

HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA

2026 Request for Applications

Hennepin Planning Grant Program



Application period opens:

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Closing date for all questions:

Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Solicitation due date: Thursday,

April 2, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.



Hennepin Planning Grant Program Guidelines

Background

The Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (“HCHRA”) is soliciting applications for the Hennepin Planning Grant (the “Grant”). As used herein, the entity/individual responsible for any awarded Grant may be referred to as the “Applicant” and the Applicant’s response to this request for applications (the “RFA”) may be referred to as the “Application”.

HCHRA’s Hennepin Planning Grants (“HPG”) program supports land use planning efforts to create a more human-centered and resilient built environment. Land use development patterns and associated infrastructure and the resulting travel behavior have a significant relationship to greenhouse gas emissions, public health indicators, racial disparities, and economic resiliency. Transforming existing corridors and small areas from segregated-use, auto-oriented areas to more compact, walkable environments requires intentional visioning and clear planning direction. Building on the success of previous years, the 2026 HPG program continues to support transformative, implementable, planning efforts, with particular attention on addressing economic and climate resilience and equitable development. Successful applicants will work with a consultant currently under contract with HCHRA for the HPG program to carry out the approved project.

The HPG program goals are to:

- Transition single-use, auto-centric areas into more compact, mixed-use places with a high-quality public realm that encourages walking and rolling
- Improve connectivity between destinations (home, jobs, educational opportunities, commercial, recreation) via walking, biking, or transit
- Expand economic opportunities and housing choices
- Promote equitable development, community wealth building and economic inclusion
- Support land use changes that balance development with ecological enhancement, and contribute to reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions
- Create places that are more economically and climate resilient.

For 2026, applicants will identify their most pressing land use challenge(s) related to one of the above listed HPG program goals. Applicants should address:

- Why this is a challenge of interest to their agency/community?
- What is the goal or desired change? Think broadly about potential total impact and long-term results of the project. For example, “improved infrastructure and environment to increase walking or biking” or “redevelopment area includes mixed-use developments with an increase in options affordable to residents” rather than a specific

item such as “new sidewalks on a street to address walkability.”

- What supporting, adjacent, or related work or conversations have taken place relevant to the identified challenge; has there been a community conversation, guidance from stakeholder groups, policymaker direction, staff initiatives, or complementary investments?
- Will the planning grant project affect foundational issues to creating more compact and walkable places?
- What is the path to implementing any changes that are identified through this process?

Successful applicants will work with an HPG program consultant for their project. Consultant selection will be based on the challenges(s) identified by the awardee and their goals, and the consultant’s experience and approach via discussion between city and Hennepin County Housing and Economic Development (HED) staff, who administer the HPG program for HCHRA. Applicants are encouraged to remain open to a range of solutions rather than starting with a fixed outcome.

HCHRA has selected consultants for HPG projects via a separate competitive request for proposal process to provide Hennepin Planning Grant services. A preference will be to match consultants with projects in communities where they have not previously performed planning related work to foster new ideas and approaches to the challenges identified by Awardees.

Consultants under contract for the 2026 Hennepin Planning Grant Program are:

- Bolton & Menk
- Cardo, Inc
- LHB
- NEOO Partners
- VanMeter Williams Pollack

The selected consultant will work closely with awardees to understand the challenge, need, and goals identified in their application, any adjacent or related issues or concerns, stakeholders, history, and potential impacts of possible solutions. HCHRA intends to have selected cities and their consultant work with Hennepin County HED staff to host a design workshop with all consultants on the HPG consulting roster. The design workshop will be held approximately halfway through the project and will provide an opportunity to get additional feedback and ideas to encourage creative and innovative solutions to the challenge at hand. Awardees will receive a plan or report from their consulting team addressing the identified issue for potential adoption and implementation.

