



# Nature in the City Grants

## Background and Guide to Submitting a Proposal

### Make it Happen: Implementation Grants

Thank you for your interest in the Nature in the City Grants program. Nature in the City (NIC) seeks to connect Fort Collins residents to nature while also protecting and enhancing habitat for native plants and animals. This document provides step by step guidance to the grant application process. We recommend you read the full document before beginning the application process. You can find a “Key Terms and Definitions” glossary included on the final pages of this document.

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.

Implementation Grants are intended for projects that are “shovel ready”, meaning that plans, designs, community outreach has been completed and the project is ready to be installed. Funds cannot be used for programming, events, on-going maintenance or over-head costs due to Nature in the City’s funding source ([Community Capital Improvement Program](#)).

Review the Frequently Asked Questions on our [website](#) to see if you think your project is a good fit.

### Grant Submission Process

Proposals for project funding must be submitted through [the grant application portal](#) between **September 1, 2023 and 11:59 PM on October 20, 2023**.

- **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 landscape plan that includes location of project, details of the project like plant and hardscape (gravel, pavers, stone, etc.) placement, a plant list, scale and the square footage of your project

Applications will be reviewed by the Grant Review Committee in November 2023 with awardees announced in mid December 2023. All grant recipients will be required to submit a final report on project activities upon completion of project implementation, as outlined in the sample [Nature in the City Project Agreement](#).

### 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:



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- **CONNECTIVITY** across high quality natural spaces through enhancement of urban lands that provide diverse social and ecological opportunities.
- **ACCESS** to nature by ensuring every resident can easily experience nature from they live, work and play.
- **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](#).

### Grant Categories and Available Funding

2024 Nature in the City Grants will be awarded in three categories for different project types: small-scale, medium-scale, and large-scale. The following information describes these project types and provides funding guidelines for each category.

#### Small-scale projects – up to \$5,000 in support

Small-scale projects are intended for areas that already support one or more Nature in the City goals, but need funding support to enhance work towards those goals and meet new goals. For example, areas that already provide great access to nature, but would like to provide higher quality habitat could apply for funding to support planting native trees and shrubs or removal of exotic plants. This would be a good fit for areas that have a neighborhood natural area that needs habitat improvements.

#### Medium-scale projects – \$5,000 to \$25,000 in support

Medium-scale projects must address at least two of the three Nature in the City goals: creating or enhancing habitat, providing better access to nature, or inspiring stewardship and connection to nature by providing diverse engagement opportunities for our community. Priority will be given to projects that seek to integrate native plantings and nature features into public spaces and/or provide safe routes to nature for neighborhoods that don't have access.

#### Large-scale projects – \$25,000 and up in support

Large-scale projects must clearly demonstrate they will further all three Nature in the City's goals. Projects working to complete a significant landscaping conversion effort that increases native habitat and access to nature are a good fit. In addition to enhancing nearby habitat through integration of native plantings across a landscape, large-scale projects also inspire stewardship and connection to nature by providing diverse engagement opportunities for our community. This would be a good fit for areas that have a neighborhood common space that they would like to convert from turf to native habitat. Priority will be given to projects that increase access to nature in areas of Fort Collins that lack nature access.

#### Residential Projects

Note, Nature in the City supports individual residential projects through the [Xeriscape Incentive Program](#) and encourages you to participate in that program if you want to do a project on an individual lot. As such, Nature in the City Implementation Grants will not supporting individual residential properties this year (i.e. front or backyard conversions).

#### Planning Projects



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Nature in the City is not accepting planning grant applications this cycle; these will be offered in the fall of 2024 for funding in 2025. If your community still needs initial support for early project outcomes such as identification of project priorities through community engagement and meetings, work with a landscape architect to draft a landscape plan, or work through the City's minor amendment process, a Planning Grant may be a good resource.

