

Community Engagement Grant Program Policy

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The Community Engagement Grant Program is seeking proposals from qualified organizations located within the [59 member jurisdictions](#) Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support community engagement efforts tied to Power Ahead Colorado, a regional initiative aimed at reducing pollution while improving the health, comfort, and energy efficiency of homes and buildings throughout the Denver region. Organizations that submit proposals in response to this solicitation will be referred to as "Grant Applicants" or "Applicants," while those that are selected to receive funding will be designated as "Grant Recipients."

Program Overview

About Power Ahead Colorado

Power Ahead Colorado is a federally funded program, led by DRCOG, that aims to reduce indoor and outdoor air pollution through heat pump installation, building policy, and workforce development

- **Mission:** Power Ahead Colorado provides people and businesses with a trusted path to healthier, safer comfort, through expert advising and incentives to install right-sized heat pump solutions.
- **Vision:** Powering better buildings, stronger communities, and quality jobs for Colorado's energy future.

Power Ahead Colorado programs:

Program Area	Program Description
Rebates & Incentives	Money back for homeowners and small businesses who install heat pumps
Comfort for All	Free home upgrades for qualifying homeowners
Workforce Development	Training programs to bring more people into HVAC jobs
Innovation Pilot	New ways to make heat pumps easier to access
Policy Coordination	Helping local governments plan together
Marketing Campaign	Spreading the word about heat pumps and energy savings



About the Community Engagement Grant Program

Proposed grant activities will be shaped by the community engagement needs of the overall Power Ahead Colorado program. The first grant cycle focuses on outreach that connects eligible residents, homeowners, and businesses with available advising, rebates, incentives, workforce opportunities, and other Power Ahead Colorado resources.

This grant cycle prioritizes two key groups: disproportionately impacted communities, as defined by the [Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment](#), and homeowners across the Denver metro area. Engagement activities may reach the public on broader program benefits, but outreach efforts will be especially directed toward these priority groups to ensure they have access to and understanding of the opportunities available through Power Ahead Colorado.

A Community Advisory Group of local leaders is providing input on the design of this program to help ensure it reflects the needs of the communities it serves.

Areas of focus for the first grant cycle

Grant applicants are encouraged to design outreach efforts that reflect the specific needs of their community while connecting residents and businesses with one or more Power Ahead Colorado program(s). Strong proposals will demonstrate a clear understanding of how their planned activities support the overall goals of the grant program.

Organizations are asked to design outreach efforts that reach communities within the jurisdictions of the [59 participating DRCOG member governments](#). Proposed outreach efforts may cover the entire metropolitan region, or a smaller area within the region. Proposals should demonstrate a thoughtful approach to reaching communities across this broad region, ensuring that Power Ahead Colorado resources are accessible to as many eligible residents and businesses as possible.

Outreach efforts should be organized around three main focus areas:

1. **Education & Outreach** — Share clear, accessible information about heat pumps, home and building electrification, and energy efficiency.
2. **Incentives & Advising** — Motivate eligible residents, particularly homeowners and middle-income households, or HVAC contractors to take advantage of available rebates, financial incentives, and free energy advising.



3. **Workforce Development** — Create pathways to careers in the clean energy sector, with an emphasis on engaging multilingual communities, youth, and justice-impacted individuals.

Competitive proposals will:

- Build trusted relationships in the community.
- Use languages and cultural approaches that fit your audience.
- Increase awareness of one or more Power Ahead Colorado program area(s).
- Remove barriers (language, culture, information) to participation in Power Ahead Colorado programs.
- Connect people to real opportunities — rebates, jobs and energy advising.
- Show a clear understanding of local community needs.

Allowable activity examples:

Applicants are encouraged to propose creative and community-centered engagement activities. The following is a non-exhaustive list of allowable activities:

- Organize block or house parties featuring heat pump demonstrations.
- Meal-centered events held at libraries, schools, or local businesses.
- Door knocking and neighborhood canvassing in priority neighborhoods.
- Community pop-up events utilizing Power Ahead Colorado mascots, promotional materials, or demonstration equipment.
- Presentations coordinated with local schools, held during or after school.
- Ambassador or community liaison programs that build trusted relationships between community members and program resources.
- Virtual Events.
- Multilingual Outreach.



Funding, schedule and eligibility

Grants will be awarded through a competitive selection process, and selected grantees will have the opportunity to participate in a cohort during their grant period, fostering peer learning and collaboration.

