

Greater Peoria Leadership Council (GPLC)

Build Grant Request for Proposals (RFP)

Fiscal Year 2025 Grant Initiative – Build a Vibrant Regional Core

About the Greater Peoria Leadership Council

The Greater Peoria Leadership Council (GPLC) was formed as a collective of regional business and civic leaders who recognized that lasting transformation requires more than individual action—it demands a unified voice. Representing the business community, the GPLC advances the Greater Peoria region through coordinated, intentional leadership and shared responsibility.

Current Strategic Focus Areas (2025)

Under the umbrella of Choose Greater Peoria, the GPLC began with two foundational priorities—attracting talent and promoting unified regional identity—and has added a third strategic focus as these priorities continue to evolve:

- Attracting & Retaining Talent - Building a connected hiring ecosystem that positions Peoria as a destination for career growth.
- Promoting a Unified Regional Identity - Creating consistent, authentic messaging so communities, businesses, and leaders speak with one voice.
- Building a Vibrant Regional Core - Creating a bustling, energetic heart of Greater Peoria through strategic placemaking, beautification, and economic vibrancy initiatives that celebrate our unique character while attracting businesses, residents, workers, and visitors.

Grant Program as Strategic Investment

The 2025 grant program represents our commitment to building a vibrant regional core—a pilot initiative to amplify regional core development work already underway by Community Development Organizations and other stakeholders. With an initial investment of \$775,000, this program creates greater collective impact through community-led, strategically aligned projects with measurable results.

Defining Our Regional Core

Our "regional core" includes six key districts: The Levee District (East Peoria's commercial center), The Riverfront (festivals and culture), The Warehouse District (creative hub), The Central Business District (downtown core), The Med-Tech Hub (healthcare and education), and The Main Street Corridor (historic connector to Bradley University).

Program Overview

The Greater Peoria Leadership Council invites applications for **Build Grants** designed to create foundational investments that establish significant wins supporting GPLC's commitment to regional core development. Build Grants support intermediate-scale projects over 6-18 months that address connectivity within the Regional Core and coordinate programming efforts to create compelling, unified experiences.

Total Available Build Funding: \$290,000

Number of Awards: 2-3 grants (approximately)

Anticipated Average Award: \$96,666

Application Deadline: October 1, 2025

Project Duration: 6-18 months

Application Frequency: Annually

Grant Overview

Build Grants

- **Funding Range:** \$50,000 - \$200,000
 - **Focus:** Foundational investments establishing wins to support Regional Core commitment
 - **Overhead Maximum:** 10%
 - **Duration:** 6-18 months with quarterly milestones
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2025 Focus Areas

All Build Grant projects must align with one or both of the following Regional Core enhancement priorities. The following focus area ideas are examples but are not limited to:

Regional Core Connectivity

- **Address utilization of empty lots** between areas experiencing economic activity and local tourism
- **Reduce urban "islands"** through strategic connectivity solutions
- **Improve walkability, safety, parking, and transportation** for a cohesive RC experience
- **Create physical and programmatic connections** that enhance Regional Core unity

Coordinated Regional Core Programming

- **Align event calendars** across Regional Core organizations and jurisdictions
 - **Create collaborative experiences** that attract activity to the Regional Core
 - **Develop joint programming initiatives** that leverage multiple organizational strengths
 - **Establish coordinated marketing and promotional efforts** for programming and event amplification and alignment
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Eligibility Requirements

All Build Grant Applications

Lead Organization Requirements

Eligible Lead Organizations:

- Must be a **GPLC Partner Community Development Organization (CDO)** in good standing
- Lead CDO serves as primary applicant and fiscal agent for all grant funds
- Lead CDO assumes full responsibility for grant compliance and reporting
- Demonstrated capacity for managing projects \$50,000+

Partnership Opportunities

Encouraged Partnerships:

- Lead CDO may partner with other **501(c)(3) organizations or 501(c)(6) organizations**
- Lead CDO may partner with **Peoria/East Peoria municipal departments/agencies**
- Lead CDO may partner with **Peoria/East Peoria public schools/park districts**
- Lead CDO may partner with other **GPLC Partner CDOs**
- All partnerships must demonstrate **enhanced regional impact through collaboration**

Partner Organization Requirements

- Must be eligible organization as defined in Build RFP
 - Minimum 1 year of operations
 - Strong regional benefit with preference for cross-river coordination (preferred)
 - Track record of successful partnership collaboration (preferred)
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Required Documentation

