



ARAPAHOE COUNTY OPEN SPACES

2021 Open Space Grant Application Instructions

Important Dates:

Application Available: **January 15, 2021**

Completed Applications Due: **April 16, 2021**

Awards Announced: **August 10, 2021***

** Expected announcement in late July, however date may change due to BoCC meeting schedules.*

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General Information

Grant Program Information:

The Arapahoe County Open Space Resolution states that 12% of annual Open Space Sales and Use Tax revenue shall be invested in communities throughout Arapahoe County through a grants program. The goal is to fund eligible projects that address local needs for open spaces, parks, and trails. Eligible entities for grant funding include incorporated municipalities within the County, recreation districts, and special districts which provide recreational services or amenities.

Since 2005, Arapahoe County has invested over \$43 million in more than 230 projects, in partnership with 25 communities across the County to expand and improve trails, open spaces, and parks.

2021 Grant Cycle:

Arapahoe County Open Spaces has allocated \$4 million for a single grant cycle in 2021, to be awarded in three categories:

- **\$3,000,000 for Standard Grants:** grants of \$100,001 to \$500,000, requiring a minimum of 25% total project cost cash match
- **Up to \$500,000 for Small Grants:** grants of \$1,000 to \$100,000, requiring a minimum of 10% total project cost cash match
- **Up to \$500,000 for Planning Grants:** grants of \$1,000 to \$100,000, requiring a minimum of 10% total project cost cash match

Each agency may submit up to three applications, to include no more than two Standard Grant applications.

Application Due Date:

Applications must be RECEIVED by Arapahoe County Open Spaces by 11:59 PM on Friday, April 16, 2021. You are encouraged to contact Grants Program staff to confirm eligibility for your proposed project before applying.

Application Format and Submission:

Applications must be submitted through the [Arapahoe County Open Spaces Online Grant Portal](#). Several required forms are available on the [ACOS website](#) and must be uploaded as attachments to the grant application. Please note allowable file formats, file size limits, and recommended file names for attachments. Additionally, please note character limits for narrative questions. Specific requirements are provided in the application.

Draft Application Review:

You are encouraged to submit a complete draft of your application for review by March 26, 2021. Applications will be reviewed by Grants Program staff in the order in which they are received. Draft applications submitted after this deadline will be reviewed as staff time allows. A review does not guarantee that the project will be funded.

Draft applications should be emailed to sbottoms@arapahoegov.com. Do not submit your application in the online system until it is ready for final submission.

You can download a PDF of your draft application in the online system by clicking the Application Packet button at the top right of the application screen. If you draft your application in Microsoft Word, please assemble a grant packet for review.

Minimum Qualifications and Eligibility

Eligibility Criteria:

Your agency and project must meet all of the following criteria and minimum qualifications to be eligible for grant funding.

Eligible Applicants: Entities in Arapahoe County eligible to apply for grant funds are:

- Incorporated municipalities
- Recreation districts
- Special districts which provide recreational services or amenities

Types of Grant Projects: Eligible project categories are:

- **Site Improvement Projects:** New construction, improvement, repair, or replacement of eligible outdoor recreation facilities or amenities (such as playgrounds, shelters, sports fields or courts, restrooms, landscaping, or interior trail segments/connections)
- **Trail Projects:** Trail/trailhead construction or improvement, including stream/road crossings and trailhead amenities (such as parking or shelters)
- **Environmental/Cultural Education Projects:** Environmental/cultural education or interpretation outreach materials (such as printed materials, video, or displays), installations (such as signage or conservation demonstration projects), or associated outdoor amenities (such as shelters or native landscaping)
- **Planning Projects:** Plans for a system (such as trail system or park system), a defined site (such as a park, historic site, or trailhead), or an agency (such as a departmental strategic plan or maintenance plan)
- **Acquisition Projects:** Eligible projects include fee simple acquisition of land for public open space, parks, or trails; acquisition of buffer land; acquisition of a conservation easement or trail easement; or acquisition of water rights (*additional application materials are required - contact Grants Program staff if you are considering an acquisition project*)
- **Other Projects:** Other allowable projects include stream/habitat restoration, natural re-vegetation, and water quality improvement (*contact Grants Program staff to confirm eligibility for this project type*)

Minimum Qualifications:

- Applicants must be in good standing with ACOS based on current and/or past grant performance (factors include compliance with reporting requirements, timeliness of project completion, maintenance of completed projects, good communication with Grants Program staff, appropriate acknowledgement of funding source, etc.)
- Applicants must discuss how project aligns with Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan; Arapahoe County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, agency master plan; or other approved planning documents. ACOS plans are available on the [Planning Documents](#) page of the ACOS website.
- Applicants must discuss how project addresses specific objectives set forth in the [County Open Space Resolution #030381/#110637](#).