Overall program budget and schedule

Power Ahead Colorado has committed \$2.2 million to community engagement grants over a four-year time frame with at least three grant cycles. The first-year grant cycle will disburse about one-third of the funds, though this amount is subject to change based on interest and quality of proposals received.

Applicants may apply for grants ranging from **\$15,000 to \$100,000**. The final mix of awarded grants will depend on the applications received and the evaluation process described below. The total number of awards will be determined based on the applicant pool, proposed activities, and alignment with program goals.

Grant amounts are intended to reflect the size and complexity of the proposed work. Smaller grants will have lighter reporting requirements, while larger grants that involve more activities, coordination, staffing, or resources will have more detailed reporting expectations. Applicants are encouraged to request an amount that is realistic and proportionate to the scope of their proposed project.

Timeline

Funded projects are expected to be implemented over a period of **six to twelve months**. All grants must be completed and fully closed out within **13 months** of the award date.

Solicitation Published	September 21, 2026
Q&A Session	October 6, 2026 at 10am MT
Questions Due by	October 9, 2026 at 5pm MT
Questions & Answers Published	October 16, 2026 at 5pm MT
Grant Applications Due	October 26, 2026 by 5pm MT
Grant Notifications	Late November 2026
Awards Issued	Anticipated December 2026

Eligibility

Eligible applicants with the capacity to implement community-based projects, including nonprofit organizations such as 501(c)(3) organizations. Applicants must demonstrate sufficient



organizational and financial capacity to manage grant funds and comply with program requirements, including staff experience, reporting capabilities, financial records and systems, and participation expectations.

To be eligible, entities must meet all the following conditions:

- Legally authorized to operate in their jurisdiction,
- In good standing with applicable state or local requirements,
- Not suspended or debarred from receiving federal funds,
- Able to enter into a formal Subaward Agreement.

Grant-funded activities must occur within the [boundaries of the DRCOG region](#). Proposals serving communities experiencing greater environmental, economic, or health burdens are strongly encouraged. Applicants may demonstrate these burdens through community knowledge, lived experience, local data, [Colorado EnviroScreen](#), or other relevant information.

Additional award requirements, including proof of insurance and a [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#) number assigned by the federal government, must be met prior to the execution of the Subaward Agreement.

Partnerships and teaming

Power Ahead Colorado strongly encourages applicants to team with other organizations to carry out their proposed projects. Collaborative proposals that bring together complementary skills, community connections, and geographic reach are more likely to reflect the diversity and breadth of the region and will be viewed favorably during the evaluation process. Proposals that demonstrate a meaningful teaming arrangement will score additional points, comprising 5% of the overall evaluation.

One eligible organization must serve as the **lead applicant**, responsible for submitting the application, entering into the Subaward Agreement, and managing all aspects of grant administration, performance, reporting, and compliance. Partner organizations may perform defined portions of the work as subcontractors or project partners, as described in the application and budget.



Fiscal Sponsorship

Organizations or community groups that are not independently eligible to apply may participate through an eligible fiscal sponsor. Kearns & West will provide more technical support for fiscal sponsorship during our second grant cycle.

Applicant Support

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance will be available throughout the grant process to help applicants and grantees succeed.

The application phase: Applicants will be provided with technical assistance via a recorded grant webinar, recorded Q&A sessions, etc. that will cover items like sample budgets, award requirements, and other application guidance.

The award and implementation phase: Grant recipients may request one-on-one technical support related to community engagement activities, project planning, implementation, reporting, and compliance. Grantees will also have the opportunity to participate in optional cohort learning sessions and an end-of-cycle summit, where they can network, share promising practices, and problem-solve together.

Budget Requirements

Grant budgets must be clearly defined and organized by cost category, including:

- Direct costs (program delivery and activities),
- Indirect costs (at the rate allowed under an approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or as mutually agreed in the Subaward Agreement).

Final award amounts and distribution may vary based on the quality of applications received and overall program objectives.

Allowable Costs

Proposed costs must be reasonable and aligned with the proposed activities. Allowable costs may include:

- Community engagement personnel costs (including participation in monthly grantee cohort meetings and sub grantee summit).