Lead Organization Documentation

- Current GPLC partnership MOU (on file)
- Audited financial statements or certified financial review for most recent fiscal year
- Three years of IRS Form 990s (if applicable)
- Current organizational chart with related project staff qualifications
- Board letter authorizing grant application and fiscal agent responsibilities

Partnership Documentation (if applicable)

- IRS determination letter (or official letterhead documentation for municipal related entities)
- Individual capacity statements from each partner organization
- Letters of commitment from all partner organizations
- Document delineating roles, responsibilities, and resource contributions for all partners

Financial Management

- Current fiscal year budget with revenue category detail (lead CDO)
- Project budget showing cost category detail and resource allocation among all partners (if applicable)

Capacity Assessment

- Project staffing plan showing adequate capacity for project and partnership management (lead CDO and all partner organizations)

Allowable Costs

Direct Program Costs

- **Comprehensive programming:** All materials, supplies, and activity costs
- **Professional services:** Consultants, trainers, technical assistance
- **Marketing and communications:** Outreach and promotional activities

Project Personnel

- **Dedicated Staff Positions:** Partial or full FTE/contractors for project duration
- **Professional Development:** Training directly related to project success
- **Temporary Staffing:** Short-term personnel hired specifically for project activities

Project Equipment & Technology

- **Project-essential equipment:** Technology, tools, and equipment directly supporting project delivery
- **Reasonable limits:** Individual purchases should be justified by project needs
- **Technology infrastructure:** Software, systems, and platforms directly supporting project activities and necessary for project outcome success
- **Equipment** purchased remains with implementing organization
- **Equipment** expenses are classified based on the organization's capitalization threshold – items above this threshold are recognized as assets and depreciated over time

Project Overhead (*Maximum 10%*)

- **Administration:** Project management, financial oversight, reporting
- **Evaluation:** Comprehensive outcome measurement and impact assessment
- **Sustainability planning:** Activities ensuring project continuation beyond grant period

Project Infrastructure (*Limited*)

- **Minor improvements:** Small-scale renovations or improvements required to support project
- **Safety and accessibility:** Modifications necessary to directly support project

Partnership & Coordination

- **Multi-organization collaboration:** Costs for coordinating with other Partner CDOs and municipal partners
- **Joint programming:** Shared activities and collaborative initiatives
- **Cross-river coordination:** Enhanced support for Peoria-East Peoria collaboration

Capacity Building (*Project-Related*)

- **System development:** Processes and procedures necessary for project success
- **Partnership development:** Training and support for collaborative work

Restricted Categories

- General organizational development unrelated to project
- Project staff benefits: Health insurance, retirement contributions, other standard benefits
- Equipment not justified by project needs
- Technology & Infrastructure not justified by project needs
- Fundraising or general development activities

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be scored on a 5-point scale across the following weighted criteria. See addendum for specific responses required.

Criterion	Weight	Description
Regional Alignment	20%	Connection to regional development, cross-river coordination, and GPLC strategic priorities
Amplification Factor	20%	Resource multiplication potential, partnership coordination, and building on existing investments
Measurable Impact	20%	Quantifiable targets for increased connectivity, coordination, and economic activity
Vibrant Place Development	20%	Connectivity improvements, coordination enhancements, and Regional Core cohesion
Execution Strength	20%	Organizational capacity, partnership quality, and project feasibility

Scoring Methodology

Evaluation Components by Criterion:

Regional Alignment (20%)

- Connection to regional development and cross-river coordination efforts
- Strategic priority alignment with GPLC mission
- Cross-regional impact and municipal boundary benefits
- Timeline synchronization with other regional initiatives

Amplification Factor (20%)

- Resource multiplication potential and leverage ratios
- Building on existing Regional Core investments
- Partnership activation and coordination enhancement
- Sustainability potential beyond grant period

Measurable Impact (20%)

- Baseline data and comprehensive measurement methodology
- Quantifiable targets for connectivity and coordination improvements
- Direct Regional Core benefit and geographic impact
- Economic activity tracking and partnership coordination metrics

Vibrant Place Development (20%)

- Connectivity improvements (walkability, safety, empty lot utilization)
- Coordination enhancements (event alignment, collaborative programming)
- Regional Core cohesion and character development
- Long-term place quality improvements

Execution Strength (20%)

- Lead organization capacity and track record
- Partnership quality and collaboration experience
- Project plan feasibility and timeline realism
- Implementation readiness and accountability framework

