

GPLC Sprint Grant FAQ - Application Details

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

What types of projects will be funded under Sprint grants?

Sprint grant projects should focus on one or more of these Regional Core areas:

- *Beautification*: Visual enhancements that create immediate positive impact
- *Programming*: Pop-up support and programming enhancements that attract visitors and activity
- *Hospitality*: Initiatives supporting positive experiences and visitor welcome

Are the examples in the Grant Process Overview the only projects you'll fund?

No. The examples provided (window clings, pop-up booths, seasonal décor, hospitality teams, etc.) are for demonstrative purposes only. The GPLC is open to other creative ideas that address beautification, programming or hospitality in the Regional Core.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Why do additional requirements apply to Major Impact grants (\$25,001-\$50,000)?

Because these grants are more complex in nature and are of a larger size, GPLC is requiring organizations to have at least one of the following additional points to be eligible to apply:

- Annual organizational budget of at least \$75,000, OR
- Track record managing projects >\$10,000 OR
- At least one previous project with budget >\$10,000 successfully completed

What do you mean by "CDOs and regional nonprofits?"

When we refer to "CDOs and regional nonprofits," we're talking about a broad group of organizations that play an active role in supporting and strengthening the Greater Peoria region. This includes local 501(c)(3) nonprofits, city and municipal departments or agencies, and even public institutions like Peoria and East Peoria schools and park districts.

It also specifically includes the community development organizations (CDOs) that have formal partnerships with the GPLC through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). Each of these entities brings unique expertise and influence to the table, helping to move our region forward in a coordinated, community-focused way.

Are religious organizations eligible to apply?

Yes, religious organizations with proper 501(c)(3) status are eligible. Projects must be secular in nature, unrelated to proselytization or evangelization, and inclusive to all Greater Peoria residents.

Can municipal departments be partners?

Yes, municipal departments, as well as public schools or park districts from both Peoria and East Peoria can participate as partners. All partnerships should align to support the regional core goals. Document their commitments in your budget.

GRANT DETAILS

Which areas are considered "Regional Core"?

When we talk about Greater Peoria's "regional core," we're referring to six key areas that shape the identity, vitality and momentum of our region.

- *The Levee District (East Peoria):* A civic and entertainment center from the riverfront to Main Street
- *The Riverfront:* Peoria's riverside hub for festivals, recreation, and gathering spaces
- *The Warehouse District:* A revitalized area of creative businesses, lofts, and repurposed spaces
- *The Central Business District:* Downtown Peoria's core for business, government and civic activity
- *The Med-Tech Hub:* A cluster of hospitals, educational facilities and biotech innovation
- *The Main Street Corridor:* A historic link between downtown and the West Bluff, home to Bradley University

What types of costs can grant funds support?

Grant awards primarily cover direct program costs like materials, supplies, event expenses (such as venues, speakers, and participant materials), local travel, marketing and participant support, including refreshments and accessibility accommodations.

Limited funding is also available for project personnel, including staff time (with proper tracking), consultant fees and short-term hires, as well as essential equipment that stays with the organization.

Additionally, up to 10% of the grant may be used for project overhead. This includes administrative coordination, evaluation and financial compliance. These costs must be defined in your project budget.

What costs are NOT eligible to be covered with grant funds?

Grant funds may not be used for general operating expenses unrelated to the project, staff benefits like health insurance or retirement, or equipment that isn't essential to delivering the project. Funding also excludes capital improvements, infrastructure upgrades, and any fundraising or development activities.

Can we work with other organizations?

Yes! Partnerships are encouraged, but one organization must serve as lead applicant and fiscal agent.

Should we coordinate with other potential applicants?

While collaboration and grant alignment is encouraged, each application should stand on its own merits. If your proposal is dependent upon another grant proposal, please explain that in your project summary narrative.

How do we show cross-river collaboration?

Document specific activities connecting Peoria and East Peoria and show multi-jurisdictional benefits.

