March 2027**

****Primary Expansion Goal:** Develop the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival into a two-day annual tourism attraction.**

Tourism Goal: Encourage longer visitor stays and increased spending at Jackson County lodging, restaurants, retail businesses, galleries, and other tourism-related businesses.

Describe your initiative

Project Timeline and Key Milestones

Planning for the 2027 Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival will build upon the successful inaugural festival held in 2026. The goal for 2027 is to expand

the festival into a two-day destination event, scheduled for March 19-20, 2027. The additional day will provide more opportunities for visitors to experience the festival while encouraging overnight stays and increased spending at lodging, restaurants, shops, galleries, and other tourism-related businesses throughout Jackson County.

April–May 2026 – Evaluation and Initial Planning

Following the 2026 festival, the Dillsboro Creative Arts Center will evaluate attendance, visitor response, artist participation, programming, and operational needs. This information will guide the development of the 2027 festival, with the primary goal of expanding from a one-day event to a two-day festival.

June–August 2026 – Artist Recruitment and Program Development

Regional and visiting glass artists, demonstrators, vendors, food providers, and community partners will be recruited. Programming will be developed to take advantage of the two-day format, including live glassblowing and lampworking demonstrations, hands-on activities, artist sales, educational opportunities, and additional experiences for visitors.

September–November 2026 – Tourism Partnerships and Event Development

The festival schedule, participating artists, vendors, demonstrations, activities, and logistics will be finalized. Outreach will be made to Jackson County lodging establishments, restaurants, retailers, galleries, tourism organizations, chambers of commerce, and other community partners. These partnerships will help promote the festival as a weekend destination and encourage visitors to extend their stay in Jackson County.

December 2026–January 2027 – Tourism Marketing Launch

A regional tourism marketing campaign will begin approximately three months before the festival. Promotion will include social media, digital advertising, press releases, regional media outreach, tourism calendars, printed materials, email marketing, and cross-promotion with tourism and hospitality partners. Marketing will emphasize the opportunity to experience a unique two-day glass arts festival in the mountains of Jackson County.

February 2027 – Intensive Promotion and Final Preparations

Advertising and public relations efforts will increase approximately four to six weeks before the festival. Final artist and vendor confirmations, schedules, signage, visitor information, parking plans, and event logistics will be completed. Outreach will focus on attracting visitors from surrounding communities and regional drive markets who can combine the festival with a weekend visit to Jackson County.

March 19-20, 2027 – Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival

The expanded two-day Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival will take place March 19-20, 2027, at the Jackson County Green Energy Park/Dillsboro Creative Arts Center. Visitors will have the opportunity to experience live glassblowing and lampworking demonstrations, meet regional and visiting artists, purchase handmade glass artwork, participate in hands-on creative activities, and learn about the unique connection between art, sustainability, and Jackson County's Green Energy Park.

The two-day format is intended to transform the festival from a single-day attraction into a weekend tourism experience, giving visitors a greater incentive to travel to Jackson County, stay overnight, dine locally, shop, and explore other attractions in the region.

April 2027 – Evaluation and Tourism Impact Reporting

Following the festival, the project team will evaluate attendance, visitor feedback, artist and vendor participation, marketing reach, and other available tourism indicators. The results will be used to measure the success of the two-day format and identify opportunities for continued growth of the festival as an annual Jackson County tourism attraction.

Overall Project Period: April 2026–April 2027

Describe what previous experience applicant has in successful execution of similar endeavors

Target Festival Dates ; March 19-20, 2027

Primary Milestone: Expansion from a one-day festival to a two-day destination event

Primary Tourism Objective: Increase visitation, encourage overnight stays, and generate increased visitor spending throughout Jackson County.

The Dillsboro Creative Arts Center (DCAC), located within the Jackson County Green Energy Park, has extensive experience developing and presenting public arts programming, educational workshops, artist demonstrations, and community events. The Center has operated as a regional creative arts destination for more than 15 years, with a particular history of glassblowing and blacksmithing programming powered by the Park's innovative use of recovered landfill methane.

In March 2026, DCAC successfully presented the inaugural Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival, establishing the foundation for the proposed 2027 event. The festival brought together glass artists, demonstrations, hands-on activities, and opportunities for the public to engage directly with the glass arts. The experience provided the Center with valuable knowledge regarding event logistics, artist coordination, visitor engagement, promotion, scheduling, and community partnerships.