Budget, Eligible Expenses, and Matching Requirements

Applicants must provide a Budget Narrative and Budget Forms:

- The Budget Narrative should be clear and concise. Include details about expenses in each budget category, justification for any unusual line items, and an explanation of how you arrived at cost estimates. Discuss amounts and sources of cash/in-kind match.
- Budget Forms include the **Summary Budget Form** and the **Detailed Expense Budget Form**. Forms are available on the ACOS website. Completed forms must be attached to your application as a single PDF document. Sample Budget Forms are available on the ACOS website for reference. Budget Forms must include grant funds and cash match (including applicant and partner cash match). Please do not include in-kind match on the Budget Forms.
 - The Summary Budget Form provides an overview of funding sources and calculates the total project cost (grant funds plus cash match) as well as cash match percentage.
 - The Detailed Expense Budget Form must be completed with sufficient detail to be accepted. Expenses must be grouped into categories, then broken down into the detailed use of funds within each category by line item and cost.

Allowable Uses of Grant Funds:

Allowable uses of grant funds must meet the guidelines set forth in the County Open Space Resolution #030381, as amended by Resolution #110637. [The Open Space Resolution is available on the ACOS website](#). If there is any question about whether your proposed project is consistent with the Resolution, please contact County Grants Program staff.

Ineligible Costs Include (but are not limited to):

- Outdoor performance venues and amphitheaters
- Concession stands and storage buildings
- Indoor facilities (such as community centers, recreation centers, and sports domes)
- Pools
- Purchase of non-fixed assets (such as lawn mowers, snow blowers, and weed eaters)
- Applicant and partner staff time (not including project management or other work completed by a consultant or contractor for specific components of the grant)
- Work completed prior to grant award and entrance into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)
- Administrative costs (photocopies, mileage, food, grand opening costs, grant writing, legal fees, etc.)
- Parking lots, roundabouts, sidewalks, and other amenities NOT directly associated with an eligible outdoor recreation project

Minimum Cash Match Requirements:

All applicants must provide a minimum percentage of cash match. Note that cash match requirements are calculated based on the total project cost, not the grant request amount.

- **Standard Grants:** minimum of 25% total project cost cash match
- **Small Grants and Planning Grants:** minimum of 10% total project cost cash match

Matching Funds:

Matching funds include cash match from the applicant and project partners. Cash match must be described in the Budget Narrative and included on the Budget Forms. The source of cash match must be clearly indicated. If applicable, cash match from partners must be documented with an official letter of support and included as an attachment to the application.

Funds from another Arapahoe County Open Space grant cannot be used as match, however shareback funds may be used as match. If you are waiting for results from another grant source to count as match at the time of submission, clearly document the funding source, anticipated amount, and expected notification date in the application. The applicant must provide a copy of the award letter to ACOS upon receiving notification from the funding source. If you are awaiting results from an outside funding source, you should have enough contingency budgeted to cover the project cost in case the outside funds are not awarded. Projects are expected to be completed as presented in the application if Open Space grant funds are awarded.

In-Kind Match:

In-kind match is not included in the Total Project Cost or on the Budget Forms. If applicable, describe any in-kind match in the Budget Narrative and Project Narrative sections of the application.

Contingency Planning and Cost Overruns:

All cost overruns are the responsibility of the Grantee. It is highly recommended that applicants budget for project contingency and potential overages. Contingency funds cannot be charged to the County grant and cannot count toward the minimum cash match requirement.

Direct Costs Associated with Preplanning:

If you have incurred direct costs associated with the project for design and planning, you may request that those costs incurred within 90 days of the application submission deadline be applied toward your cash match requirement. Additionally, you may request that planning costs incurred after the grant application deadline but before an IGA is executed (such as finalizing construction documents or acquiring permits) be counted toward the cash match requirement. Requests will be reviewed by County Grants Program staff and must be approved prior to applying. You may not include staff time or overhead costs.

Cost Underruns:

Excess funds may not be transferred to another project or account. Unused excess funds must be returned to the County Open Space Program prior to project close out.

Additional Requirements

Project Scope, Location, and Readiness:

Each application should focus on one project and one location/site. Proposals for multi-site projects (for example, updating signage throughout a park system) should be discussed with County Grants Program staff prior to submitting an application to determine eligibility. Provide the project site address and GPS coordinates. [ArapaMAP](#) or Google Maps may be used to find GPS coordinates. Projects should be ready to start upon award notification and must be completed within two years. A complex multi-year project should be broken into phases that can be reasonably completed within two years. In the event that an application is for a single phase of a larger project, applicants should briefly discuss past/future phases in the narrative section of the proposal. Grant funding is not guaranteed for future phases of the project.

