



Nature in the City Grants Background and Guide to Submitting a Proposal

Thank you for your interest in the Nature in the City Grants program. Nature in the City (NIC) seeks to connect City of Fort Collins (City) residents to nature while also protecting and enhancing habitat for native plants and animals. This document provides step by step guidance to the application process. We recommend you read the full document before beginning the application process.

The Nature in the City Grants program supports projects that create or improve natural spaces in your neighborhood and community. Projects within the Fort Collins City Limits and the [Growth Management Area](#) are eligible and encouraged to apply. Top priorities for funding will be projects that demonstrate strong alignment with the Nature in the City program goals.

Dream it Up: Planning Grant Submission Process

Proposals for project funding must be submitted through [the grant application portal](#) between **Tuesday, September 15 and 11:59 PM on November 2, 2020**.

- **Application** – Questions ask for detailed responses outlining the vision, plans for, and intended impact of your project. The application is divided into four categories: Administrative Questions, General Questions, Funding Questions, and Attachments.
- **Required Attachments** – In order to complete the application process, you will be required to submit supporting documentation including:
 - Project budget worksheet (budget template provided)
 - Photos of your potential site
 - A drawing of your initial concepts (an example provided).

Applications will be reviewed by the Grant Review Committee in November with awardees announced in mid December 2020. All grant recipients will be required to submit a their final design and a report upon completion of their planning project in 2021.

Dream it Up: Planning Grants

2021 NIC Dream it Up: Planning Grants will be awarded for planning projects that improve urban habitat and connect people to nature. Nature in the City is specifically seeking planning grant applications this year. If your project needs initial support for early outcomes such as identification of project priorities through community engagement and meetings, work with a landscape designer to draft a landscape plan, or work through the City's minor amendment process, a smaller planning grant may be awarded. Planning grants provide up to \$5,000 to specifically support these early project efforts. Projects that receive planning grants are eligible to apply for a Make it Happen: Implement Grant in the fall of 2021 to be funded in 2022. However, receipt of a planning grant does not guarantee future NIC funding.

Nature in the City Program Goals

Nature in the City's vision is a connected open space network accessible to the entire community that provides a variety of experiences and functional habitat for people, plants, and wildlife. The grants program seeks projects that help achieve one or more Nature in the City program goals:

- **CONNECTIVITY** across high quality natural spaces by conserving, creating or enhancing natural spaces that provide diverse social and ecological opportunities.
- **ACCESS** to nature by ensuring every resident can easily experience nature from their home or workplace.



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- **STEWARDSHIP** of the naturalized landscape by shifting the urban landscape aesthetic to more diverse forms that support healthy environments for people and wildlife.

You can learn more about NIC goals in the [Strategic Plan](#).

Planning projects should work towards designing a proposed project that aligns with the Nature in the City goals. Applications that demonstrate how your proposed project concept will support these goals will be prioritized. Proposed projects should inspire stewardship and connection to nature by providing diverse engagement opportunities for our community. Review the Frequently Asked Questions on our [website](#) to see if you think your project is a good fit.

Application Guidance

Please reference the following guidance to help answer any questions you have as you work through the grant application process. Please note that “proposed project” refers to the project you want to implement after the “planning phase”. The “planning phase” is what you are requesting funds for in the application. If you need additional assistance during the grant application process, please contact [NIC staff](#). Please note, NIC staff will reply to your inquiry within 3 business days.

1. **Start the grant application process** by accessing the [NIC Grants portal](#). If you have previously applied for a grant using the ZoomGrants site (i.e. 2018 Nature in the City Grant, 2019 XIP Grants for HOAs and Commercial Properties) please login using your existing account information. If this is the first time you have applied for a grant using ZoomGrants you will need to create a new account.
2. **Navigate around the application site** by beginning with the button on the middle, right side of the first screen, **Apply Now/Start an Application**. After you’ve started your application, you can navigate through the different steps using either the tabs on the left side of this main screen for **Summary, Application Questions, and Required Attachments** or after completing one section, navigate to the next section by clicking Next at the bottom of the page.
3. **Summary** information provides basic background information about you and your organization. Please include email addresses for all on your team who you wish to receive communications about the grant review progress.
4. **Legal Agreement** will need to be signed and executed upon award of grant funding. Please review the sample [Nature in the City Planning Grant Agreement](#) and confirm that you and/or your organization will be able to enter into such an agreement with the City of Fort Collins. If you are school in the Poudre School District (PSD), please contact Facilities Services to inform them of your project and proposal. PSD schools awarded grant funding will fall under an umbrella agreement between the District and the City of Fort Collins.
5. **Application questions** : Sample application can be accessed here if you’d like to preview it prior to setting up an account. [Application Questions](#)
6. **Administrative Questions** help us determine if we can legally support your project. All projects must be within the City of Fort Collins [Growth Management Area](#) and need to be supported by the property owner. Successful applicants will be required to sign a legal agreement with the City of Fort Collins for funds to be distributed.