The Center also has extensive experience offering glassblowing and lampworking classes, demonstrations, and hands-on arts experiences to visitors, students, and regional residents. These programs require careful coordination of artists and instructors, specialized equipment, visitor safety, scheduling, registration, and public engagement. This existing infrastructure and experience provide a strong foundation for successfully expanding the Glass Arts Festival into a two-day tourism event.

Under the current leadership of Project Manager Julie Boisseau-Craig, the Center benefits from more than 48 years of professional experience as a working artist and arts educator. Julie has taught at Western Carolina University, Southwestern Community College, and the Oconaluftee Institute for Cultural Arts and has extensive experience presenting workshops, demonstrations, exhibitions, and community-based arts programming.

The 2027 festival will build directly upon the experience and success of the 2026 inaugural event. The proposed expansion to a two-day format will allow DCAC to increase programming, attract additional artists and visitors, strengthen partnerships with local tourism businesses, and establish the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival as a recurring annual destination event for Jackson County.

Website

www.jcgep.org

Social Media Channels - paste URLs below

[www.Facebook.com/DillsboroGlassArtsFestival](https://www.facebook.com/DillsboroGlassArtsFestival),
www.instagram.com/DillsboroGlassArtFestival

Amount of Funds Requested?

\$3500

Date Funds Needed

Jan 1, 2027

Give a narrative description of how this project will increase tourism and visitation in Jackson County

The expansion of the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival into a two-day event will create a new reason for visitors to travel to Jackson County during the early spring tourism season. Rather than functioning as a one-day local arts event, the 2027 festival is being developed as a weekend destination experience that encourages visitors to spend two days in Dillsboro and explore other attractions throughout Jackson County.

The festival offers an experience that is distinctive to the region. Visitors will have the opportunity to watch live glassblowing and lampworking demonstrations, meet regional and visiting artists, purchase handmade artwork, participate in hands-on creative activities, and learn how the Jackson County Green Energy Park uses recovered landfill methane to power its glass and metal studios. This combination of art, sustainability, education, and Appalachian creativity provides an experience that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere and gives travelers a compelling reason to include Jackson County in their travel plans.

Expanding the festival to two days is expected to increase both the number of visitors and the amount of time they spend in the county. A weekend format provides a stronger incentive for travelers from surrounding metropolitan areas and neighboring states to stay overnight rather than making a brief day trip. Those visitors are likely to use local hotels, cabins, and campgrounds; dine in area restaurants; shop in Dillsboro's galleries, boutiques, and retail businesses; and visit other Jackson County attractions before or after the festival.

The project will also strengthen collaboration among local tourism partners. The Dillsboro Creative Arts Center will work with lodging providers, restaurants, retailers, galleries, tourism organizations, and community partners to promote the festival as part of a broader Jackson County getaway. By encouraging cross-promotion among businesses and attractions, the event will help distribute visitor spending throughout the local tourism economy rather than limiting its impact to the festival site.

The festival is scheduled for March, a period that falls outside the county's busiest summer and fall tourism seasons. Establishing a recurring arts festival during this shoulder season will help attract visitors at a time when additional tourism activity can provide meaningful economic benefit to local businesses. Over time, the goal is to build recognition for the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival as an annual event that visitors plan trips around, creating repeat visitation and strengthening Jackson County's reputation as a destination for arts, culture, craftsmanship, and sustainable creativity.

By transforming the inaugural one-day festival into a two-day destination event, the project is expected to increase regional awareness of Dillsboro and Jackson County, attract new visitors, encourage longer stays, and generate additional spending with local tourism-related businesses. The long-term objective is to establish the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival as a signature annual tourism event that contributes to the economic vitality of the county while showcasing one of its most unique cultural and environmental assets.

If this initiative has occurred before, what is new that differentiates it from prior years?

The 2027 Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival will build upon the successful inaugural festival held in 2026, but will represent a significant expansion of the event in both size and tourism focus. The most important change will be the expansion from a one-day festival to a two-day destination event, planned for March 26–27, 2027.