Hennepin County HED manages several other HCHRA and County programs that provide place-based assistance to cities, including the Business District Initiative and Active Living grants. HCHRA reserves the right to refer applicants to, or consider applications under, other programs that may be better aligned with proposed project goals, as timing and funding allows

Funding

HCHRA will contract directly with consultants for the scope of work covered by the HCHRA award, and awardees will contract directly with the selected consultant for their portion of the scope of work. A monetary (not in-kind) match is expected from applicants, based on population under the local authority's jurisdiction:

Population	County Award	City Match (min)	Total Project Cost
Greater than 40,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000
15,000 to 40,000	\$50,000	\$17,500	\$67,500
Fewer than 15,000	\$50,000	\$5,000	\$55,000

- Consideration will be given if financial constraints affect your ability to meet this match. Please detail any challenges in your application.
- Project scopes are expected to take place in an approximately six-to-nine-month timeframe.
- Projects should be completed by December 31, 2026.

HCHRA anticipates providing \$50,000 in funding per project. The final funding amount may be less depending on project scope. Up to \$200,000 is available across the Business District Initiative and Hennepin Planning Grants programs.

Requirements

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for HPG assistance, the applicant must be a municipal government or economic development/housing and redevelopment/port authority within Hennepin County. The Local Governmental Unit (LGU) applying must have authority to adopt and implement any plan or policy created through the HPG project and sign any agreements with the HCHRA as a responsible party to carry out the work. Applications submitted by LGUs that do not have jurisdiction over the type of project or geography that is the subject of the proposal will not be considered.

Eligible Activities

The Hennepin Planning Grants program supports land use planning and development-related projects that are at a small geographic scale, rather than city-wide plans, including:

- Small area plans
- Station area plans
- Master plans
- Green infrastructure or district system planning, such as for energy or stormwater
- District or shared parking studies designed to support sustainable urban design

- Other types of plans and studies advancing program goals may be considered.

Ineligible activities include:

- Local government staff time
- Reimbursements to consultants who function as a planner for a local government
- Capital costs and equipment
- Highway or roadway-oriented transportation plans
- General city-wide market studies
- General sewer, water, or utility infrastructure planning
- Stand-alone traffic or parking studies
- Market analyses or feasibility studies unless part of a larger project

Contracting and Reporting

HCHRA will contract directly with selected Program consultant(s) for the portion of the proposed work covered under the HPG award. Awardees will contract directly with the selected Program consultant(s) for the proportion of the work covered by their match. Any grant agreement resulting from this RFA will be a written instrument or electronic document defining the legal relationship between HCHRA as the granting agency, and the consultant selected on behalf of the Grantee through the process described in this RFA. The purpose of this relationship and agreement is to transfer public funds to the consultant to support a public purpose authorized by law. A separate Acknowledgement of Award letter will outline the relationship between the HCHRA and Grantee and will address project goals, each party's responsibilities, and the amount and terms of the city's matching funds to be paid to the selected consultant. By comparison, the grant agreement is not a professional or technical contract where the HCHRA is acquiring goods or services for HCHRA's direct benefit or use.

HCHRA requires all awarded projects to include a final report summarizing the process, outcomes, and impacts of the completed work and a memorandum, upon request, detailing feedback on how to improve the HPG program and application process.

HCHRA is obligated to follow the Minnesota Data Practices Act, which means that applications will likely be public data after the evaluation and selection process. A statement identifying data as copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the data contained in the response if such data does not qualify as trade secret data.

Receiving funds through this program does not guarantee that future capital funding will be made available.

Requests for Applications (RFA) Process

Applications will be received in the Hennepin County [Supplier Portal](#). In order to submit an Application, you must first register with the Supplier Portal. For more information on how to register, please go to the [Supplier Portal help page](#). Applicants are urged to be as complete with

their application as possible. Clear and concise responses are appreciated, and bulleted points are encouraged.

