



NATURAL & CULTURAL HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAM 2024 GRANT GUIDELINES

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GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As an advisor to the Board of Douglas County Commissioners, the Heritage Conservation Council promotes and advocates for the conservation of tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage to honor the past, enrich the present, and inspire the future. The Natural and Cultural Grant program is the primary use of tax dollars allocated for Douglas County's heritage conservation efforts. The Heritage Conservation Council has determined that the most appropriate use of these funds is for the Douglas County community to propose and implement important heritage conservation projects.

The Douglas County Commission has authorized grant funds up to **\$220,000** for the 2024 Douglas County budget to assist with the development and implementation of natural and cultural heritage conservation projects.

In 2024, there will be an additional **\$200,000** for projects that further Open Space conservation and align with the developing Douglas County Open Space Plan (see Open Space Grants below for more information).

The Natural and Cultural Heritage Grant Program may fund a wide range of natural and cultural heritage conservation projects that support the goals outlined in this Grant Guidelines document.

GRANT TIMELINE

Pre-application Meeting Deadline: February 23, 2024

Application Deadline: March 7, 2024, at 5 pm

Award Recommendation Meetings: March 28, 2024, and April 4, 2024

Project Start: May 1, 2024, with agreement fully executed and workplan approved.

Project Completion Deadline: May 1, 2026

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Award amounts range from \$5,000 to \$75,000. The three award categories are listed below:

Major Grants - \$40,000-\$75,000

A Major Grant proposal is defined as a proposal requesting at least \$40,000 and no more than \$75,000. Grant projects falling in this category should be large enough to have a major impact on the conservation of our natural and/or cultural resources. Typically, one or two Major Grant projects are funded each year.

Target Grants – \$5,001- \$39,999

Target Grant proposals are equally important for conserving Douglas County's natural and/or cultural heritage but may not have as large of a scope as Major Grant proposals. Applicants may request up to \$39,999.

Seed Grants- Up to \$5,000

Seed Grant proposals can be requested to plan the first phase of a multi-phased project, to initiate a project and secure future funding from a variety of sources, or to implement projects that are smaller in scope and require less funding to achieve its goals.

AWARD DISTRIBUTION: Awarded projects will be the subject of binding agreements between the County and the applicant. The funding is distributed according to the following:

- **Seed Grant** recipients will receive the full amount of their award at the beginning of their projects upon full execution of the project agreement.
- **Major or Target Grant** awardees will receive a distribution of 30% of their grant award upon full execution of the project agreement. After the initial 30% has been spent, the next 60% of the award can be requested by submitting a Payment Request form. The final 10%

of Major and Target Grant awards will be held until the Final Report is submitted. Upon approval, the final 10% will be reimbursed. The reimbursement requirement may be waived upon approval from the Heritage Coordinator.

GRANT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT

The following types of organizations are eligible to apply and receive funding:

- Non-profit organizations (*All 501(c)(3) non-profit applicants must be in current good standing with the IRS regarding their Form 990 filing requirements.*)
- Accredited post-secondary institutions, K-12 schools, and libraries
- For-profit businesses, including agricultural businesses
- Cemetery Associations
- Any unit of local government or adjacent agencies within Douglas County, Kansas.

Fiscal sponsorship, or pass-through funding to unincorporated organizations or individuals, is allowed for this grant program. Applicants should be the organizations that will administer and receive funds.

Organizations in good standing with current or completed Natural & Cultural Heritage Grant awards may apply for 2024 grant funds. Applicants may apply for multiple grants to fund separate projects.

ELIGIBILITY OF THE PROJECT

PROJECT LOCATION: All grant projects must occur in Douglas County, Kansas. The benefit of the project must primarily impact Douglas County residents or visitors.

PROJECT THEME: Projects must fall into at least one of the following categories:

- **Cultural Heritage**

Cultural Heritage projects can touch any theme related to culture or history. Examples of Cultural Heritage projects include recording of oral histories, digitization of archives, knowledge sharing related to a specific culture or time in history, museum exhibit development, and cultural celebrations and community events.

- **Natural Heritage**

Natural Heritage projects can touch any theme related to native ecosystems, natural history, agricultural heritage, or land conservation. Examples of natural heritage projects include ecosystem restoration, educational resources for land stewards, conservation easement transaction fees, and trail development.