The additional day will allow the festival to offer more glass artists, demonstrations, hands-on experiences, educational programming, artist sales, and opportunities for visitors to engage with the creative process. More importantly, the two-day format is intended to encourage visitors from outside Jackson County to make the festival part of a weekend trip rather than a single-day excursion. This creates greater potential for overnight lodging, restaurant visits, shopping, and participation in other Jackson County attractions and activities.

The 2027 festival will also place a stronger emphasis on **regional tourism marketing and partnerships**. DCAC plans to work more closely with lodging providers, restaurants, retailers, galleries, tourism organizations, and other local businesses to promote the festival as a Jackson County weekend experience. Marketing will extend beyond the immediate local community to surrounding regional markets with the goal of attracting new visitors to the county.

Programming will also be expanded to showcase the unique story of the Jackson County Green Energy Park. Visitors will not only experience exceptional glass arts but will learn about the Park's innovative use of recovered landfill methane to power its glass and metal studios. This combination of glass art, Appalachian creativity, environmental stewardship, and sustainable energy gives the festival a distinctive identity and creates an experience that is unique to Jackson County.

Finally, the 2027 festival represents the beginning of a long-term effort to establish the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival as an **annual signature tourism event**. The first festival demonstrated community and visitor interest; the 2027 expansion will build on that foundation by increasing the duration, programming, tourism outreach, and economic impact of the event. The goal is not simply to repeat the 2026 festival, but to grow it into a recurring destination event that attracts new visitors and generates measurable benefits for Jackson County's tourism economy.

What is your advertising and marketing plan for your initiative?

The marketing strategy for the 2027 Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival will focus on positioning the event as a unique two-day destination experience in Jackson County, rather than simply a local arts festival. The campaign will target visitors within driving distance of Western North Carolina, neighboring states, and regional tourism markets, with the goal of attracting new visitors and encouraging overnight stays.

Marketing will begin approximately three months before the festival and increase in frequency as March 26–27, 2027 approaches. The campaign will utilize a combination of digital, print, public relations, tourism partnerships, and direct community outreach.

Digital and Social Media Marketing:

DCAC will use its existing social media platforms and website to build awareness and excitement for the festival. Content will include artist announcements, behind-the-scenes preparation, glassblowing demonstrations, photographs and videos, festival activities, schedules, and information about visiting Dillsboro and Jackson County. Paid social media advertising will be used to reach audiences outside Jackson County, particularly in regional drive markets.

Tourism and Regional Promotion:

The festival will be submitted to regional and statewide tourism calendars and promoted through appropriate tourism organizations, chambers of commerce, visitor information resources, and community partners. Marketing materials will emphasize the two-day format and encourage visitors to make the festival part of a weekend getaway.

Hospitality and Business Partnerships:

The Creative Arts Center will work with local hotels, cabins, campgrounds, restaurants, galleries, retailers, and other tourism-related businesses to distribute promotional materials and cross-promote the event. Partners will be encouraged to promote the festival to their guests and customers, helping extend the festival's reach beyond the arts community.

Print Advertising and Promotional Materials:

Printed posters, rack cards, flyers, and other promotional materials will be distributed throughout Jackson County and in surrounding communities and regional tourism locations. Placement will focus on areas where potential visitors are likely to encounter information while planning or participating in a Western North Carolina trip.

Public Relations and Media Outreach:

Press releases and media information will be distributed to regional newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television outlets, online publications, arts publications, and tourism-focused media. Special attention will be given to the festival's unique story: live glass arts powered by recovered landfill methane at the Jackson County Green Energy Park. Artist stories and festival activities will provide opportunities for feature coverage and editorial interest.

Email and Direct Outreach:

DCAC will use email communications and existing community and arts networks to reach previous visitors, students, artists, supporters, and regional audiences. Information will include festival dates, participating artists, activities, travel information, and links to local tourism resources.

On-Site and Cross-Promotion:

As the festival becomes an annual event, promotional materials will be distributed at DCAC programs, workshops, community events, and other appropriate arts and tourism activities throughout the year. The goal is to build recognition of the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival well beyond the immediate event period.

Marketing results will be evaluated through available measures such as social media reach and engagement, website traffic, media coverage, event attendance, visitor feedback, and participation from businesses and tourism partners. These results will help DCAC refine future campaigns and continue building the festival's reputation as an annual Jackson County tourism attraction.