- Subcontractor or consultant services.
- Travel (mileage, parking, transit, as applicable).
- Materials (copying/printing, office supplies, postage, translation/transcreation).
- Event expenses (venue rental, A/V, food and beverages, interpretation, speaker or performer fees, participant support stipends or childcare).
- Other direct costs necessary to implement approved grant activities, including costs associated with meeting award requirements, where allowable (e.g., insurance top-up).

Note: alcohol is not an allowable cost.

Applicants may include indirect costs, at the rate allowed under an approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or as mutually agreed in the Subaward Agreement.

Grant funds are intended to support activities that advance the goals of the Community Engagement Grant Program. Funds may be used to expand existing programs that align with the grant objectives or to implement new activities proposed by the applicant and approved through the grant award.

How to Apply

The grant application will be published on the Power Ahead Colorado Community Engagement web page. Grant application instructions and application requirements will be provided in Spanish and English. The grant program will be administered in English. Kearns & West, the Power Ahead Colorado vendor administering the Community Engagement Grant Program, will manage the application and evaluation process in consultation with Power Ahead Colorado staff.

Applications must be submitted online within the posted submission timeframe. All required fields in the application must be completed, and any supporting materials may be uploaded directly through the portal. Before applying, please review the Program Terms and Conditions below.

For any questions regarding eligibility, the Terms and Conditions, or any other topics related to this grant program, please email ([email address TBD](#)) by October 9. Responses to all questions we receive will be added to a publicly available Q&A document posted on the Power Ahead Colorado website by October 16.



Submitted applications and supporting materials may be subject to the Colorado Open Records Act (CORA). CORA requires that most “public records” be available for inspection by any person. Because this program uses public funds, information such as project descriptions, budgets, and supporting documents may be released if requested. Sensitive information may only be withheld in limited cases, such as personal data or trade secrets, though such exemptions are rarely applicable to grant applications like these.

Applicants should avoid including highly sensitive or proprietary information unless it is essential for review and clearly mark any information they believe qualifies for an exemption. DRCOG and Kearns & West, will review and respond to CORA requests in accordance with state law but cannot guarantee that all information can be withheld.

Receipt of Applications

Only complete applications received by the stated deadline will be accepted. The grant selection committee may, at its discretion, provide guidance and an opportunity to resubmit applications that are missing minor elements before the deadline.

Evaluation Criteria and Scoring Process

Once the application period closes, all proposals will be screened for eligibility and evaluated based on approach to engagement (“technical approach”), cost effectiveness, past performance, and current capability. Kearns & West will lead this process in consultation with PACO staff. Each proposal will be reviewed and scored independently by at least three evaluators with relevant expertise.

After scoring, evaluators will meet to compare results, resolve major differences, and identify the proposals that best align with program goals. Scores may be adjusted at this stage. Finalists may be invited to a short interview. If selected, Kearns & West will provide guidance materials and the evaluators’ specific questions in advance.

For each criterion, will be scored on a scale between 0 and 5, across: Exceeds (5), Meets (4), Satisfactory (2.5), or Does Not Meet (0). A proposal meets expectations when its plan and costs are reasonable and achievable. A proposal, while it exceeds expectations, provides especially clear, thoughtful, and convincing evidence that the work will succeed. The grant selection committee may conduct a secondary review or conduct an interview.



Kearns & West will notify all applicants of their status. If an applicant is not selected in this first grant cycle, they are welcome and encouraged to apply again in a future cycle.

Kearns & West is committed to protecting applicant information. Application materials containing personally identifiable information (PII) will be accessible only to staff responsible for grant administration, and reviewers will receive only the information necessary to conduct a fair and objective evaluation.

Scoring Rubric

Each criterion in the table will be scored on a scale of 0-5. These will then be multiplied by the weighted percentage and totaled to create a weighted average score.

Category	Description	Scoring Weight
Community Context & Opportunity	How clearly the applicant describes the community, identifies target populations (especially disproportionately impacted communities and property owners), and explains the opportunity to increase awareness of Power Ahead Colorado programs. Consider whether the project addresses real barriers or information gaps.	10%
Outreach & Engagement Approach	Quality and appropriateness of the proposed outreach, education, and awareness activities. Consider whether activities are culturally appropriate, accessible, realistic, and likely to increase reach of the intended audiences.	20%
Community Reach & Relationships	Applicant's ability to effectively reach the proposed audience. Considering existing community relationships, demonstrated trust, partnerships, geographic coverage, and likelihood of engaging, intended audiences.	25%
Project Feasibility & Budget	Whether the proposed activities are realistic within the grant period and supported by a clear implementation plan. Evaluates whether the budget is reasonable, aligned with the proposed activities, and demonstrates responsible stewardship of grant funds.	25%
Organizational Capacity & Qualifications	Applicant's experience and capacity to carry out the proposed work. Considers staff experience, organizational strengths, partnerships, and prior experience serving similar communities.	15%
<i>Partnering & Teaming</i>	Awarded to proposals that include a formal teaming arrangement with another eligible organization(s)	5%



