



Love Where You Live Grant Request for Projects

OVERVIEW

Legacy Foundation invites eligible organizations to submit a Proposal for the Love Where You Live Grant Program.

Supported through the Lilly Endowment GIFT IX initiative, Legacy Foundation will invest \$4,000,000 in projects that create, improve, and activate public spaces across Lake County. The program is intended to support implementation-ready projects led by nonprofits, local governments, public agencies, and eligible partnerships that strengthen quality of life.

Grants of up to \$1,000,000 will support projects such as plazas, park improvements, recreation spaces, performance areas, markets, and other public gathering places that remain open and accessible to the community. The program is designed to fund projects that show clear community benefit, project readiness, organizational capacity, and a plan for long-term maintenance and use. All awarded funds must be spent by November 1, 2028.

This grant opportunity will use a two-part application process: applicants will first submit a Proposal, and selected applicants will then be invited to submit a full Application. Proposals are due on June 7, 2026 at 5pm CDT.

PROGRAM GOALS

Through this program, Legacy Foundation aims to support catalytic placemaking investments that transform shared spaces into vibrant community assets that reflect the voices, identity, and aspirations of Lake County residents. The Love Where You Live grant aims to:

- Increase equitable access to high-quality public spaces
- Empower communities to shape and activate the places they gather

- Support creative placemaking activities that integrate arts, culture, and design
- Enhance community connection and civic life
- Improve accessibility and universal design in public spaces
- Transform vacant or underutilized areas into vibrant community assets

Projects should create spaces that invite people to gather, interact, and experience community life together.

ELIGIBILITY

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Eligible projects include those that activate public spaces or create community places where people gather and spend time. Projects must be located in Lake County and should meet the general program goals identified previously.

Examples of eligible projects include, but are not limited to, creating or upgrading the following:

- Public space development, including downtown plazas, or neighborhood hubs
- Park enhancements, including creating or upgrading parks, community gardens, green spaces, multi-purpose sporting, and outdoor gathering areas
- Outdoor performance spaces, including bandshells, amphitheaters, or multi-use platforms
- Recreation amenities, by creating or upgrading public recreation spaces, including indoor and outdoor venues
- Indoor or outdoor public market spaces, through the development of permanent spaces that support local vendors, food access, and community gathering

Legacy Foundation is looking for creative and innovative ideas, projects are not limited to the above examples.

Funded projects must ensure that the supported space remains accessible to the general public. Projects supported through this grant may not require a membership fee or paid subscription for individuals to access or participate in the primary public space. While exceptions may be considered for vendors, events, or specific activities within the space that may include associated fees, the overall space must remain open and accessible to the broader community.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

- 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations
- Municipal or local government entities
- Parks departments, libraries, or public agencies
- Collaborative partnerships led by an eligible nonprofit or public entity

Applicants must serve Lake County and are encouraged to partner with local residents, artists, businesses, and community groups in project design and implementation.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Grant funds may be used to support costs directly associated with the planning, development, construction, and activation of public spaces supported through the Love Where You Live Grant Program. Eligible expenses may include:

Planning and project development

- Site assessment
- Community engagement activities that inform project design
- Professional services such as architecture, engineering, or landscape architecture services
- Permitting and regulatory approvals

Construction and capital improvements

- Construction, renovation, or rehabilitation of public spaces
- Site preparation and infrastructure improvements
- Improvements that support universal design and ADA accessibility
- Utilities, lighting, landscaping, and hardscape elements
- Installation of permanent structures such as plazas, pavilions, market stalls, amphitheaters, or gathering spaces

Placemaking and public space enhancements

- Public art installations, murals, sculptures, or cultural design elements
- Wayfinding signage, lighting, and other placemaking features
- Site furnishings such as benches, seating areas, bike racks, planters, or shade structures

Project Implementation and administrative costs

- Project management and coordination related to implementation
- Staff time directly related to project planning, management, or implementation
- Administrative or overhead costs associated with implementing the project
- Administrative and staff expenses may be included in the project budget but **may not exceed 10% of the total grant request.**

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Grant funds may not be used for the following:

- Ongoing programmatic activities or recurring program costs unrelated to the physical space
- Maintenance projects or expenses
- Recurring event series
- General organizational operating expenses not directly tied to the project
- Debt repayment or refinancing of existing obligations
- Property acquisition or land purchase (unless otherwise approved by the foundation)
- Expenses incurred prior to grant approval
- Lobbying or political activities
- Endowments or reserve funds