The overall marketing goal is to bring new visitors to Jackson County, encourage them to stay longer, and introduce them to the many other experiences available throughout the county while establishing the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival as a distinctive annual destination event.

Do you agree to acknowledge the 'Jackson County TDA' in materials as required? Any releases or ad placements should have a statement that "the event was made possible, in part, by the Jackson County TDA." Print ad placements, where/when possible should include the JCTDA logo.

Yes

Total anticipated cost of initiative 24,050

Total funds your organization will provide toward total cost? 9350.00

Detail funds requested from other sources and note commitments or anticipated receipt of funds from other sources

NC Arts Grassroots Grant will be a funding partner.

Please upload your detailed budget, including event or initiative expenses and revenue. You can attach a spreadsheet (Excel), PDF, or Word Document.



Dillsboro_Glass_Arts_Festival_2027_Detail... .xlsx

Anticipated Attendees from Jackson County: 2000

Anticipated Attendees from outside Jackson County: 1500

Anticipated overnight stays generated: 150

How did you determine audience/attendance numbers and where do they come from?

This was determined by last years numbers with a 25% increase projected

How will you measure success of your initiative?

We will measure success by artist sales, business reports, parking count and transit counts.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Conclusion

The 2027 Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival represents an opportunity to build on the success of our inaugural event and establish a distinctive new tourism attraction for Jackson County. By expanding the festival to two days, we hope to encourage visitors to travel to the area, stay overnight, explore Dillsboro and surrounding communities, and spend money with local lodging, restaurants, shops, galleries, and other tourism-related businesses.

What makes this festival particularly special is its connection to the Jackson County Green Energy Park. Visitors will experience exceptional glass arts while discovering an innovative story of environmental stewardship—where methane recovered from a closed landfill is captured and used to power glass and metal studios. This combination of **art, Appalachian creativity, sustainability, and tourism** gives the festival a story and experience that is uniquely rooted in Jackson County.

Our goal is to grow the Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival into an annual destination event that attracts visitors from outside the county and eventually from beyond Western North Carolina. Support from Jackson County Tourism will help us expand our programming, reach new audiences through regional marketing, and create a stronger economic impact for the community.

We believe the festival can become an important addition to Jackson County's tourism calendar—one that celebrates creativity, supports local artists and businesses, brings visitors to Dillsboro during the spring shoulder season, and showcases an innovative Jackson County success story to a broader audience.

Signature:

Dillsboro Glass Arts Festival – 2027

Proposed Dates: March 19-20, 2027

Detailed Project Budget – Jackson County Tourism Grant

EXPENSES	Projected Cost	Grant Funds	Other Funds	Notes
Artist / Demonstrator Stipends	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	Regional and visiting glass artists
Advertising – Digital / Social Media	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00	Paid regional advertising
Print Advertising /Billboards/ Posters / Rack Cards	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	\$0.00	Printing and distribution
Graphic Design / Promotional Materials	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00	
Event Permits	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	Town of Dillsboro
Event Supplies / Materials	\$300.00	\$0.00	\$300.00	Hands-on activities and event supplies
Glass / Studio Demonstration Supplies	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	\$1,200.00	
Tent / Canopy / Equipment Rental	\$4,500.00	\$0.00	\$4,500.00	
Signage / Wayfinding	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	
Parking / Shuttle / Transportation Support	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	covered by county
Entertainment / Music	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	
Food / Hospitality	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00	water and ice
Security / Safety / First Aid	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	
Portable Restrooms / Sanitation	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	
Other / Contingency	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$24,050.00	\$3,500.00	\$20,550.00	

PROJECTED REVENUE / FUNDING				
Jackson County Tourism Grant	\$3,500.00	Requested amount		
Sponsorships	\$0.00	Corporate/communi ty sponsorships		
Vendor Fees	\$2,000.00	Artist/vendor participation fees		
Food Vendor Fees	\$500.00	Food truck/vendor fees		
Artist / Exhibition Sales Revenue to Event	\$0.00	If applicable		
Admission / Activity Fees	\$0.00	If applicable		
Donations	\$500.00	If applicable		
DCAC / JCGEP Contribution	\$9,350.00	Cash contribution		
Other Grants / Funding	\$9,350.00			
Other Revenue	\$0.00			
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE	\$25,200.00			