



## 2026 Grant Guidelines & Information

### Larimer County Department of Natural Resources

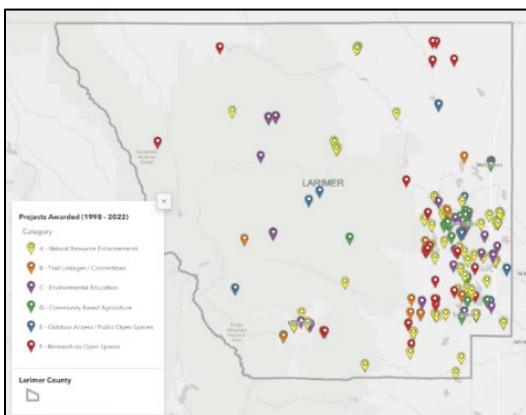
Connecting People, Nature, and Place

Larimer County's Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) conserves and manages important open space, natural areas, and wildlife habitat while providing nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities for the public. This work would not be possible without the citizens of Larimer County who voted overwhelmingly to support a ¼-cent Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax in 1995 (and then again in 1999 and 2014). Since the initial passage of the tax, Larimer County has successfully conserved over 56,000 acres of land throughout the county.

For 27 years, Larimer County has awarded a portion of the open space sales tax directly back to the community through the **Small Grants for Community Partnering Program**. Grant funds from this program are available to non-profits, community organizations, homeowner associations, and K-12 schools for nature-based neighborhood and community outdoor projects taking place in Larimer County.

Since its inception, the program has awarded over \$445,000 across 246 neighborhood and community projects throughout Larimer County.

LCDNR's mission is to **Connect People, Nature, and Place**. The program seeks projects that align with the department's mission, meet key community needs, and inspire stewardship of the natural world.



LCDNR invites new and returning applicants to apply for **seed money or capacity-building support** to protect and enhance outdoor natural areas or community gathering spaces, provide environmental education opportunities, increase access to nature, conduct research on county open spaces, and so much more! To view the map showing all of the projects awarded by the program, click [here](#).

This document will guide you through the program requirements. Review the information carefully and feel free to email Jenn Almstead, Program Coordinator, at [jalmstead@larimer.org](mailto:jalmstead@larimer.org) to set up a time to discuss your project further!

## GRANT PROGRAM CATEGORIES

Proposed projects must take place within Larimer County (unincorporated or city/town limits). Projects must fall into at least **one of the five** Small Grants for Community Partnering Program grant categories provided below.

1. **Provides or enhances natural landscapes**, including wildlife habitat, rivers, wetlands, outdoor community gathering spaces, neighborhood parks, greenbelts, lakes/ponds, etc.
  - a. Projects that include planting or habitat improvements must include a landscape design plan with native (and non-invasive), drought-resistant plant species list appropriate for the selected environment.
  - b. Projects proposing a new structure, rehabilitation, or change of use of an existing structure are required to provide a written response by the application deadline noting this would be allowable from the Larimer County Community Planning Department at (970) 498-7679
2. **Provides nature-based environmental education** opportunities, including outdoor education signs and materials, outdoor classrooms, workshops, trainings, etc.
  - a. Applicants are required to provide the environmental education resources that will be used to develop the materials for the project. Environmental education materials must be based upon established principles and proven practices in the outdoor field.
3. **Provides opportunities for people to connect with the land via providing access to nature for those experiencing barriers**, including those with limited transit options, financial obstacles, etc.
  - a. Project opportunities in this category must focus on nature-based education, health and wellness or recreation related to the outdoors.
4. **Provides opportunities for people to connect with the land via local agricultural food production**, including projects that include practices around improving soil, water, habitat, or community connection to agriculture.
  - a. The community garden or CSA must have local distribution in Larimer County.
  - b. Projects proposing a new structure, rehabilitation, or change of use of an existing structure need to provide written response by the application deadline noting this would be allowable from the Larimer County Community Planning Department at (970) 498-7679.
5. **Research on Larimer County open spaces, which will provide new information on the ecology, history, visitation, and/or human dimensions of Larimer County open spaces.** Projects should encourage intellectual curiosity about our natural world and/or how people connect to it. All proposed research projects must be discussed with the Small Grants Program Coordinator and approved prior to applying.

- a. Funding for research may not be used for college or university overhead or administrative costs. No exceptions.