Funding Recommendation Thresholds:

- 4.0-5.0: Strong Funding Potential
- 3.5-3.9: Fundable
- 3.0-3.4: Consider Funding
- 2.5-2.9: Recommend Revision and Resubmission
- Below 2.5: Do Not Fund

Bonus Points (up to 0.75 additional points for projects scoring 3.0+):

- Proven innovation in connectivity or coordination solutions
- Exceptional cross-river or multi-jurisdictional collaboration
- Strong data collection plans contributing to regional learning and replication

Note: All grant scores act as guides for the Grant Committee. The committee reserves the right to prioritize and make funding recommendations to the GPLC Executive Committee as they deem is in the best interest of the GPLC and its goals. Annual grant funding will be based on funds available and overall program mix.

Application Process

Timeline

- **RFP Release:** July 24, 2025
- **Application Deadline:** October 1, 2025
- **Review Period:** October 2025
- **Recipients Notified:** November 2025
- **Project Period:** December 2025 - June 2027

How to Apply

1. Complete RFP required responses using GPLC online portal at www.choosegreaterpeoria.org/gplc
2. Upload all required documentation
3. Attend GPLC Grant workshop on July 30, 2025 (recommended)
4. Schedule pre-application consultation (available)

Support Available

- **GPLC Grant workshop** available for all applicants + partners
 - **Pre-application consultation** with GPLC grant operations available for complex partnerships
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Grant Management Requirements

Grant award recipients will be notified by GPLC Grant Operations. Grant awards are formalized through a signed grant agreement with GPLC prior to funding distribution.

Advance Restricted Funding: GPLC will provide grant funds in advance rather than through reimbursement. Short-term grants (six months or less) receive full funding upfront, while longer grants (up to three years) receive annual allocations at the start of each grant year. All funds remain restricted to approved activities and require regular financial reporting for compliance.

Reporting

- **Quarterly Combined Grant Reports:** Due 15th of January, April, July, October (covering grant progress)
- **Annual Partnership Assessment:** Comprehensive grant portfolio update submitted prior to collaborative annual partnership review meeting
- **Final Grant Report:** Due 30 days after project completion

Financial Management

- **Detailed budget categories** with specific allocation to approved budget lines
- **Time and effort reporting** for personnel costs with documentation
- **Receipt documentation** for all purchases with invoices and payment records
- **Quarterly financial reports** with expenditures by cost category and variance explanations
- **Competitive procurement** for equipment >\$10,000 and professional services >\$10,000
- **Financial records** for project maintained for a minimum of 5 years

Pre-Approval Requirements

Equipment and Capital Purchases

- **Over \$10,000:** Requires GPLC pre-approval with documented competitive procurement process
- **Technology Systems:** Major software or hardware purchases require GPLC consultation
- **Capital Improvements:** All infrastructure modifications require advance approval with proof of formal quote process

Personnel Changes

- **New Positions:** Adding staff not in original budget requires approval
- **Salary Increases:** Changes to approved personnel costs need justification
- **Contractor Selection:** Major professional service contracts >\$10,000 require documentation of competitive quote process

Budget Modifications

- **Between Categories:** Transfers over 10% of category total require approval
- **New Activities:** Adding project components not in original proposal
- **Timeline Changes:** Extensions or accelerations affecting costs

Compliance

- **Site visits** may be conducted by GPLC for programmatic and financial monitoring

Special Considerations

Partnership Development

- **Cross-river coordination** strongly preferred for maximum connectivity impact
- **Municipal partnerships** encouraged for infrastructure and coordination projects
- **Multi-CDO collaboration** supported for enhanced regional impact

Project Sustainability

- **Plans for continuation** beyond grant period required
- **Partnership sustainability** strategies essential for multi-organization projects
- **Regional learning** and replication potential valued

Innovation and Impact

- **Creative solutions** to connectivity and coordination challenges encouraged
 - **Measurable outcomes** that demonstrate foundational wins for Regional Core
 - **Scalable approaches** that can be replicated or expanded
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Contact Information

Grant Operations Team

Greater Peoria Leadership Council

Kristin Zika

kzika@greater-peoria.org

Questions?

- Attend GPLC Grant workshop
 - Schedule pre-application consultation for complex applications
 - Email grant operations team for eligibility guidance
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Applications must be submitted by 11:59 PM Eastern on October 1, 2025. Late applications will not be considered. All funded projects must demonstrate clear foundational benefit to the Greater Peoria Regional Core and align with GPLC's strategic priorities for connectivity and coordinated programming.

