

2025 Hennepin Planning Grants program Program Guidelines

Application period opens: March 4, 2025

Applications due 3:00p.m., March 27, 2025



2025 Hennepin Planning Grants Guidelines

Administered by Hennepin County's Housing and Economic Development (HED) Department, the 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.

The Hennepin Planning Grants Program goals are to:

- Transition single-use, auto-oriented areas into more compact, mixed uses places with a high-quality public realm for 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
- Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions
- Improve community resilience to impacts of climate change

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
- 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

Eligible Applicants

Municipal governments, economic development/housing and redevelopment/port authorities, park districts, watershed districts, within Hennepin County

Program Approach

For 2025, 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, “increase in people walking or biking in project area” or “redevelopment project 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?

Selected applicants (“Awardees”) will participate in a “mini-RFP” process to select a consultant from the HPG consultant roster. Consultant selection will be based on the challenges(s) identified by the awardee and their goals, and the consultant’s experience and approach. Consultants will work with awardee to develop solutions to the challenge(s) identified in the application. Applicants should approach the process with an openness to a range of possible solutions rather than a preconceived outcome for the project.

Hennepin County Housing and Economic Development has selected consultants via a separate request for proposal process to provide Hennepin Planning Grant services. Consultants that have demonstrated expertise, high-quality work addressing HPG goals, and experience providing the types of plans listed above were selected for the roster of approved HPG consultants. Hennepin County will contract directly with consultants for the scope of work covered by the Hennepin County award, and awardees will contract directly with the Hennepin County selected consultant for their portion of the scope of work. 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 will work closely with the selected 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. As part of the program, Hennepin County intends for selected cities and their consultant to work with Hennepin County HED staff to host a design workshop with all consultants on the HPG consulting roster. The design workshop would 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 from which the awardee can choose from for adoption and implementation.

Consultants under contract for the 2025 Hennepin Planning Grant Program include:

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

Hennepin County HED manages several other programs that provide assistance to cities with land use projects, including the Business Development Initiative, and Active Living grants. The County reserves the right to refer applicants to other programs that may be better aligned with proposed project goals, as timing and funding allows.

Funding

Hennepin County will contract directly with consultants for the scope of work covered by the Hennepin County 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-month timeframe.
- Projects must be completed by December 31, 2025.

Hennepin County anticipates providing \$50,000 in funding per project. The final funding amount may be less depending on project scope. A total of approximately \$200,000 is available across the Business District Initiative and Hennepin Planning Grants program.

Application Process

Applications are **due by 3:00 p.m. March 27, 2025**, via the Hennepin County Supplier Portal. The application packet must include the following items:

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

Funding recommendations and consultant assignments are anticipated in May. Awards are not final until approved by the Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to review projects with Hennepin County staff prior to

application submittal. County staff will be available to provide technical assistance to applicants about potential projects prior to March 4, 2025. Email Laura Fredrick laura.fredrick@hennepin.us to discuss potential projects.

Questions regarding specific program requirements or the application after March 4 must be submitted via email to Laura Fredrick, laura.fredrick@hennepin.us no later than March 18. Responses will be posted by 12:00p.m., March 21, on the Supplier Portal. Send questions to:

Subject line: Hennepin Planning Grants RFA

To: Laura Fredrick

Email: laura.fredrick@hennepin.us

Copy: Ian Clobes

Email: ian.clobes@hennepin.us

Application Evaluation

HPG application evaluators will look for the following:

1. Alignment with Hennepin Planning Grant program goals. Does the application address how this project would:

- 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 in the deliverables and program implementation
- 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 County, consultants, and other identified stakeholders
- Commits 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
- Explanation about why County resources are needed and how they will be critical to impacting change on 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.

Contracting and Reporting

Hennepin County will contract directly with consultants for the portion of the proposed work covered under the award. Awardees will contract directly with the identified consultants for the proportion of the work covered by their match.

Hennepin County 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.

Hennepin County 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.

Hennepin County is not obligated to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of an application. Hennepin County reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, to accept or reject any late applications, to request additional information as deemed necessary to review any application, to negotiate with all qualified proposers, to use any or all proposer ideas and/or approaches presented, or to cancel this application process, if it is in the best interest of Hennepin County to do so.

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