## GRANT GUIDELINES

**APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY:** The grant program is open to anyone to apply, with a few exceptions and parameters.

1. Government agencies already receiving the Help Preserve Open Space tax dollars may not apply directly.
2. For projects taking place on public lands, the applicant must be a 501c3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization as identified by the IRS.
3. All affected landowners must **agree in writing** to the proposed project.
  - a. Homeowners and Property Owners associations must submit a copy of the board meeting minutes approving the proposed project.
  - b. K-12 Public Schools must provide a letter from the appropriate facilities director agreeing to the specific project.
  - c. Applicants leasing property from a private property owner must submit a letter from the owner agreeing to the proposed project and include the signed lease agreement by all parties.
  - d. Projects proposed on public lands must include a letter or permit from the land management agency agreeing to the proposed project.

**PROJECT ELIGIBILITY:** All projects must align with LCDNR's mission: Connect People, Nature and Place with a community-centered focus, which is inclusive and collaborative. Grant funds are intended solely for new projects or an expansion to an existing project or program and no general operating requests will be considered. The program will not fund projects that have already begun or are already completed. Projects may be declined by Larimer County for any reason.

**PROJECT LOCATION:** All proposed projects must take place within Larimer County (unincorporated or city/town limits). Grant dollars can only be distributed in Larimer County.

**PROJECT TIMELINE:** All awarded projects must be completed by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026. Applicants are responsible for obtaining all required permits and necessary approvals for the project.

**GRANT AMOUNT:** Applicants may request up to **\$4,000** and are limited to one application per grant cycle. Applicants who have received three years of consecutive funding are not eligible to apply for one grant cycle.

**MATCH REQUIREMENT:** Applicants must demonstrate at least a **50% cash and/or in-kind match of the grant request**. For example, a grant request of \$4,000 would need to provide a minimum of \$2,000 cash and/or in-kind match. The match can come from donated in-kind services, volunteer hours, private dollars and/or other funding sources (e.g. other grants).

1. Cash Match: is the direct project expense your organization (or another funding source) is contributing toward the project or program.
2. In-Kind Match: is the donation of products, materials or services provided by a third party, staff-time provided by your organization<sup>1</sup>, and volunteer service hours. Rates for employee time should be in keeping with their hourly wage. Volunteer rates are provided by the [Independent Sector](#) and for 2024 in Colorado is listed at \$38.74 per hour.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff time for the project can be used as in-kind match.

## GRANT APPLICATION

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** Applications are due no later than **11:59 p.m. on Friday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**. We strongly encourage applicants to reach out to the Program Coordinator to discuss their project early on in the process. Grant awards will be announced in early February 2026. Successful applicants will have until the end of 2026 to complete the proposed project and submit final documentation by mid-January 2027.

**To apply, complete and submit an online application by the stated deadline at:**

<https://forms.gle/DJAgEftvkehBtZQe6>

### ELIGIBILITY QUIZ:

New to 2025! Complete the \*new\* [Eligibility Quiz](#) to help determine if a project is a good fit for the Small Grants for Community Partnering Program.

### APPLICATION COMPONENTS:

#### General Information:

The first section of the form requires general information about your organization, including the date of the application, organization name and email, organization address, project address (if different from the organization address), organization phone number, organization website, and organization type (501c3 non-profit, K-12 school, homeowner's associations, or community-based organization).

#### General Project & Budget Information

**Project Title:** The title should be clear and concise, and no more than eight words.

**Project Summary:** Briefly summarize the proposed project in 3-4 sentences. If awarded, this summary will be featured on the program's website.

**Grant Category:** Select the category that best fits your project from the dropdown list.

**Grant Request Amount:** Requests up to \$4,000 are permitted. Double-check to make sure this figure matches what is included in the budget worksheet.

**Total Matching Funds:** Include the in-kind match and cash match contributions toward the project. The match requirement has been reduced to a minimum of 50% of the project request. This can be solely cash match or in-kind match, or combination thereof.

**Total Project Cost:** Include the total cost of the project, and make sure this figure matches what is included in the budget worksheet.

#### Narrative Section – 60 Total Points

Be sure to read through the descriptions carefully.

**Project Description** (10 pts): Describe the purpose, scope of work, and key objectives of your proposed project.

**Need** (10 points): Describe the specific reasons why this project is needed in the community. Describe the preparations you have taken to ensure the project will be successful, including but not limited to final design plans, cost estimates, and other information to successfully carry out and complete the project by December 2026.