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- 7. General Questions** will help provide an overview of your project and the intended impact. In our experience, having a strong project team is a key to success. Developing this team can be a goal of the planning phase. In addition, we want to know how your eventual proposed project will support NIC objectives and goals (listed in the previous section). Finally, starting to think early about what your challenges might be moving forward, will help you overcome them down the road. Identifying challenges and strategies to overcome them, can also be a goal of the planning phase.
- 8. Funding Questions** will clarify your expected costs and funding sources. We recommend completing the [budget worksheet](#) before answering question 12. The budget is just for the planning phase of the project. Funding Questions should also identify other sources of funding if applicable. We see leveraging funds from other City programs as a positive. Examples include the [Xeriscape Incentive Program](#), or [Utilities Water Allotment Management Program](#). While the focus of the questions is to understand the funding of the planning phase, for question 16 we are interested if you have any initial thoughts on how you will fund the implementation of your proposed project after completing the planning phase. Identifying other sources of funding can be a goal of the planning phase.
- 9. Required Attachments** must be complete and uploaded before submitting your application, including budget worksheet, project site photos, and concept plan. Please download and use the provided template for your budget and to view an example concept plan. The concept plan must be uploaded as either a PDF or JPEG.

Budget worksheet (template provided) must detail all anticipated expenses related to completing your project. Each item should include a quick description (column A), the anticipated total cost (column B), the amount requested from the grant (column C), and funding from other sources (column D). As a reminder, NIC Grants cannot be used for staff, overhead, or maintenance costs. Also, while a specific percentage of the project budget does not need to be matched by other funding sources, we encourage applicants to identify and reflect additional funding sources in the total project budget. Staff time and sweat equity count as match.

Concept plan – illustration of the project space with a conceptual sketch of your proposed project. This can be a first draft sketch of preliminary ideas, both electronic and hand drawn will be accepted. It does not need to be detailed and can change during the planning phase. The concept plan should convey that you have some ideas about what you want to do and the space you have to work with. Please view the example provided [here](#) or on the Zoom platform for a sense of the level of detail requested.

Potential Outcomes of a Planning Grant

A planning grant might result in a professional, community-approved native plant landscape plan. Some other examples of planning grant outcomes include:

- Construction ready documents, plant list and project budget for your proposed project
- Community survey to help you understand the wants and needs of your community in regards to an outdoor space to connect with nature
- A feasibility study that explores the possibility and costs of different options
- Completion of a minor amendment



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Process if you are awarded a grant

If you are awarded a grant, the next step will be as follows:

- Work with NIC staff to draft a project agreement and sign final version
- You will receive a portion of your grant funds up front
- You will have 2-3 meetings with NIC staff over the course of the project. Which will include:
 - A site visit
 - One or two check-in meetings to review progress and draft of plans
- Once complete, all outcome products will be submitted to NIC staff along with an Evaluation Report (included in the project agreement)
- After all final documents are received, you will receive the final portion of your funding

Key Terms and Definitions

Biodiversity – quantifiable measure of the variety of life in a habitat or ecosystem.

Landscape plan – either an informal or technical drawing that details the natural elements like flowers, trees, and grass as well as hardscapes and built structures.

Minor Amendment – changes to a property's approved landscape plan must receive a Minor Amendment before the beginning of a project. This process ensures the proposed landscape and irrigation plan changes are reviewed by the appropriate City staff. For questions about whether or not your project will need a [Minor Amendment](#), please email [Missy Nelson](#) or call 970-416-2743.

Native Species – plants or animals that have evolved with the Colorado ecosystem over a long period of time.

Nature – places that support plants, animals, and natural processes.

Natural Area – land acquired by the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department that provides residents access to open space and protects important habitat.

Natural Space – public or private land that provides residents access to nature and creates important habitat for diverse plants and animals.

Project Budget – total cost to complete the project outlined in the landscape plan; this should include all expenses you hope will be covered by a Nature in the City Grant, as well as those expenses that will be funded through other sources.

Sweat equity – the value of volunteer labor contributed to the completion of your project.