Award Process

Award Notifications

Following completion of the application review and final award decisions, all applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application. Successful applicants will receive an award notification, Subaward Agreement, and instructions regarding next steps, including a grant orientation and the award process. Applicants that are not selected for funding will receive written notification that their application was unsuccessful.

Award Requirements

Applicants selected as finalists will complete a pre-award eligibility and readiness review before an award is finalized. This review will confirm the information provided in the application and assess the applicant's ability to meet the program's financial, administrative, insurance, reporting, risk assessment, and other grant requirements. The documents and information that may be reviewed are identified in the application checklist, so applicants can understand these requirements in advance.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

A UEI is a federal numbering system obtained through sam.gov to identify legal entities receiving federal funds. If applicants do not already have an UEI, a one-time, free registration is required of selected grant recipients prior to award. Applicants are not required to have a UEI at the time of application.

Insurance

Applicants are not required to have the minimum insurance coverage in place at the time of application. However, organizations selected for funding must obtain and maintain the insurance coverage required under the Subaward Agreement prior to execution of the agreement and receipt of grant funds. For more details on insurance requirements please visit our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page.



Minimum Required Insurance Coverage

1. Workers' Compensation in statutory limits.
2. Employer's Liability Insurance: \$100,000/ each accident, \$500,000/ disease - policy limit, and \$100,000/ disease - each employee.
3. Comprehensive General Liability Insurance: \$1,000,000/Occurrence
4. Automobile Liability or Hired & Non-Owned Vehicle Liability Insurance: \$1,000,000/each accident.
5. Professional Liability Insurance: \$1,000,000/Claim.
6. Security & Privacy Liability or Cyber Risk insurance: \$1,000,00/Occurrence

Subaward Agreement and Project Kickoff

Following Board approval, notification of award, and confirmation of the minimum insurance coverage selected applicants will enter into a Subaward Agreement with Kearns & West, the administrator of the Power Ahead Colorado Community Engagement Grant Program, prior to receiving grant funds. Subaward Agreements will be executed as soon as practicable following award notification.

The workplan, budget, and milestone payment schedule will form the basis of the Subaward Agreement. During agreement development, Kearns & West and the selected grant recipient may work together to refine the scope of work, milestones, budget, or implementation schedule to ensure alignment with program objectives and grant requirements. Once finalized, the approved activities and milestone payment schedule will become part of the Subaward Agreement.

Following execution of the Subaward Agreement, grant recipients will participate in a grant kickoff and orientation to review program expectations, grant administration procedures, reporting requirements, payment processes, available technical assistance, and other resources to support successful implementation. As part of its grant administration procedures, Kearns & West will conduct periodic monitoring to ensure compliance with applicable grant requirements, assess implementation progress, verify appropriate use of grant funds, and provide technical assistance as needed to support successful project delivery and timely completion of grant-funded activities.

Any subsequent changes to the approved scope of work, budget, or milestone schedule will be managed in accordance with the Scope Change procedures described below.



Grant Administration

Grant recipients will participate in periodic monitoring throughout the grant period, including brief check-in meetings and progress reports submitted in April, October, and at grant closeout. Standardized templates will be provided and will focus on progress toward approved milestones. Each invoice should include brief supporting documentation demonstrating completion of the associated milestone. Technical assistance will be available throughout the one-year grant period, and grant recipients are encouraged to participate in optional cohort learning sessions and an end-of-cycle grantee summit to strengthen peer connections, share lessons learned, and support successful implementation.

As part of the award process, each grant recipient will finalize its workplan, milestone payment schedule, and approved budget with Kearns & West. Grant payments will be issued upon completion of agreed-upon milestones and submission of the required invoice and supporting documentation. To support cash flow, grant recipients may request advance payments by providing a brief justification demonstrating that the requested amount is reasonably related to upcoming approved project activities. Advance requests are subject to review and approval by Kearns & West.