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to make their submissions well in advance of the application due date as the process may take some time to complete. Failure to submit an application on time may be grounds for rejection of the application; however, HCHRA reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to accept applications after the time and date specified.
- **Applications are due by 3:00 p.m. April 2, 2026.** Applications must be submitted through Hennepin County's Supplier Portal, accessible via the Hennepin County HPG website. Incomplete applications or applications submitted outside of the designated Supplier Portal may not be reviewed.

Applications must include the following items:

- Hennepin Planning Grant application
- Map(s) of the project area(s)
- Letters of resolution or support (recommended)

Applicant shall be solely responsible for securing all additional funds necessary for completion of the Project.

When submitting an Application, Applicants must follow the specific format and content requirements in these guidelines and in the application. Failure to do so will likely prolong the evaluation process and/or may be grounds for rejection of the Application.

Applicant shall describe, in detail, the proposed uses of the Grant funds for the Project. Any other use of Grant funds is strictly prohibited. Applicant shall be solely responsible for securing all additional funds necessary for completion of the Project.

By submitting an Application, Applicant agrees to only use the Grant funds for the uses indicated above. Use of Grant funds for any other purpose is strictly prohibited. If Applicant uses Grant funds for any other purpose, Applicant shall, upon HCHRA's written demand, repay all Grant funds awarded.

These dates are subject to revision or cancellation by HCHRA in its sole and absolute discretion. Funding recommendations and consultant assignments are anticipated in June. Awards are not final until approved by the Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

Inquiries

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to review projects with HED staff prior to application submittal. Questions regarding specific program requirements or the application after March 5 must be submitted via email to Laura Fredrick, laura.fredrick@hennepin.us, no later than March 26 at 3:00 p.m.

HED staff cannot respond to questions about program requirements or projects after the March 26 deadline. Responses will be posted by 12:00 p.m., March 27, in the Supplier Portal. Send questions to:

Subject line: Hennepin Planning Grants RFA

To: Laura Fredrick, Laura.Fredrick@hennepin.us

cc: Ryan Kelley, Ryan.Kelley@hennepin.us and

Christine Longwell, Christine.Longwell@hennepin.us

Applicant-specific written notes will, in accordance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, be considered public data after the conclusion of any negotiation process resulting from this RFA.

Application Evaluation and Recommendation for Selection

LGUs submitting HPG applications must have the authority to adopt the plan or policy being developed in the proposed project and jurisdiction over land use changes in the project area. Applications from entities that do not have the authority for adoption will not be considered. HPG application evaluation will consider the following:

1. Alignment with Hennepin Planning Grant program goals. How well might the project:
 - Support a change in the built environment to create or expand a more compact, walkable development pattern, as demonstrated by high intersection density, public and private realm prioritizing pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Expand economic opportunity, housing choices, and improve connectivity among jobs, housing and services via transit, walking, etc.
 - Address sustainability, climate resilience, and VMT reduction through the anticipated changed built environment
 - Demonstrate how a disparities reduction and racial equity-lens will be used in project design and implementation
 - Identify stakeholders who may need to be engaged during project work
 - Generate measurable, positive impacts commensurate with the public investment

2. Importance of identified issue:
 - Provides clear description of the challenge/issues facing the community, including causes and impacts
 - Impact of change on the surrounding area
 - Provides clear explanation of how a Planning Grant might help address the challenge/issue
 - Clearly identified target area (please attach a map and images to give context of area)

- Demonstrates willingness to support change on this problem, and/or track record of prior related or complementary efforts
 - Demonstrates an understanding of stakeholders impacted by the problem and their potential role in creating solutions
3. Value of planning effort to the city and to Hennepin County as a whole:
- Shows a collaborative approach to developing strategies with HCHRA, consultants, and other identified stakeholders
 - Commitment to tracking deliverables and outcomes
 - Ties to community's goals, priorities, and long-range plans
 - Level of policymaker support for engaging in planning efforts
 - Demonstrates organizational capacity and staff commitment to support the work
 - Explains why HCHRA support is essential to addressing the identified challenge.

Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of Hennepin County Housing and Economic Development staff and additional reviewers as deemed necessary to thoroughly evaluate applications.

HCHRA reserves the right to determine whether any aspect of the Application satisfactorily meets the criteria, the right to seek clarification or additional information from any Applicant(s), and the right to waive any irregularities or informalities that HCHRA deems are in the best interests of the public purpose of the grant. Submission of an Application shall neither obligate nor entitle an Applicant to enter into a grant agreement with HCHRA or to receive any grant funds.

Debarment

HCHRA will reject an application if the Applicant, its proposed subcontractors, its sub-grantees, its co-applicants, or its affiliates are barred from doing business with either the Federal or State of Minnesota Governments as a result of debarment proceedings. Persons or entities are affiliates of each other if, directly or indirectly, either one controls or has the power to control the other or a third party controls or has the power to control both. The ways to determine control include but are not limited to:

- o Interlocking management or ownership,
- o Identity of interests among family members,
- o Shared facilities and equipment,
- o Common use of employees; or
- o A business entity which has been organized following the exclusion of a person which has the same or similar management, ownership, or principal employees as the excluded person.

Evaluation of responsiveness

HCHRA will consider all the material submitted by the Applicant to determine whether the Applicant's application is in compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in this RFA. Applications that do not comply with the provisions in this RFA may be considered nonresponsive and may be rejected. Notwithstanding the foregoing, HCHRA expressly reserves the right to reject any or all Applications with or without cause.

Execution of Grant agreement

HCHRA may condition the Grant award upon Applicant's execution of a Grant agreement provided by HCHRA with a selected consultant and an acknowledgement of Award agreement with Applicant. As applicable, the Acknowledgement of Award letter shall define the legal relationship between HCHRA and Applicant.

General rules

Addenda

The HCHRA reserves the right to modify this RFA at any time prior to the Application due date. An addendum will be posted in the Supplier Portal if the RFA is modified. Addenda may be viewed by clicking on the 'View Documents' on the Event Details page. It is the responsibility of each prospective Applicant to assure receipt of all addenda.

HCHRA will modify the RFA only by formal written addenda. Applications should be based on this Solicitation document and any formal written addenda. Applicants should not rely on oral statements, or site visits.

County's right to withdraw, cancel, suspend and/or modify the Request for Applications

The County reserves the right to withdraw, cancel, suspend, and/or modify this Solicitation for any reason and at any time with no liability to any prospective Applicant for any costs or expenses incurred in connection with the Solicitation or otherwise.

Applicant's right to edit or cancel an Application

An Application may be edited or cancelled in the Supplier Portal prior to the Application due date. For instructions, go to the [Supplier Portal help page](#).

Applications will not be returned

Upon submission, Applications will not be returned.

Applicant's costs

HCHRA shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by Applicant in relation to this Solicitation. Applicant shall bear all costs of Application preparation, submission, and attendance at interviews, or any other activity associated with this Solicitation or otherwise.

Conflict of interest

The Applicant affirms that to the best of its knowledge the submission of its Application, or any resulting Grant award, does not present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Strictly for illustration purposes, a personal relationship with a County employee directly or indirectly involved in the Grant evaluation or management process may be a conflict of interest.

The Applicant agrees that should any actual or perceived conflict of interest become known, it will immediately notify HCHRA and will advise whether it will or will not avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the conflict of interest.

HCHRA may make reasonable efforts to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize a conflict of interest by an Applicant. To avoid a conflict of interest by an Applicant, HCHRA may utilize methods including disqualifying an Applicant from eligibility for the Grant or terminating the Grant if the conflict is discovered after the Grant has been issued. HCHRA may, at its sole and absolute discretion, waive any conflict of interest.

4 Attachments

Attachment 1 – Application Format and Content

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Please complete the Grant Application Form, and attachments, provided in the Event Details.