

Greater Peoria Leadership Council (GPLC)

Community Sprint Grant Request for Proposals (RFP)

Fiscal Year 2026 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 (2026)

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 2026 grant program represents our commitment to building a vibrant regional core—an initiative to amplify regional core development work already underway by Community Development Organizations and other stakeholders. This program is designed to create 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 **Community Sprint Grants** designed to create rapid, visible impact in the Greater Peoria Regional Core within 3-6 months. Sprint Grants support quick-implementation projects that enhance regional core beautification, programming, and hospitality while building momentum for longer-term regional development.

Total Available Sprint Funding: \$200,000

Number of Awards: 3-4 grants (approximately)

Anticipated Average Award: \$50,000 (maximum request \$75,000)

Application Deadline: March 1, 2026

Project Duration: 3-6 months

Application Frequency: Semi-annually (2 cycles per year/anticipated summer 2026 release)

Grant Thresholds

Sprint Grant applications which fall into the Major Impact Threshold (greater than \$25,000) are subject to additional eligibility requirements and required documentation.

Sprint - Quick Impact Threshold

- **Funding Range:** \$10,000 - \$25,000
- **Focus:** Accessible, rapid implementation projects
- **Overhead Maximum:** 10%

Sprint - Major Impact Threshold

- **Funding Range:** \$25,001 - \$75,000
- **Focus:** Enhanced capacity projects with maximum sprint value
- **Overhead Maximum:** 10%

2026 Focus Areas

All Community Sprint Grant proposals must align with one or more of the following Regional Core enhancement priorities. The following focus area ideas are examples but are not limited to:

Regional Core (RC) Beautification

- Window clings in empty storefronts
- Streetscape improvements: flowers, lighting, seating in RC areas, public art
- Visual enhancements that create immediate positive impact

Regional Core (RC) Programming

- Pop-up support for existing Regional Core planned events
- Programming enhancements that attract visitors and activity
- Creative activations that utilize existing Regional Core infrastructure

Regional Core (RC) Hospitality

- Street hospitality teams or local concierge ambassadors
- Visitor experience improvements
- Initiatives supporting positive Regional Core experiences during events

Eligibility Requirements

All Sprint Grant Applications

Eligible Organizations:

- 501(c)(3) organizations
- Municipal departments/agencies
- Peoria and East Peoria public schools/park districts
- GPLC Partner Community Development Organizations (CDOs)

Requirements:

- Minimum 1 year of operations
- Must serve Greater Peoria region with demonstrated community benefit
- Current on required state & federal filings, no significant financial violations

Additional Eligibility Requirements

For Major Impact Threshold (\$25,001 - \$75,000) only:

- Annual organizational budget of at least \$75,000 OR demonstrated management of projects >\$10,000
- Track record of at least one previous project with budget >\$10,000 successfully implemented

Required Documentation

All Sprint Applicants:

- IRS determination letter (or official letterhead documentation for municipal related entities)
- Simple project budget using GPLC template
- Previous year's year-end financial statements (board-approved)
- Current year organizational budget (year-to-date)

Additional Documentation Requirements

For Major Impact Threshold (\$25,001 - \$75,000) Applicants Only:

- Brief organizational description including staff capacity for project related activities (1 page maximum)
- Description of previous successful project with budget >\$10,000
- Detailed project timeline with milestones

Allowable Costs

Direct Program Costs (*Primary Focus*)

- Materials and supplies directly related to project activities
- Event and programming costs: venue rental, speaker fees, participant materials
- Marketing and outreach: project-specific promotional materials
- Local travel directly related to project implementation
- Participant support: refreshments, materials, accessibility accommodations

Project Personnel (*Limited*)

- Staff allocated to project outcomes (with time tracking)
- Hourly or project-based professional services
- Short-term personnel hired specifically for project activities

Project Equipment (*Limited*)

- Equipment and technology essential for project delivery
- 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%** for project administration, permits, financial tracking, evaluation, compliance, and partnership coordination

Restricted Categories

- **General organizational operating expenses unrelated to project**
- **Project staff benefits:** Health insurance, retirement contributions, other standard benefits
- **Equipment not directly essential to project delivery**
- **Fundraising or 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	10%	Connection to regional development and GPLC strategic priorities
Amplification Factor	15%	Resource multiplication potential and building on existing investments
Measurable Impact	25%	Quantifiable targets for increased activity and economic impact
Vibrant Place Development	35%	Physical, social, and cultural enhancement of place quality
Execution Strength	15%	Organizational capacity and project feasibility

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 or successful pilot approaches
- Exceptional community engagement with documented commitments
- Strong data collection plans contributing to regional learning

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:** January 28, 2026
- **Application Deadline:** March 1, 2026 at 11:59 pm Eastern
- **Review Period:** March 2026
- **Recipients Notified:** April 2026
- **Project Period:** May 2026 - October 2026 (*targeted, though open to adjustments for seasonality or community calendar considerations*)

How to Apply

1. Complete RFP required responses using GPLC online portal at www.choosegreaterpeoria.org/gplc
2. Upload all required documentation with application

Support Available

- Basic application assistance
- Budget template resources

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. All funds remain restricted to approved activities and require financial tracking capability for compliance.