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility** (5 points): Does the project engage diverse and/or underserved community members? If so, please describe.

**Public Access** (5 points): Does the project allow public access in some form (always open to public, free events to public, etc.)?

**Partners & Volunteers** (10 points): What partners (other groups or organizations) are involved in the project? How will they be utilized? Are volunteers going to be involved to assist with this project? If so, describe who they are, their role in the project, and how they are being recruited.

**Budget Narrative** (10 points): Describe why funds are needed in order to complete the project. List and describe the specific items to be funded by the program and list all of the sources of the required 50% cash and/or in-kind match. What other funding sources are helping to contribute to this project? What will happen if this project is not funded?

**Maintenance** (10 points): Describe what future maintenance will be required and include the estimated annual costs associated. Identify who will have ownership of this project and who will be responsible for sustaining the project financially over the next five years (2027-2031).

#### Project Metrics

**Project Outcome Metrics:** Please select one outcome metric for your project from the dropdown list:

- # of acres of new or enhanced natural landscapes completed
- # of nature-based environmental education opportunities provided
- # of adults and youth connected to the land via accessing the outdoors/natural areas/open space
- # of adults and youth connected with the land via local agricultural food production (community gardens, CSA's, etc)
- Other (Research project)
- Other (Not specified above).

**Project Outcome Metric Goal:** Briefly describe your goal for the outcome metric selected above (ex., Connect 50 students to the land through local food production; 3 acres of enhanced natural area for nature-based programs; 6 educational programs reaching 3,000 community members).

#### Grant Attachments

**Budget Worksheet** (Required): Download the required Budget Worksheet and complete the budget details of your proposed project.

Eligible Expenses	Ineligible Expenses
Project expenditures related to project implementation, materials, supplies, etc. Delivery or shipment of project materials is	All operational costs, no exceptions. Projects already started or completed. Salaries and/or project planning expenses, except for research projects.

permitted but cannot exceed more than 5% of the total grant request.	
Tools and equipment (e.g., GPS units, weed sprayers, etc.) may be funded to 501c3 non-profit organizations, only with an acceptable justification as it relates to project implementation	Transportation expenses, except for provision of access to open spaces for those experiencing barriers and research projects.

**Project Information** (Required): Upload all relevant drawings, graphics or photographs to help the grant reviewers better understand the proposed project This may include a landscape design plan, plant list, site map, scaled drawings, photographs, sign design/text, etc.

**Property Owner Consent** (If Applicable): Written consent for projects occurring on private or public lands, homeowner associations, and/or K-12 school facilities is mandatory and must be included with your application. Upload the following documents, as appropriate.

- Public or private land: A copy of either a current permit or lease agreement and a letter from the landowner indicating their support of the project. (Combine files into one PDF).
- Homeowner's associations: Board meeting minutes approving the project.
- K-12 Schools: Letter from the facilities director, or individual with signing authority, indicating their support of the project.

**Non-Profit Organization IRS Letter** (If Applicable): Upload the current IRS determination letter.

**Letters of Support** (Optional): Upload up to two (2) letters from local community members who support your project. Please **DO NOT** send letters by mail or email.

## 2026 GRANT AWARDS

**October 2025:** The Small Grants Program Coordinator will conduct an initial review of the applications and verify project eligibility.

**November – December 2025:** Review undertaken by the Small Grants subcommittee, consisting of three (3) Larimer County Open Land Advisory Board members and Larimer County staff.

**January – February 2026:** Small Grant Project funding recommendations are presented by staff to the Open Lands Advisory Board to approve the final selection of grant awards. The Small Grants Program Coordinator will notify awardees and finalize contracts and declarations.

**March 2026:** All grant contracts must be signed and returned to the Small Grants Program Coordinator before expenditures for the project can be spent.

## GRANT REQUIREMENTS IF AWARDED

A contract between LCDNR and the grant recipient is required prior to receiving the grant award. The contract will include the amount of the grant award, specific items funded, the timeline for project completion, monitoring and reporting requirements, and other conditions.

Awardees are required to submit high-quality progress photos of their project along with a short summary of what is taking place. This information will be shared through LCDNR's social media networks.

Awardees must keep track of all project expenditures and submit receipts for all items purchased with grant funds.

A final report is due by January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2027. Awardees will need to answer questions related to the awarded project, upload copies of receipts, and up to ten photographs.