Funds may be used to launch and engage the community around events and programmatic activities. However, projects that require ongoing programming or operations should demonstrate how those costs will be sustained through other funding sources.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & MATCH

Matching funds will not be required as part of the Love Where You Live Grant Program. However, Legacy Foundation strongly encourages applicants to demonstrate financial commitment and vested community and stakeholder interest in the successful implementation of the project by identifying any additional resources that can be brought to the project beyond GIFT IX funds. Applicants are encouraged to provide match whenever possible, whether through other grant funding, local public or private investment, or other cash contributions. In-kind services will be considered as match, such as donated services, materials, volunteer support, and other partnerships as additional resources that strengthen the project. Any matching funds or other committed resources should be

clearly documented in the application budget and narrative, including the source of the funds and how they will be applied to the project. Although the absence of match will not disqualify an application, projects that demonstrate higher levels of local investment and leveraged support will be viewed more favorably.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To minimize the time required from applicants, the Foundation will use a multi-stage, streamlined approach. Organizations will begin by submitting a high-level overview, with only the most competitive projects invited to provide more detailed information. This approach will help the Foundation identify the strongest opportunities early while reducing unnecessary burden on applicants.

The application process will include:

- **Proposal:** A project proposal will be submitted through the Foundation’s grant platform. Requirements are outlined below.
- **Full Application:** The most competitive Proposals will be invited to submit a full application. Invited applicants will be asked to provide additional information to more fully describe the project and demonstrate its viability. This phase will include more detailed documentation of project scope, an itemized budget, status of preliminary design work, site control, financial commitments, and related factors.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Interested applicants must submit a Proposal by June 7, 2026. Proposals should be submitted through the Foundation’s grant platform, which can be accessed by visiting www.legacyfdn.org/apply-for-a-grant. If the applicant has not previously applied for a Legacy Foundation grant, the applicant will need to create an account.

Each Proposal will include prompts to answer the following questions:

- **Project Name** – Please provide a project name for the Proposal.
- **Project Location** – Please indicate the primary physical address for the proposed project and the owner of this site. If the owner is not the applicant, describe the land use agreement in place.
- **Grant Request** – Please indicate the grant request amount. Note - Grant awards will be provided on a full-award basis whenever possible, so applicants should ensure that their request amount is necessary, realistic, feasible, and aligned with the full scope of work they can successfully implement. In rare cases, the Foundation may

consider adjustments to award amounts based on project fit, available funding, and overall portfolio balance.

- **Total Project Cost** – Please indicate the total project cost for the Proposal provided. Please only include actual cash expenditures, do not account for in-kind contributions.
- **Project Description (3,000 characters max)** – A brief summary of the proposed project, including the major components, intended users, how the space will function, and how the project meets the program goals and project eligibility criteria outlined above.
- **Lead Applicant Background and Capacity (3,000 characters max)** – A brief summary of the applicant, including organizational structure to demonstrate program eligibility, applicant’s ability to manage the grant and complete the project, and identification of any partners. Applicants should identify organizational leaders who will be responsible for delivering the project as described.
- **Budget Narrative (3,000 characters max)** – A brief description of the intended use of grant funds. Additionally, the application should identify any other known or anticipated funding sources or leveraged resources, if applicable. As described above, matching funds are not required, but additional committed resources may strengthen a proposal. If available, please attach a line-item budget and/or cost estimate documentation within the ‘Proposal Uploads’ section below. Please note – a line-item budget will be required for projects invited to submit a Full Application.
- **Community Impact, Involvement, and Support (3,000 characters max)** – A short description of the community need or opportunity the project addresses, the intended public benefit, and any community input, partnerships, stakeholder engagement, or local support that has informed, or will inform, the project.
- **Project Status, Readiness, and Feasibility (3,000 characters max)** – Provide a summary of the current status of the project. This should include the status of architecture or engineering plans, identification of permits required and the status of those permits, the status of site control for the project. The status update should demonstrate the applicant’s ability to meet the grant expenditure deadline of November 1, 2028.
- **Activation and Public Access (1,500 characters max)** – A brief explanation of how the project will activate public space and ensure that the space remains accessible to the broader community.
- **Long-Term Sustainability (1,500 characters max)** – A short explanation of how the space will be maintained and stewarded over time.