Addendum: RFP Specific Responses Required

SECTION A: BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION

A1. Project Title (25 words maximum)

A2. Requested Amount \$ _____

A3. Project Duration (6-18 months) Start Date: _____ End Date: _____

A4. Primary Focus Area (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Regional Core Connectivity (addressing empty lots, walkability, transportation)
- ☐ Coordinated Regional Core Programming (event alignment, collaborative experiences)

A5. Target Regional Core District(s) (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Levee District (East Peoria) ☐ Riverfront ☐ Warehouse District ☐ Central Business District ☐ Med-Tech Hub ☐ Main Street Corridor

A6. Partnership Structure

- ☐ GPLC Lead Partner CDO (Primary applicant & fiscal agent) _____
- ☐ Partner Organizations (Please list)

A7. Project Overview (200 words maximum) Provide a clear, comprehensive description of your project, its primary activities, and expected outcomes that will establish significant wins for Regional Core vibrancy, connectivity and development.

SECTION B: REGIONAL ALIGNMENT (20% of score)

B2. Regional Connectivity/Coordination Strategy (250 words maximum) How will this project enhance connectivity between Regional Core districts OR improve coordination of programming across organizations? Address specific barriers being addressed.

B3. Cross-River & Multi-Jurisdictional Impact (150 words maximum) How does this project strengthen connections between Peoria and East Peoria, involve multiple jurisdictions, or create alignment across the regional core?

B4. Strategic Timing & Alignment (100 words maximum) How does this project coordinate with other regional initiatives, events, marketing efforts, or development activities?

SECTION C: MEASURABLE IMPACT (20% of score)

C1. Baseline Assessment (Current State) (150 words maximum)

Please describe the current situation using existing data and observations to demonstrate the specific gap or challenge your project will address. This baseline will help reviewers understand why your project is needed and will serve as your “before” snapshot for measuring project impact. Provide current data applicable to your project using **accessible sources** such as:

For Connectivity Projects:

- Current usage patterns (pedestrian/vehicle counts if available, or estimates)

- Identified barriers (time, distance, safety, accessibility issues)
- Current empty lots/spaces
- Current safety/accessibility issues (lighting, signage, compliance)

For Programming Coordination:

- Event calendar analysis (conflicts, gaps, attendance patterns)
- Current marketing reach and coordination levels
- Current cross-promotional reach
- Current collaborative/partnership activity (formal and informal)

Economic Context:

- Business counts by district (approximate)
- Vacancy observations and trends
- General activity levels and timing patterns

C2. Quantifiable Target Outcomes *(Select relevant measurements based on your project focus)*

Based on your project design and implementation plan, what measurable outcomes do you anticipate achieving? Please provide your projected target outcomes for the metrics most applicable to your project.

Connectivity Improvements:

- Connection planning/design completed/executed: _____ (routes, access points, infrastructure plans)
- Barrier assessment/solutions identified/executed: _____ (safety, accessibility, navigation issues addressed)
- Empty lot/space improvement plans/execution: _____ lots/spaces assessed, planned for activation, and improved
- Safety/accessibility upgrades: _____ (lighting, signage, ADA compliance improvements)
- Regional Core districts connected: _____ (location, number, connection method)

Programming Coordination:

- Calendar efficiency: _____ (conflicts reduced, gaps filled)
- Cross-promotional reach: _____ % increase
- Collaborative events: _____ # new joint activities, _____ #cross-river activities
- Coordination systems established: _____ (shared calendars, communication tools, new collaborative processes)

Economic Context:

- Business engagement: _____ businesses actively participating or consulted
- Commercial space assessments: _____ properties evaluated for future activation
- Investment prospect development: _____ business recruitment activities or prospect meetings
- Partnership agreements: _____ new formal/informal collaborations

Community Impact:

- Community Sentiment: Positive community feedback target: _____ % positive responses
OR _____ positive testimonials

C3. Project Outcomes Measurement Plan *(150 words maximum)*

Please describe how you will track and report on the specific quantifiable target outcomes you identified above. Your measurement plan should demonstrate clear methods for documenting progress and changes from your baseline assessment. **Connect your measurement methods directly to your selected quantifiable target outcomes. Include practical measurement approaches such as:**

