



## CATALYTIC OPPORTUNITIES AND BIG IDEAS GRANT APPLICATION

### About the DDA

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was established by voters in November 2006 to help drive investment and momentum in Downtown Colorado Springs. Guided by an 11-member board appointed by City Council, the DDA is focused on building strong public and private investment partnerships that promote the long-term economic growth of Downtown. The Downtown Partnership serves as the DDA’s contracted partner, carrying out its programs, initiatives, and day-to-day work on the ground. Funding for the DDA comes from two primary sources. A 5-mill property tax within the district supports ongoing operations, while Tax Increment Financing (TIF) captures the increase in property tax revenue generated as Downtown grows. Those incremental dollars are reinvested back into the district—helping fund catalytic projects and accelerate development that might not otherwise happen. The DDA’s TIF is in place through 2037, creating a defined window to maximize impact and continue building on Downtown’s momentum.

### Plan of Development

The Elevate Downtown Plan (Elevate) serves as the plan of development for the DDA. Approved in 2026, Elevate consists of five primary goals. The plan can be found at: [www.downtowncs.com/elevate](http://www.downtowncs.com/elevate).

### What are Catalytic Opportunities and Big Ideas Grants?

The Catalytic Opportunities and Big Ideas (COBI) Grant Program is intended to advance high-impact projects identified in Volume II, Chapter 1: Land Use and Character of Elevate. The program focuses on initiatives that deliver meaningful community benefit while helping to catalyze additional private investment. Eligible projects may include those identified as Catalytic Opportunities, Desired Use/Market Opportunities, Reimagined/Enhanced Use Sites, Contemporary Prospects, and Influence Sites that enhance Downtown’s vitality, connectivity, and overall quality of life.

### Eligibility Criteria

Applications must:

- Be located within DDA boundaries and/or proves a direct economic benefit to the district
- Explicitly support goals or strategies defined in the Plan of Development
- Demonstrate site control or a path to site control
- Show a defined funding gap or need for participation
- Be consistent with zoning and adopted plans
- Demonstrate project readiness (design, financing, timeline)
- Commit to measurable community outcomes

### Funding Structure

Total Project Investment	Max Grant Amount	Typical Range	Structure Options*
\$500K – \$1M	Up to \$200K	\$50K–\$200K	Reimbursement
\$1M – \$5M	Up to \$750K	\$50K–\$750K	Milestone-based
\$5M – \$10M	Up to \$1M	\$750K–\$1M	Structured mix
\$10M+	Case-by-case	\$1M+	Negotiated case-by-case

\*Structure options are illustrative only. The DDA Board reserves the right to determine the final funding structure, award amount, and associated terms and conditions based on individual application merits.

## **General Guidelines**

- Grants typically do not exceed 20% of total project cost
- Larger awards may be structured as forgivable loans tied to performance
- Preference may be given to:
  - Projects structured as reimbursement or tied to defined milestones
  - Projects that leverage significant private investment
  - Projects that advance multiple plan goals
  - Local or regional ownership/partnerships
  - Projects that activate underutilized or highly visible sites

## **Eligible Uses of Funds Include:**

Funds may be used for a broad range of project costs. Eligible uses may include:

- Pre-development and feasibility costs, including market studies, site analysis, environmental assessments, and financial modeling
- Property acquisition or assemblage, where necessary to enable a project
- Design and entitlement costs, including architecture, engineering, and planning
- Site development and infrastructure, such as utilities, grading, and public improvements
- Façade improvements and building enhancements
- Code compliance upgrades for adaptive reuse
- Public-facing amenities and activation elements, including plazas, outdoor dining, and pedestrian-oriented improvements
- Structured parking or mobility-related improvements, where tied to broader catalytic outcomes
- Tenant improvements for targeted or priority uses that align with identified gaps (e.g., childcare, grocery)
- Other demonstrated funding gaps that are not typically eligible under existing DDA programs but are critical to project feasibility

## **Ineligible Uses:**

Funds may not be used for the following:

- Routine maintenance or repair that does not result in a substantive improvement
- Purely speculative land acquisition without a defined development plan or timeline
- Debt refinancing or reimbursement of prior expenditures incurred before award
- Projects that lack a clear public-facing element or catalytic impact
- Projects that are not identified in, or do not meaningfully align with, the adopted Plan of Development and its associated strategies
- Projects that primarily benefit a single private user without broader economic or community impact
- Uses that are otherwise eligible under existing DDA grant programs, unless a clear gap or need for this program is demonstrated

## **Evaluation Criteria**

Projects may be scored across the following:

- Alignment with Elevate Plan Goals: 30%
- Catalytic Impact / Transformational Potential: 30%

- Other Investment Leveraged: 20%
- Project Readiness & Feasibility: 20%

### **Strategic Flexibility**

The program allows the board discretion to:

- Adjust funding caps based on available TIF revenue
- Bundle with other tools (existing grants, TIF participation, partnerships)

### **Suggested Process**

1. Pre-application meeting with staff
2. Informational presentation to the board
3. Formal application submission
4. Staff and committee review and scoring
5. Formal board consideration
6. Agreement with structure requirements

## To Apply

### Summary sheet

- Date of application
- Applicant name (business, nonprofit, etc.)
- Contact name, title
- Contact email, phone number, mailing address
- An explanation (no more than 5 pages) of the project and how it aligns with the Elevate Downtown Plan
- Total budget for project, demonstrating anticipated revenue and expenses, with revenue indicated as secured, committed, or projected (including amount of private equity and debt investment)
- Scheduling or phasing of the project including anticipated start and finish date
- If applicable, architectural plans, renderings, or illustrations depicting the work to be performed
- If applicable, photos of the existing property
- Total amount requested of DDA
- Total amount requested reflected as a percentage of the total project cost
- Estimated direct and indirect economic impact, addressing the following as applicable:
  - Job Creation
    - Number of permanent full-time and part-time employees
    - Number of construction jobs (temporary)
  - Sales and Revenue Generation
    - Estimated annual sales (for retail, restaurant, or experiential uses)
    - Projected increase in commercial activity
  - Property Tax Impact
    - Estimated increase in assessed value
    - Projected annual property tax increment generated
  - Occupancy and Activation
    - Square footage activated (commercial, residential, or mixed-use)
    - Anticipated occupancy rates or tenant mix
    - Anticipated hotel room nights
  - Additional Community Benefits (if applicable)
    - Affordable or workforce housing units created
    - Public realm improvements or amenities
    - Increased visitation or foot traffic

If funds are awarded, applicants must sign a grant agreement within 30 days of receipt and agree to provide a final report on use of funds; when studies or reports are funded, applicants may be asked to provide updates and/or present final findings to the board.

**All decisions concerning aspects of the grant application process, including eligibility, are within the sole discretion of the Downtown Development Authority board.**

**Submit grant application and supporting documents electronically to:**

info@downtowncs.com

Address questions to Downtown Partnership at 719.886.0088.