Reporting

- **Final Report:** Due 30 days after project completion

Financial Management

- Detailed budget categories with specific allocation
- Time and effort reporting for personnel costs
- Receipt documentation for all purchases
- Competitive procurement documentation required for equipment >\$10,000

Pre-Approval Required

- Budget modifications >10% between categories
- Equipment/Technology Over \$10,000: Requires GPLC pre-approval with documented competitive procurement process
- Timeline changes affecting costs

Special Considerations

Geographical Focus

- **Regional Core** preferred for vibrancy and place-building effectiveness
- **Cross-river coordination** preferred for maximum impact and connectivity

Innovation and Impact

- **Creative solutions** to connectivity and coordination challenges encouraged
- **Measurable outcomes** that demonstrate increased community engagement
- **Scalable approaches** that can be replicated or expanded

Contact Information

Grant Operations Team

Greater Peoria Leadership Council

Kristin Zika

kzika@greater-peoria.org

Director of Operations & Grant Management

Questions?

- Email grant operations team for eligibility clarification and general submission support
- Applications must be submitted by 11:59 PM on March 1, 2026. Late applications will not be considered.

Addendum: RFP Specific Responses Required

SECTION A: BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION

A1. Project Title (*25 words maximum*)

A2. Requested Amount

Quick Impact Threshold: \$5,000 - \$25,000 Major Impact Threshold: \$25,001 - \$75,000

A3. Project Duration (*3-6 months*) Start Date: _____ End Date: _____

A4. Primary Focus Area (*Check all that apply*)

Regional Core Beautification Regional Core Programming Regional Core Hospitality

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. Organization Eligibility (*Check one*)

501(c)(3) organization Municipal department/agency
 Peoria/East Peoria public school/park district GPLC Partner CDO

A7. Project Summary (*300 words maximum*) Provide a clear, concise description of your project and its primary activities.

SECTION B: REGIONAL ALIGNMENT (10% of score)

B1. Regional Core Impact (*150 words maximum*) How will this project specifically benefit the Greater Peoria Regional Core? Address cross-river coordination if applicable.

B2. Alignment with GPLC Priorities (*150 words maximum*) How does this project support GPLC's strategic focus areas: attracting talent, promoting unified regional identity, and/or building a vibrant regional core?

SECTION C: MEASURABLE IMPACT (25% of score)

C1. Current Baseline (*200 words maximum*)

Please describe the current conditions in your project area that demonstrate the need for this grant. Your baseline should help us understand what exists now and why your project is needed. Consider describing:

- Current activity levels (estimated daily foot traffic, typical event attendance)
- Present business environment (number of active businesses, general vacancy observations)
- Existing physical state (infrastructure condition, aesthetic qualities, accessibility, safety)
- Existing community connections (current partnerships, resident engagement, visitor patterns)

- **Please cite data sources used:** Simple observation, existing reports, basic counts, community feedback, local business input

C2. Quantifiable Target Outcomes: Choose Your Top Metrics (*Complete only those most relevant to your project*)

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

- Participation:** Expected participants/attendees: _____
- Activity Increase:** Foot traffic increase: _____ % OR _____ additional people
- Engagement:** New visitors to Regional Core you expect to attract: _____
- Business Impact:** Number of businesses participating/benefiting from project: _____
- Community Sentiment:** Positive community feedback target: _____ % positive responses OR _____ positive testimonials
- Media/Visibility:** Social media reach/media coverage target: _____

C3. Simple Project Outcomes Measurement Plan aligned to your chosen metrics (150 words maximum)

Please describe how you will track and document the changes your project creates. Your measurement plan should be simple and realistic for your organization to implement using basic tools and existing resources.

- Photos (before/during/after)
- Simple counts (attendees, participants, businesses engaged)
- Basic surveys (1-2 questions via text/email)
- Social media metrics (posts, engagement, reach)
- Timeline: When will you collect data? (start, midpoint, end)

C4. Success Story (250 words maximum)

In your own words, what will success look like for your project? Highlight the measurable outcomes you expect from this project. Describe the visible change you expect to create and how the community will experience the difference your project makes.

SECTION D: VIBRANT PLACE DEVELOPMENT (35% of score)

D1. Place Quality Enhancement (300 words maximum) How will this project improve the physical environment, social connections, community character, or overall vibrancy of the targeted area?

D2. Community Engagement Strategy (100 words maximum) How will you engage local residents, businesses, or visitors? What partnerships will enhance the project's impact?

SECTION E: EXECUTION STRENGTH (15% of score)

E1. Organizational Capacity (100 words maximum) Briefly describe your organization's experience with similar projects and your team's qualifications for this work.

E2. Project Timeline (List 3-5 key milestones with dates)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SECTION F: AMPLIFICATION (15% of score)

F1. Resource Amplification (*200 words maximum*) What additional resources (funding, volunteers, partnerships, in-kind support) will this grant leverage? Include dollar amounts and partner commitments.

F2. Catalyst Effect (*200 words maximum*) How might this project inspire additional initiatives or motivate others to invest in similar Regional Core improvements?

F3. Sustainability (*150 words maximum*) How will positive impacts continue after the grant period ends? How will initial success attract additional resources or support?

SECTION G: BUDGET SUMMARY

G1. Total Project Budget

- GPLC Grant Request: \$_____
- Other Funding Sources: \$_____
- In-Kind Contributions: \$_____
- **Total Project Value:** \$_____

G2. Budget Categories (*Upload GPLC Sprint Grant Budget Template*)

- Direct Program Costs: \$_____
- Project Personnel: \$_____
- Project Equipment: \$_____
- Project Overhead (max 10%): \$_____

G3. Budget Narrative: *Include brief explanations for major budget categories - Direct Program Costs, Project Personnel, Project Equipment, and Overhead (100 words maximum)*

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

All Sprint Grant Applications

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

Additional Documentation Requirements for Major Impact Threshold (\$25,001 - \$50,000)

- Brief organizational description including staff capacity for project activities (1 page maximum)
- Description of previous successful project with budget >\$10,000
- Detailed project timeline with milestones