- **Baseline comparison:** Before/after photo documentation, basic counts
- **Partnership tracking:** Shared activity reports
- **Activity monitoring:** Event calendars, attendance tracking, business participation logs
- **Technology tools:** Simple apps, shared spreadsheets, basic survey tools

C4. Anticipated Economic Impact *(150 words maximum)*

Please describe how your project outcomes will contribute to increased economic activity in the Regional Core. Connect the specific targets you will track to their anticipated economic effects, such as increased foot traffic leading to business revenue, improved connectivity attracting new customers, or coordinated programming drawing larger audiences. **Focus on observable changes your project will help generate:**

- Business participation and engagement levels
- Space utilization improvements
- Visitor pattern changes
- Partnership resource sharing
- Marketing/promotional coordination success

C5. Project Success Definition *(150 words maximum)*

Clearly state what a successful grant project will look like by connecting your measurable outcomes to visible economic and community improvements in the Regional Core. Reference the specific targets you will track, those measurable results, and the economic activity impacts you anticipate. Paint a clear picture of success that positions your project to benefit the community beyond the grant period. **Focus on concrete, observable changes that clearly show your project has strengthened economic activity and Regional Core vibrancy.**

SECTION D: VIBRANT PLACE DEVELOPMENT (20% of score)

D1. Place Quality Enhancement Strategy *(200 words maximum)* How will connectivity improvements OR coordinated programming enhance the overall character, safety, accessibility, and vibrancy of the Regional Core?

D2. Community Building & Engagement *(150 words maximum)* How will this project strengthen community connections, attract target demographics, or create lasting positive change in how people experience the Regional Core?

SECTION E: EXECUTION STRENGTH (20% of score)

E1. Lead Organization Capacity *(150 words maximum)* Describe your organization's track record with projects of this scale, relevant experience, and staff capacity for project management.

E2. Partnership Framework (200 words maximum) Detail all partner organizations, their specific roles, governance structure, and how collaboration will be managed. Upload letters of commitment with required documentation.

E3. Risk Management (100 words maximum) Identify potential challenges and your mitigation strategies.

E4. Detailed Project Timeline (List 6-10 major milestones with dates)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

SECTION F: AMPLIFICATION (20% of score)

F1. Amplification & Leverage Strategy (150 words maximum) What additional resources will this grant unlock? Include confirmed and projected funding, volunteer commitments, and in-kind contributions with dollar values.

F2. Catalyst Effect (100 words maximum) How might this project inspire additional initiatives or motivate others to invest in similar Regional Core improvements?

F3. Sustainability (75 words maximum) How will positive impacts continue after the grant period ends? How will initial success attract additional resources or support? Include ongoing funding strategies and partnership commitments.

SECTION G: BUDGET & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

G1. Comprehensive Budget

- GPLC Grant Request: \$ _____
- Partner Organization Contributions: \$ _____
- Other Funding Sources: \$ _____

- In-Kind Contributions: \$ _____
- **Total Project Value:** \$ _____

G2. Detailed Budget Categories *(Use GPLC template with cost category detail and partner allocations)*

- Direct Program Costs: \$ _____
- Project Personnel: \$ _____
- Project Equipment & Technology: \$ _____
- Project Infrastructure: \$ _____
- Partnership & Coordination: \$ _____
- Capacity Building: \$ _____
- Project Overhead (max 10%): \$ _____

G3. Budget Narrative: *Include brief explanations for major budget categories - Direct Program Costs, Project Personnel, Project Equipment & Technology, Project Infrastructure, Partnership & Coordination, Capacity Building, and Overhead (150 words maximum)*

G4. Financial Management Plan *(100 words maximum)* Describe fiscal agent responsibilities and financial tracking across partners.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

Lead Organization Documentation

☐ Current GPLC partnership MOU ☐ Audited financial statements or certified financial review for most recent fiscal year ☐ Three years of IRS Form 990s (if applicable) ☐ Current organizational chart with related project staff qualifications ☐ Board letter authorizing grant application and fiscal agent responsibilities

Partnership Documentation (if applicable)

☐ Individual capacity statements from each partner organization ☐ Letters of commitment from all partner organizations ☐ Document delineating roles, responsibilities, and resource contributions for all partners

Financial Management

☐ Current fiscal year budget with revenue category detail (lead CDO) ☐ Partnership budget showing resource allocation among all partners (if applicable)

Capacity Assessment

☐ Staffing plan showing adequate capacity for project and partnership management (lead CDO and all partner organizations)