### Application Guidance

Please reference the following guidance to help answer any questions you have while working through the grant application process. If you need additional assistance during the grant application process, please contact [Nature in the City](#) staff. Please note, staff will reply to your inquiry within 3 business days.

1. **Start the grant application process** by accessing the Nature in the City [Grants portal](#). If you have previously applied for a grant using the ZoomGrants site (i.e. Nature in the City Grants, 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** (screenshot below) by beginning with the **Apply Now/Start an Application** button on the middle, right side of the first screen. 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.

A screenshot of the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department 2021 NIC Dream it Up: Planning Grants application portal. The page title is "Applicant View". In the top right corner, it says "CLOSED Deadline 11/2/2020". The main content area shows "Application Status: Not Submitted" and a prominent orange button labeled "Apply Now/Start Application" which is circled in red. Below this, there are three tabs: "Summary" (highlighted in yellow), "Application Questions", and "Documents". At the bottom of the page, there is a "Summary" section with input fields for "Project Name", "Amount Requested" (with a note "Max. \$5,000 request" and a dollar sign), and "Applicant Information" with fields for "First Name" and "Last Name". A note at the bottom right of the form states "(answers are saved automatically when you move to another field)".

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 process.



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4. **Legal Agreement** will need to be signed and executed upon award of grant funding. Please review the sample [Nature in the City 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.
  - a. If you are representing a school in the **Poudre School District (PSD)**, please contact PSD Facilities Services to discuss and get approval for your project. PSD schools awarded grant funding will fall under an umbrella agreement between PSD and the City of Fort Collins, and will need to be signed by PSD Facilities Service Staff.
5. **Application questions** are broken into themes as explained in the following instruction steps. Application questions and an example application can be accessed here if you'd like to preview it prior to setting up an account. [Application Questions](#) and [Example Application](#).
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 need the property owner to sign a legal agreement with the City of Fort Collins for funds to be distributed.
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. In addition, we want to know how your 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.
8. **Funding Questions** will clarify your expected costs and funding sources. We recommend completing the [budget worksheet](#) before answering question 12. Funding Questions should also identify other sources of funding if applicable. Matching funds are not required, however, projects that leverage additional contributions score higher on the evaluation. Receiving funds from other programs, (including these City programs the [Xeriscape Incentive Program](#), or [Utilities Water Allotment Management Program](#)), is allowed and viewed as a positive.
9. **Required Attachments** must be complete and uploaded before submitting your application, including the budget worksheet, project site photos, and landscape plan. Please download and use the provided template for your budget. There is also an example landscape plan you can download and view. Your landscape plan and project site photos 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 overhead or maintenance costs. However, 15% of your grant funds can go towards funding staff and outreach costs, collectively. 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.**

**Landscape plan** – illustration of the project space with a detailed sketch of your proposed project. The plan should show the location of plantings, hardscape, trails, signs, special features, etc. that you will be installing. The plan should include a north arrow, scale, and estimated square footage of the project area. Please also include a species list for any plantings you may be doing.



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### Expectations if Awarded a Grant

If you are awarded a grant, the next steps will include:

- An initial meeting to review the project agreement and sign it.
- You will receive a portion of your grant funds after all signatures and forms are complete.
- Up to two on-site consultations with staff (pre or during and post completion).
- A middle payment of grant funds may be made depending on the need and size of the project.
- After all final documents (receipts and project evaluation report) 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.

*Hardscape* – the rock or man-made features in the landscape such as gravel, boulders, pavers, walls, paths, etc.

*Landscape plan* – a technical drawing that details the natural elements like flowers, trees, and grass as well as hardscapes and built structures. The plan should have a scale, north arrow, plant list, and estimated square footage of project.

*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 and conform to City codes. For questions about whether or not your project will need a [Minor Amendment](#), please email [Zoning](#) or call 970.416.2745.

*Native species* – plants or animals that have evolved with the Colorado ecosystem over a long period of time and formed essential and complex relationships with other species and the physical environment.

*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.