- **Historic Preservation**

Historic Preservation projects center around the preservation of historic structures or other human-built resources. Examples of these projects include restoration of windows, rehabilitation of barns, preservation planning for a historic site, or consultant fees for registering a site on the state and/or national historic register. (See below for more eligibility requirements for projects that involve tangible historic resources, including structures)

- **Open Space**

See the end of this document for more information about Open Space Grants.

PRIORITY THEMES: The Heritage Conservation Council's Strategic Planning for 2023-2026 determined the following specific themes to be priority areas for funding recommendations:

- **Inclusive and Creative Storytelling of Heritage**

- Elevate under-told stories or narratives of BIPOC, immigrants or refugees, LGBTQIA2s+ or other marginalized communities. Projects led by people with lived experience and marginalized identities will be prioritized.
- Celebrate living heritage through culturally significant celebrations or events.
- Record and share oral histories.
- Give visibility to little known places, people, or stories.

- **Conservation and Restoration of Native Ecosystems**

- Conserve or restore prairie, woodlands, wetlands, waterways, and other ecosystem types.
- Assess existing conservation efforts with a lens of diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion.

- **Enhancement of Agricultural Heritage**

- Preserve and promote the viability of working farms.
- Conserve high quality agricultural soils.
- Promote agritourism or public access to heritage farms.

- **Accessibility and Visibility of Important Natural and Cultural Sites**

- Protect, build, or maintain recreational and/or historic trails.
- As appropriate, provide increased access to and/or education about historic sites, including cemeteries.

- **Strategic Preservation of Historic Resources**
 - Promote the listing of significant historic structures and districts to National or Kansas Register of Historic Places
 - Promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures.
 - Promote the conservation of designated structures, districts, and landscapes.

ELIGIBILITY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROJECTS: Projects that involve the preservation of historic resources are eligible to apply for funding. Historic is defined as more than 50 years old, and resources include structures, buildings, historic sites, and more.

However, priority will be given to historic preservation projects that involve either 1) sites listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places and 2) sites eligible for listing on a Historic Register if the applicant is in the process of seeking such listing (must have written notice of eligibility from SHPO). Consideration may be made for historic preservation projects outside of these parameters with reasonable explanation.

For projects that involve physical work related to historic resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places or Register of Historic Kansas Places, the applicant must have the proposed work reviewed and approved by the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to ensure compliance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Written approval must be submitted with the grant application.

Any projects that are related to archaeological sites and/or unmarked burials must consult with the State Archaeologist, impacted communities, and associated Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPO) to ensure compliance with the Unmarked Burial Sites Preservation Act, Antiquities Act, and THPO guidelines.

PROJECT BUDGET

Applicants may request funds up to **\$75,000** per project. A budget template to assist with project planning is available on the Heritage Conservation Council website.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES: Eligible expenses for project proposals include, but are **not limited** to:

- Personnel or Staff Expenses
- Consultant or Professional Service Fees
- Materials and Supplies
- Travel
- Communications and Signage
- Printing
- Equipment

INDIRECT COSTS: Overhead or indirect costs are allowable expenses; however, indirect costs are not to exceed 10% of the grant award. If an indirect cost estimate exceeds 10% in ways that can be reasonably and transparently attributed to costs fairly associated with the proposed project, exceptions may be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

MATCHING FUNDS: There is no minimum amount or percentage of matching funds, either cash or in-kind, required for this grant program. However, applicants, especially those applying for **Major** and **Target Grants**, are expected to demonstrate some form of support or investment in the project beyond County grant funds. For **Major** and **Target Grant** requests, projects with a greater percentage of matching funds, either through cash or in-kind support, will be given priority consideration.

PROJECT TIMELINE: All grant projects must be completed within two years. Extensions may be granted with approval from the Heritage Coordinator and Heritage Conservation Council.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

APPLICANT MEETING

The **first step** in the grant application process is for the applicant to **schedule a meeting with the Heritage Coordinator** to review their project idea. This meeting must take place by **February 23, 2024**.

The purpose of this meeting is to help the applicant develop a grant proposal that is competitive, ensure that the applicant has considered all grant guidelines, and confirm that the proposed project is eligible to receive funding from this program.

To schedule this meeting, email kammerlaan@douglascountyks.org or call 785-330-2878 with **preferred times** and **method for meeting** (in-person, Zoom, or over the phone).