Note: If a construction project is not “ready” from a planning perspective, the applicant should consider applying for a Planning Grant or delay the application until the planning process is complete. Projects that are not well planned or well budgeted will not meet minimum qualifications and will be disqualified from the competitive evaluation process.

Timeline:

Applicants are required to submit a Project Timeline Form with their application. The project timeline should be detailed, realistic, and correlate to the Project Narrative. The purpose of the timeline is to encourage the applicant to think about the various components of the project, the activities required to complete them, and how to meet the two-year deadline.

The proposed timeline should allow 30-60 days after the grant is awarded for an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to be executed. Grantees may not spend any grant funds until the IGA is fully executed. The IGA must be signed and returned to County Grants Program staff within 60 days of award notification. The project start date is the date the IGA is fully executed by the County. Grantees are allowed two years from this date to complete the project.

Capacity:

Applicants must demonstrate capacity to manage, implement, and maintain the project. Capacity must be discussed in the Project Narrative and supporting documentation should be available to the County upon request. Additionally, a statement of commitment to complete and maintain the project is included on the required Certification and Authorized Signature Form.

Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

The Project Narrative should explain how the project will reasonably accommodate users with disabilities.

Evidence of Support from Highest Authority in the Agency:

An official resolution or letter of commitment from the highest authority in the agency (mayor, board of directors/board chair, etc.) is required. The resolution or letter must be dated within the last 6

months and be specific to the proposed project. At a minimum, this document must include the following information:

- Project title;
- Amount of grant funds requested;
- Statement that matching funds are secured and/or efforts to secure funds are underway (include the amount of matching funds committed);
- Certification that the project will be open to the public or serve a public purpose upon completion

Public Input, Community Support, and Opposition:

The applicant should spend adequate time garnering internal and public support prior to submitting a grant proposal. These efforts should be discussed in detail in the Project Narrative. Please note that some jurisdictions may have specific public outreach requirements for land use approvals.

Support letters from users, working groups, community members, volunteers, schools, etc. are encouraged and should be dated within the past 6 months. Include support letters in the Attachments section of the application.

Any objections, opposition, or controversy related to the project must be disclosed in the application. Include evidence of opposition to the project, such as letters, petitions, or news articles, in the Attachments section of the application.

Project Partners:

If applicable, discuss project-related partnerships in the Project Narrative and attach evidence of commitment from project partners (such as partner support letters, commitment to provide matching funds, or maintenance agreement) in the Attachments section of the application. Partner letters must be dated within the last 6 months and be specific to the proposed project. Partners may include municipalities or special districts, recreation and conservation groups, schools, businesses, homeowners' associations, etc.

Photos and Maps:

Applicants must provide photos of existing conditions at the project site in the Attachments section of the application. Please upload one high quality "before" JPG photo that you feel best represents the project as a whole – this photo will be used by ACOS for presentations and publications related to the grant. Please use a photo without any text or graphics. Upload any additional photos (include captions) as a single PDF document.

Additionally, applicants must provide maps of the project site. Please include a site map and a vicinity map as a single PDF in the Attachments section of the application.

Property Ownership, Legal Access, and Public Purpose:

All properties on which Open Space grant funded projects are located must be owned by or under control of the applicant. Applicant is required to provide evidence of ownership or legal access without trespassing on adjacent property.

If the property is owned by a third party, an Intergovernmental Agreement or other contract between the applicant and the property owner is required at the time of application. Applicants must provide proof that the property will be open to the public for the useful life of the proposed improvements. Other scenarios must be approved by County Grants Program staff to confirm eligibility before submitting your application. All projects funded through the ACOS Grants Program must be open to the public or serve a public purpose upon completion.

Encumbrances at Project Site:

Applicant is responsible for conducting pre-submittal research to identify any encumbrances or obstacles which could prevent a project from moving forward in a timely fashion. Applicant is required to provide information regarding easements, floodplain status, use restrictions, zoning, permitting, utilities, liens, hazards, and third-party control/interest in the project site. Applicant must be able to provide any additional information that may be requested by the County.

Evidence of Pre-Submittal Planning Process and Budgeting:

Applicant should have the details of this project internally vetted, approved, and budgeted, with matching funds committed by the local agency prior to requesting County grant funds. For construction projects, applicants are encouraged to have the project initially reviewed by the governing jurisdiction’s planning department before submitting an application.

Applicants should describe any planning completed prior to submitting the proposal in the Project Narrative and itemize anticipated costs for fees, permits, etc. on the Budget Forms. Examples include:

- Planning/engineering review
- Building permits
- Surveying or mapping
- Environmental assessment
- Site cleanup or remediation
- Consulting fees
- Utility fees
- Grading, drainage, erosion, and sediment control plans/fees

Projects in unincorporated Arapahoe County may require an approved location and extent plan (L&E) with the County’s Public Works Department prior to construction. Fees charged by the County for planning/engineering review or permits may be included in the grant request and shown as an expense against the grant in the budget.