- Recognition of Support (1,500 characters max) - Describe how your organization will acknowledge the Foundation’s support. Include any planned communications, visibility, branding, or naming opportunities associated with this project.
- **Project Timeline** – An overview outline when the project will be implemented, highlighting key milestones. A more detailed timeline will be required for projects invited to submit a Full Application.
- **Project Uploads** – Please attach any available line-item budgets, preliminary cost estimates, renderings, existing site pictures, engineering design plans, site development plans, and/or other relevant information which would assist with the evaluation of this Proposal.
- **Additional Upload** – Board of Directors or governing body list

FULL APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants invited to submit a Full Application will be required to provide additional information and documentation that supports and substantiates the information presented in their Proposal. The Full Application is intended to provide Legacy Foundation with a more complete understanding of the proposed project and to confirm that the project is well defined, feasible, and positioned for successful implementation.

Full Application may include:

- Detailed project budget and timeline
- Documentation of committed funding or other resources
- Evidence of site control
- Status of design, engineering, or other predevelopment work
- Organizational, financial, and prior grant experience materials
- Interview with grants committee
- Other supporting documentation required within Request for Full Application

AWARD AMOUNTS

This program will award grants of up to \$1,000,000 to support transformative projects that revitalize, activate, or create inclusive public spaces across Lake County. A total of \$4,000,000 will be awarded. It is intended that the program will support projects ranging from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000, with the following estimated award breakdown:

- Approximately 5 to 7 projects ranging from \$100,000 to \$500,000
- Approximately 3 to 4 projects ranging from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000

Grant awards are generally intended to support projects at the full request amount.

However, the Foundation may in rare cases exercise discretion to make adjustments when

appropriate. Applicants should ensure that their request amount is realistic, feasible, and aligned with the full scope of work they can successfully implement. Proposals with inflated budgets, unsupported cost estimates, or expenses that are not clearly justified or essential to the project may be viewed less favorably during the review process. Payments to awarded organizations will be disbursed according to a pre-determined schedule established at the time of the grant agreement.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

REVIEW PROCESS

Applications will be evaluated by a review committee composed of select Legacy Foundation staff, Board, and other individuals with relevant community, philanthropic, or technical expertise as determined by the Foundation. Applications will be evaluated based on how well they align with the goals of the Love Where You Live grant program and the extent to which they demonstrate readiness for successful implementation. Priority will be given to projects that show strength in the following areas:

- **Community impact and public benefit** – The project creates meaningful, visible, and lasting benefit for Lake County residents and strengthens community connection, civic life, and sense of place.
- **Community involvement and support** – The project reflects meaningful community engagement, local input, and demonstrated support from residents, partners, or stakeholders. The availability of matching funds or other committed project resources will also serve as a strong indicator of broader support and investment in the project.
- **Project feasibility and readiness** – The project is realistic, well-defined, and supported by an achievable scope, budget, timeline, and implementation plan.
- **Organizational capacity and stewardship** – The applicant has the experience, staffing, partnerships, and financial capacity to manage the grant and successfully complete the project.
- **Activation of Space** - Projects demonstrate either the activation of a new or distressed public space, or improved accessibility or usability of an existing public space.
- **Long-term sustainability** – The project will remain accessible, well-maintained, and actively used over time, with a clear plan for ongoing stewardship and community benefit.

MONITORING

Legacy Foundation will maintain an active role in monitoring all funded projects to ensure progress, accountability, and successful implementation. The Foundation will engage with grantees throughout the lifecycle of each project through regular communication, scheduled check-ins, and periodic site visits to observe progress firsthand and provide support where needed. Grant recipients will be required to submit progress reports to the Foundation in advance of Legacy Foundation’s reporting deadline to the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Monitoring will be structured around clearly defined project milestones, interim deadlines, and deliverables to ensure that projects remain on track and aligned with the approved scope and timeline.

TIMELINE

The Legacy Foundation intends to review applications according to the following schedule.

Activity	Approximate Date
Launch Event and Proposal Phase Begins	April 23, 2026
Proposal Due	June 7, 2026
Finalists Notified and Full Application Period Opens	July 7, 2026
Full Application Due	September 5, 2026
Recipients Notified and Grant Agreements Sent	October 20, 2026
Final Day to Submit Signed Grant Agreements. *	November 19, 2026
Project Completion Deadline	November 1, 2028

*Initial award payment will be made based on receipt of signed grant agreement.

CONTACT

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