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- Submit grant application online via Adobe Sign. You can request an application through a link on the Heritage Conservation Council website at douglascountyks.org/administration/heritage-conservation-council/natural-and-cultural-grant-program.
- All questions in the application must be completed unless they are indicated as optional.

- Each narrative response should be kept to approximately 500 words or less. Applicants are encouraged to be direct and concise in their responses to the application questions. However, this word limit is not strict, and applicants should provide all necessary information to demonstrate project goals and outcomes.
- In case of any unforeseen technical difficulties, we highly recommend preparing your answers in a **separate document**. A draft version of the application is available on our website.
- Submit your completed application online by **Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 5 pm**. The application will close at this time. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted. Please do not wait until the last minute.
- Contact the Heritage Coordinator at kammerlaan@douglascountyks.org or 785-330-2878 if you experience any technical difficulties or need assistance with the application. If you do not have reliable access to internet, the Heritage Coordinator will work with you to accommodate your needs.

APPLICATION EVALUATION

APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

All applications will be evaluated using the competitive project criteria listed below.

- **Project impact on heritage conservation**
- **Feasibility of project**
- **Matching resources**
- **Equity consideration**
- **Project urgency**
- **Inclusion of knowledge sharing, education, or interpretation**
- **Public access**
- **Sustainability after award**

The Scoring Rubric used by reviewers with more information about the application review criteria can be found on the Heritage Conservation Council website.

Additional priorities will be considered when determining recommendations for grant awards:

- Projects that align with at least one priority theme as outlined in this document
- Projects led by people with lived experience and marginalized identities
- Geographic diversity with Douglas County
- Projects with demonstrated collaboration between multiple organizations
- When considering **Major** or **Target Grant** requests, priority will be given to projects with a greater percentage of matching funds, either through cash or in-kind support
- When considering historic preservation projects, priority will be given to projects that involve either 1) sites listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places and 2) sites eligible for listing on a Historic Register if the applicant is in the process of seeking such listing

If a proposed project does not provide substantial benefit to the conservation and preservation of natural and/or cultural heritage, it will not be considered for funding.

APPLICATION EVALUATION PROCESS

After the application deadline, the Heritage Coordinator will review each application for eligibility and completeness and may contact applicants if questions arise. Once reviewed by staff, the Heritage Coordinator will distribute application materials to the HCC members for evaluation.

The grant reviewers are committed to the following principles in their grant deliberation:

1. **FAIRNESS:** Evaluation will be based on the use of a scoring matrix that incorporates stated competitive project criteria. This matrix is meant to minimize bias and score grants based on merits and appropriateness of project to fulfill goals of the grant program. The scoring rubric can be viewed on the Heritage Conservation Council website. Any member of the deliberation team who has a conflict of interest with an application must recuse themselves from the deliberation process.
2. **EXCELLENCE:** Grantees are required to meet high expectations for quality of overall application and demonstrated ability to follow through.
3. **TRANSPARENCY:** The deliberation process, where all funding decisions are made, will be open to the public. Evaluation will be based on the criteria outlined in these guidelines which are available to all applicants and reviewers. Individual feedback on applications can be made available to interested applicants by request to the Heritage Coordinator. All County Commission meetings, where the final decision is made, are open to the public.

The HCC will forward grant award recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners will make all final funding decisions.

The complete Natural and Cultural Heritage Grant Program Review Procedure can be found on the Heritage Conservation Council website.

**Grant applications are subject to the Kansas Open Records Act (KORA). Please see the Douglas County website for the KORA policy and procedures at <https://www.douglascountyks.org/depts/district-attorney/kansas-open-records-act-kora>. If you feel that your application may contain information that would be exempt from KORA (namely archaeological or sensitive cultural information), please notify the Heritage Coordinator immediately.*

GRANT AWARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Awarded grant applicants must sign a project agreement with Douglas County before their proposed project can begin.
- Due to the competitive nature of this grant program, grant project requests may be only partially funded. The Heritage Coordinator will work with any partially funded applicants, if necessary, to refine the project scope to align with the funding provided.
- In some instances, conditions specific to the awarding of a particular grant may be added to the project agreement as amendments to the grant agreement. The Heritage Coordinator and HCC will work with the grant applicant to ensure these amendments benefit the impacts of the project and the capacity of the applicant.
- All projects with a duration of more than six months are required to submit quarterly reports.
- All grant projects are required to file a final report to remain in good standing with the grant program and be eligible for future Natural and Cultural Heritage Conservation grants.
- Payment Request and Reporting forms will be made available on the Heritage Conservation website.
- Grant funding must be acknowledged in any public messaging about this project. This includes social media posts, press releases, public events, and website.