APPLICATION PROCESS

How do we apply for a *Sprint* grant award?

Complete the online application through the GPLC portal and upload required documents.

What documents do we need for the application?

Every applicant will need to submit the following:

- IRS determination letter (or official letterhead for municipal entities)
- Sprint Grant Budget using GPLC template
- Previous year's financial statements (board-approved)
- Current year organizational budget

If you're applying for a Major Impact grant (\$25,001-\$50,000), we'll also need the following:

- Brief organizational description (1 page max)
- Description of previous successful project >\$10,000
- Detailed project timeline with milestones

Is there help available for applications?

Yes! Basic application assistance and template resources are available.

Can we start work before the official grant start date?

Yes, the GPLC aims not to slow down good projects. Grant agreements typically signed within 4 weeks of approval.

Who should we contact with questions or if we need help during the application process?

Please contact Kristin Zika, Director of Operations & Grant Management at kzika@greater-peoria.org for questions or assistance during the process.

MEASUREMENT & REPORTING

What specific outcomes should we track?

Think about the impact your project is meant to have then pick the metrics that best reflect that. Some great options include:

- **Participation:** How many people do you expect to show up or get involved?
- **Activity Boost:** Are you hoping to increase foot traffic in a certain area? Estimate how many more people you expect.

- **Engagement:** Will your project bring new visitors into the heart of the region?
- **Business Impact:** Are local businesses taking part or seeing benefits? Track that!
- **Community Sentiment:** Positive feedback matters — especially for things like beautification projects.
- **Visibility:** Did the project get media coverage or strong engagement on social media?

How do we establish our baseline?

Document current conditions using local, simple data sources: observation, existing reports, basic counts, community feedback

What's expected in our measurement plan?

We're looking for a simple, doable way to track your progress.

- Snap a few photos before, during and after your project
- Keep a basic headcount of people involved or businesses that took part
- Send out a quick 1–2 question survey via email or text
- Track your social media posts and see how far they reached

And let us know when you'll be collecting this info — at the beginning, middle or end of the project.

Do we need sophisticated evaluation tools?

No. Keep measurement basic and manageable for your organization using existing resources.

What reporting is required?

A final report is due 30 days after your project wraps up. This should include a summary of what you accomplished, how funds were used and any lessons learned or impact you can share. Stories, photos or feedback are all welcome!

FUNDING PROCESS

How and when do we receive funding?

Once your grant is approved and the agreement is signed (usually within about four weeks), you'll receive the funding up front — no need to wait for reimbursement. Just remember, all funds must be used specifically for the project activities you outlined in your application and financial tracking documentation is required.

What ongoing management is required?

You'll need to keep track of how grant dollars are spent, including any staff time paid for by the grant. Hold on to receipts and make sure time and effort are recorded for any personnel costs.

How should we track project costs?

All project spending should align with your approved budget categories and be tracked accordingly. If your grant includes personnel time, that must be recorded through reliable time-tracking methods. Be sure to keep receipts for all purchases, and maintain simple, organized financial records to ensure compliance and accountability throughout the project.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

What makes an application stand out?

Applications are reviewed across five key areas:

- Regional Alignment (10%) – How well your project ties into the goals of the Regional Core
- Amplification (15%) – How the grant builds on other partnerships or resources
- Measurable Impact (25%) – Are there clear, realistic goals?
- Vibrant Place Development (35%) – How your project brings energy to the space (socially, culturally, physically)
- Execution Strength (15%) – Can your team carry the project through successfully?

Is there a way to earn bonus points?

Yes. Projects that score 3.0 or higher can earn up to 0.75 bonus points for going above and beyond in areas like:

- Trying something new or scaling a proven idea
- Engaging the community in meaningful, documented ways
- Planning to collect strong data that benefits the broader region

What if we're unsuccessful this year?

The 2026 grant calendar is expected in December 2025. You're encouraged to consider lessons learned and strengthen your approach for the next grant cycle.