Evaluation Process

Applications are screened for eligibility and minimum qualifications by County Grants Program staff. If all eligibility criteria and minimum qualifications are met, then the grant application will be evaluated in the competitive process. Evaluators include County staff and members of the Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB).

The grant evaluation team will conduct site visits to proposed project sites approximately 4-6 weeks after the grant application deadline. Applicants will receive notification of their scheduled site visit date and time within approximately one week of the application deadline. Applicants have approximately 20 minutes to meet with evaluators at the project site and answer any evaluator questions. Applicants may provide a one-page project summary handout (optional), but may not provide any other materials to evaluators during the site visit. The applicant will be notified if any follow-up information is requested by the evaluators.

** Please note that the site visit process may vary in 2021 to address state and local guidance related to COVID-19. Applicants will receive updates in the spring.*

Proposals are evaluated and ranked based on the merits of the project. The evaluation process considers the accuracy of the proposal in conveying the need, urgency, and scope of the project; the leveraging dollars/cash match provided for the project; the ability of the applicant to achieve the proposed results according to the budget, supporting documentation, and timeline; and the capacity of the applicant to complete the project and maintain the project site.

Standard, Small, and Planning Grant requests will be ranked separately. Projects will be funded in order of rank in each category until allocated funds for the grant cycle have been expended. County staff and OSTAB will make final recommendations for funding to the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC). Funding announcements will be made following BoCC approval.

Post-Award Requirements

Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA):

Grant awards are subject to an IGA between the County and the Grantee. ACOS will provide IGAs to grantees within one week of the grant award. IGAs must be signed by the person with appropriate signature authority and returned to ACOS within 60 days for full execution. The project start date is the date the IGA is fully executed by the County. Projects must be completed within two years of this date.

The County has the right to require additional conditions in the IGA based on project details or the Grantee's history with the ACOS Grants Program.

Grant Funds Disbursement:

Grant funds disbursement will be detailed in the IGA. Grants payments are made by ACH transfer. Awards of more than \$100,000 will be paid on a reimbursement basis. Partial reimbursement may be requested with any Progress Report. A minimum of 25% of grant funds will be held until project close-out. Requests for reimbursement must include financial documentation/proof of expenditures.

Grants of \$100,000 or less are typically paid up front at the discretion of ACOS staff and OSTAB.

Project Start Date:

The project start date is the date the IGA is fully executed with the County. Grant funds may not be spent until this date. Any matching funds spent before this date must be pre-approved by Grants Program staff and clearly identified in the grant application budget.

Reporting Requirements:

Grantees must submit Progress Reports through the online grant portal twice per year for the duration of the project. Reports are due annually on January 31 (covering the preceding July 1 – December 31) and July 31 (covering the preceding January 1 – June 30).

Partial reimbursement may be requested with any Progress Report, however no more than 75% of grant funds will be reimbursed prior to project close-out. Proof of all expenditures must be included for reimbursement.

Grantees must submit a Final Report through the online grant portal within 60 days of completing the project. Final Reports may include a request for reimbursement, if applicable. Proof of all expenditures must be included for reimbursement. ACOS Grants Program staff may schedule a final site inspection after reviewing the Final Report.

Acknowledgement Requirements:

Please note that ACOS updated its logos in 2019. Please discontinue use of the old logos. New logo files are available from Grants Program staff and several versions are available:

- White (for use on solid-color background)
- Full color (for use on white background)

- Black and white (for use in black and white print only)

Additionally, each of the three color options are available in two orientations:

- Horizontal (this is the primary/preferred orientation)
- Vertical

The horizontal and vertical full color versions of the updated logo appear below:



If awarded grant funding, the applicant will be required to install an approved sign at the project site which acknowledges support by the County Grants Program and Open Space Sales and Use Tax. ACOS offers a standard sign to all grant recipients at no cost. If the Grantee prefers to install a custom sign, then associated costs should be included in the project budget. Custom signage must be reviewed and approved by Grants Program staff and the County's Communications staff before it is fabricated or installed.

Planning projects, environmental education projects, or other projects that do not lend themselves to installation of grant signage may acknowledge Arapahoe County Grant support in other ways, such as in final printed or multi-media materials, as approved by ACOS and the County's Communications staff.

In addition to signage, acknowledgement of County support must be included in all publications, on-site construction signage, news releases, ribbon cutting/grand opening announcements, and other publicity issued by the Grantee related to the project.

Project Close-Out:

Grant projects will be fully reimbursed and closed out once the following requirements are met:

- Successful project completion according to scope of work and budget
- Acknowledgement signage installation at project site (or other acknowledgment of County support as approved by ACOS staff)
- Final report approval by ACOS staff
- Final site inspection completed by ACOS staff