IMPORTANT GRANT PROGRAM DATES	
DATE	ITEM
January 9, 2024	2024 Grant Guidelines and Application Released
January 23, 2024, at 6 - 7:30 pm	<p>Grant Information Session. This grant information session will be held in-person at the Douglas County Public Works Building (3755 E 25th Street, Lawrence, KS). A pre-recorded version of the presentation will be available on the HCC website following the information session.</p> <p>Applicants are not required to attend to be eligible to apply.</p>
February 23, 2024	Deadline for required meeting with Heritage Coordinator in person, or via phone/ Zoom.
March 7, 2024, at 5 pm	Application submission deadline. Applications due via Adobe Sign.
March 28, 2024 and April 4, 2024, if additional time is needed	<p>Deliberation</p> <p><i>*The Award Deliberation and Recommendation process is open to the public to view, however there is no public comment at these meetings.</i></p>
April 17, 2024 <i>Date is tentative.</i>	The Heritage Conservation Council will make final recommendations for grant awards to the Douglas County Board of County Commissioners for consideration at a regular County Commission business meeting.
April 18, 2024 <i>Date is tentative.</i>	Notification of award to applicants. Heritage Coordinator to send grant agreements or reach out to refine project scope/workplan to awarded applicants.
May 1, 2024	Projects may begin (contingent on signing and approval of agreement and workplan). Initial grant payment sent.
May 2026	Fiscal Year 2024 grant projects are expected to be completed within a 24-month period from the project start date.

OPEN SPACE GRANTS

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act, the Heritage Conservation Council has an additional support of **\$200,000** to be used in the 2024 grant cycle for projects that enhance or support Open Space protection in Douglas County. This Open Space specific funding must be used to ensure that community-led natural conservation projects are funded alongside County efforts to develop an Open Space Plan. You can learn more about the Open Space Plan at dgcoks.org/openspace.

Open Space projects must align with at least one of the following categories:

- **Permanent Conservation of Sensitive and Important Ecosystems**

Permanent conservation is primarily facilitated through conservation easements or acquisition of property. Sensitive and important ecosystems include floodplains, wetlands, river and stream corridors, native and restored prairie, native and restored woodlands and forests, prime farmland, and sites of cultural, historic, or archaeological significance.

- **Public Access to Open Spaces**

Public access may be facilitated through trail development, public site improvements such as interpretive signage, or other projects that connect the public to nature.

- **Stewardship and Restoration of Native Ecosystems**

Projects can be focused on enhancing current land stewardship practices such as procuring equipment or plants, coordinating volunteer programs, or continuing an existing restoration project or program. Projects may also focus on beginning a new stewardship project such as establishing a new prairie restoration area.

- **Education and Community Engagement with Open Space Topics**

Topics include, but are not limited to, natural heritage and biodiversity, human connections with the landscape, land stewardship and natural resource management, and outdoor recreation.

Applicants that intend to apply for these Open Space specific projects must indicate so in an initial meeting with the Heritage Coordinator (no later than February 23, 2024). These Open Space specific grants may be Major, Target, or Seed Grants. Since Open Space Grants are federally funded, the applicant must demonstrate that they meet the following criteria for these projects:

1. Obtain a Universal Entity Identifier (UEI) and have an active *SAM.gov registration
2. Have adequate finance policies, procedures and internal controls in place with respect to expenditure of federal funds

3. Have the sufficient capacity to administer a federal grant award and maintain compliance with federal laws and regulations

*Obtaining a UEI and activating a SAM registration is free of charge.

Open Space grant projects will be subject to all guidelines as listed above, except for project categories and themes, for other Natural and Cultural Grant projects.

Open Space Grant applications will be evaluated by HCC members with the addition of two Douglas County staff reviewers that have been actively working to develop the Open Space Plan. Open Space Grant applications will be evaluated using the same review criteria and scoring matrix** as the Natural and Cultural Grant applications.

**The language of the scoring matrix will be adapted slightly to better reflect Open Space project topics and themes.