



NATURAL & CULTURAL HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAM 2025 GRANT GUIDELINES

Sections:

1. [Grant Program Overview](#)
2. [Grant Program Eligibility](#)
3. [Application Procedures](#)
4. [Application Evaluation](#)
5. [Grant Award Terms and Conditions](#)
6. [Important Grant Program Dates](#)

GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

First launched in 2011, the Natural and Cultural Heritage Grant Program is an annual Douglas County program to support community-led heritage conservation projects. This program is administered by the Douglas County Heritage Conservation Office and overseen by the Heritage Conservation Council. As an advisor to the Board of 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.

Up to **\$210,000** is available for grant awards in 2025. Funding for this program has been allocated by the Board of County Commissioners as a part of the County's annual budget process.

GRANT TIMELINE

Pre-application Meeting Deadline: Friday, February 21, 2025

Application Deadline: Thursday, March 6, 2025, at 5 pm

Award Recommendation Meetings: Thursday, March 27, 2025, and Thursday, April 3, 2025

Project Start: Approximately May 1, 2025, with project agreement fully executed.

Project Completion Deadline: May 1, 2027

GRANT AWARD CATEGORIES

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

- **Major Grants – \$40,000-\$75,000:** Grant projects in this category should be large enough to have a major impact on the conservation of our natural and/or cultural resources. Typically, one Major Grant project is selected for funding 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.
- **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.

GRANT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT

The following types of organizations are eligible to apply for this program:

- 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 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 and 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, and recreational 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.

PRIORITY THEMES: The Heritage Conservation Council's Strategic Plan 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, immigrant or refugee, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized communities.
- 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.
 - Promote agritourism or public access to heritage farms.
- **Accessibility and Visibility of Important Natural and Cultural Sites**
 - Protect, build, or maintain recreational 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 Expenses and Staff Time
- Contractor Fees or Professional Services
- Materials and Supplies
- Travel
- Communications, Printing, and Signage
- 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.

- *In-Kind Match:* In-kind match combines the value of all non-cash contributions (goods & services) directly related to the grant activity. This may include donated use of a facility space, use of equipment, donated staff time, or volunteer time. If calculating the value of volunteer time, please use the estimated value of volunteer time for the state of Kansas: \$29.69 per volunteer, per hour (independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/is-vovt-report-all-years_v2-1.pdf). Volunteers using professional skills may use professional rates.
- *Cash Match:* Includes other cash contributions including other grant awards, internal funding support, and donations.

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

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 21, 2025**.

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@dgcoks.gov or call 785-330-2878 with preferred times and method for meeting (in-person, online, or over the phone).

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

- Applications will be submitted online via Adobe Sign. You can request an application through a link on the Heritage Conservation Council website at www.dgcoks.gov/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 as direct and concise as possible in their responses to the application questions.
- Letters of support are requested from any organization named as a partner or collaborator on the proposed project.
- 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 6, 2025, at 5 pm**. The application will close at this time. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

- Contact the Heritage Coordinator at kammerlaan@dgcoks.gov 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. Assistance will be provided as available, however last-minute requests may not be accommodated.

APPLICATION EVALUATION

APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

- **Impact**
- **Public Benefit**
- **Feasibility**
- **Matching Resources**
- **Equity**
- **Urgency**
- **Sustainability**

The scoring rubric with more information about the application evaluation criteria can be found on the Heritage Conservation Council website.

Additional priorities will be considered when making 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 within Douglas County
- Projects with demonstrated collaboration between multiple organizations
- Projects that offer knowledge sharing, educational, or interpretive opportunities
- 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 a 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:

- **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.
- **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 and award 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 the 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 are feasible and cooperatively defined.
- 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.
- Grant funding must be acknowledged in any public messaging about this project. This includes social media posts, press releases, signage, and public events.
- The grant award is distributed according to the following:
 - **Grant awards of \$5,000 or less (Seed Grants)** are distributed in an up-front, lump-sum payment upon the execution of the project agreement.
 - **Grant awards greater than \$5,000 (Target and Major Grants)** are distributed as follows:
 - Grantees will receive an initial payment of 30% of the 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.

IMPORTANT GRANT PROGRAM DATES	
DATE	ITEM
Tuesday, January 7, 2025	Grant Guidelines and Application Released
Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 6 - 7:30 pm	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). Applicants are not required to attend to be eligible to apply.
Friday, February 21, 2025	Deadline for required meeting with the Heritage Coordinator in person, or via phone/ Zoom.
Thursday, March 6, 2025 at 5 pm	Application submission deadline. Applications due via Adobe Sign.
Thursday, March 27, 2024 and Thursday, April 3, 2025	Deliberation <i>*The Award Deliberation and Recommendation process is open to the public to view, however there is no public comment at these meetings.</i>
Wednesday, April 16, 2025 <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.
Thursday, April 17, 2025 <i>Date is tentative.</i>	Notification of award to applicants. Heritage Coordinator to send grant agreements or reach out to refine project scope/work plan to awarded applicants.
May 1, 2025	Projects may begin (contingent on signing and approval of agreement and workplan). Initial grant payment sent.
Thursday, May 15, 2025 at 6 - 7 pm	Grant Orientation Meeting. All new grantees are requested to join an orientation session to learn about payments, reporting, and offer an opportunity to meet other grantees.
May 2027	Grant projects are expected to be completed within a 24-month period from the project start date.