



**2026
INNOVATION
AWARDS**

OVERVIEW

The **Innovation Awards program** promotes and supports a culture of innovation and is intended to recognize the implementation and accomplishments of new approaches, effective solutions, and/or creative and innovative changes made by the employees of Larimer County.

The program is offered annually and employees/supervisors are encouraged to apply for the award or nominate others. The award(s) will be presented to the recipient(s) by the County Commissioners, followed by a press release to recognize the innovative accomplishments. In addition to the public recognition, the employee(s) or team(s) will receive an award of up to \$10,000 paid in the form of Nectar points and/or 457(b) contribution.

The information in this booklet summarizes the activities and benefits of the Innovation Awards Program. The program is entirely voluntary and no employee will be recommended to participate in this program without consent.

If you have questions regarding the Innovation Awards Program, please contact:

- Valerie Douglas, *Senior Administrative Specialist*, vdouglas@larimer.org, (970) 498-5992
- Nick Cole, *Accounting Manager*, ncole@larimer.org, (970) 498-5974

PROGRAM BASICS

WHAT IT IS:

The Larimer County Innovation Awards Program is a deliberately broad program that allows for flexibility in honoring creative methods, ideas, processes, and programs that have been implemented and are beneficial to Larimer County. Innovation is about accomplishing a specific purpose in a new or different way.

It is anticipated that competitive applications for the Larimer County Innovation Awards Program will generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Innovative change that resulted in a distinct and quantifiable benefit
- Compelling story of need or purpose addressed through innovation
- Significant improvement due to a new process or program
- Continuous improvement of an existing process or program

HOW TO APPLY:

- Any employee interested in applying or nominating others will need to complete the Innovation Awards Program [online application](#).
- Applications must be submitted to Human Resources by the application deadline: Thursday, May 14, 2026 at midnight.
- Application Tip: Have someone not familiar with the innovation review the application for clarity and purpose prior to submitting.

REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS:

Applications will be reviewed by Guiding Principles Committee first, and then by the Strategic Leadership Committee based on the following criteria:

- Connection to Larimer County's Guiding Principles.
- Novelty, originality, or uniqueness. Does the innovation represent a fundamental change in direction, policy, program or approach?
- Results, significance, or relevance. The level to which the innovation addresses a need or problem and is beneficial to Larimer County.

The nominees associated with the top applications will then be asked to provide a short presentation outlining their innovation to the Strategic Leadership Committee. Following the presentations, the winner(s) of the Innovation Awards will be selected by this committee.

The winner(s) will be recognized by the Board of County Commissioners during a Department Head meeting, where a professional video of the grand prize innovation will be shown.

REWARD & PAYMENT OPTIONS

If the winning innovation is a team, the award will be divided equally. Winners must be employed at the time of payout or they will forfeit their award.

The awards given to eligible employees can be provided as Nectar points, a 457(b) contribution, or combination thereof. Each employee may elect how to receive the payment. The payment will be distributed on the pay date following the Innovation Award Program presentation.

NECTAR POINTS: Employees who elect to receive the award in Nectar points will have required taxes and other required deductions withheld from their pay once points are redeemed in Nectar.

457(b) CONTRIBUTIONS: Employees may elect to receive the award payment (or a portion thereof) deposited into the County provided 457(b) deferred compensation plan up to the IRS established contribution limits. For more information see the Benefits section of the HR website.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES: All full or part-time regular, limited term, and temporary employees who are in good performance standing. To receive the award, winners must be currently employed by the County when the award is given. Teams are limited to five (5) critical contributors who will receive the monetary award; all others on the team will receive an Honorable Mention certificate.

INELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES: Elected Officials, Chief Deputies, Department Heads, and Service Category Directors.

NOTIFICATIONS & ACCEPTANCE

Once the winner(s) are determined, all employees or teams who applied will be notified. County Commissioners will recognize the winners and their department or office leadership at a Department Head meeting. A professional video highlighting the grand prize winning innovation will be presented at that time. Winners will receive trophies and have photos taken with the Commissioners for the press release.

TIMELINE

4/14 - 5/14/2026	Application Period
6/17/2026	Guiding Principles Committee meet and vote on finalists.
6/19/2026	Finalists are notified and asked to prepare a short presentation for the Strategic Leadership Committee.
7/9/2026	Finalists present their innovation at the Strategic Leadership Committee meeting.
7/16/2026	Innovation Award Winners and Honorable Mentions are notified.
9/11/2026	Innovation Awards winners are recognized by the County Commissioners at Department Head meeting and winning video is shown.

AWARDS CELEBRATION

The ceremony will be held in the Hearing Room at 200 W Oak, on Friday, September 11, 2026, from 8:30-10am. Please invite and encourage coworkers, friends, and family to attend the celebration. Everyone is welcome.