

# The 2026 Healthy and Sustainable Communities Grant Awards

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) and the American Beverage Foundation for a Healthy America (ABFHA) are excited to announce the launch of the 2026 Healthy and Sustainable Communities Grant Awards

Below you will find answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the program, the application process, and the criteria by which the winners are selected. On our [web page](#) you'll find a second document: a list of the actual questions that are part of the online application. If you have any questions that you cannot find the answers to in this document, you can contact USCM staff at [abfha-awards@usmayors.org](mailto:abfha-awards@usmayors.org).

### 1. Who is eligible to apply for these awards?

There are two primary eligibility criteria which every application must meet:

- The city on behalf of which the application is submitted must be a member of The United States Conference of Mayors. Member service cities are eligible as well.
- The application submission must include a letter of support from the Mayor.

Eligible entities that may submit applications include:

- **City departments and authorities**, such as the Mayor's Office, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Department of Public Works, the local/regional housing authority, etc.
- **Individual schools or school districts.**
- **Nonprofit organizations** that address issues within the scope of the awards program.

If you are unsure whether your organization is eligible to submit an application, or whether your city is a member of The United States Conference of Mayors, you can [contact us](#). Again, it is key that **the application must be submitted on behalf of a member city of The United States Conference of Mayors, and the application must include a letter of support from the Mayor.**

### 2. How many awards will be given and what are the award amounts?

Awards will be made in three population categories: Small City (less than 75,000), Medium City (75,000 – 250,000) and Large City (greater than 250,000).

	Small City	Medium City	Large City
1st Place	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$275,000
2nd Place	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$100,000
3rd Place	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$75,000

Overall, this award aims to support programs that engage community members and promote or stimulate behavior change, in the categories of healthy and sustainable cities.

### Health Initiatives

- Increasing kids' and families' access to fresh fruits and vegetables, through the development of school and community gardens, and/or programs that support farmers' markets and/or free or low-cost fruit and vegetable distribution in affected communities
- Cooking and nutrition programs that focus on teaching kids how to eat better and/or how to prepare healthy meals
- Programs that encourage kids to exercise in and out of school
- Programs that empower youth to engage in educating their peers and in the community decision-making process about issues that directly impact their health and wellbeing – for example, hiring and training youth advocates

### Environmental Health and Sustainability Initiatives

- Strategies to encourage and improve residential recycling rates and reduce contamination
- Food waste reduction initiatives, composting and other waste/landfill diversion programs
- Beach/waterway and other types of community clean-up initiatives

- Projects that promote water conservation

We recognize that many types of initiatives, including some of those we list here, might bridge both categories (childhood obesity prevention, and environmental health and sustainability) and we encourage and welcome such proposals. Finally, this list is meant to be suggestive, rather than exhaustive. If you would like to propose a program that you do not see specifically mentioned here, and you are wondering whether it might be eligible for funding, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

### 3. How many applications may be submitted on behalf of a single city?

**There is no limit to how many applications may be submitted on behalf of a member city.** If the Mayor believes that there are two or more programs that are worthy of support, then the Mayor may submit (or allow to be submitted on the member city's behalf) an application for each of those programs. Again, as long as each application is submitted on behalf of a member city and includes a letter of support from the Mayor, it is eligible for consideration. Each application will be judged on its individual merits.

### 4. Speaking of that letter of support from the Mayor...what should it include?

The letter should be addressed to Tom Cochran, Executive Director, The United States Conference of Mayors. **The letter must be printed on official city letterhead, and also include the Mayor's signature.** Beyond that, the letter should speak to the Mayor's familiarity with and enthusiasm for the project being proposed for funding. It can speak to why the program being proposed is important and necessary. Anecdotes which express the Mayor's personal experience with, if not the program itself, the issues which the proposed program addresses, are welcome. If the Mayor will take a specific and active role in the proposed program, it is absolutely worth noting that! Please keep in mind that the letter itself is one of the criteria by which your application may be evaluated. (More on that below.)

### 5. What are the other criteria by which our application(s) will be judged?

The criteria by which your application will be evaluated are broad and may include:

- The extent to which the applicant makes a compelling case for the need for the proposed program.
- The extent to which the proposed strategies/interventions have the potential to effectively address the need(s) outlined by the applicant.
- The extent to which the proposed strategies/interventions approach the need(s) outlined by the applicant in a novel, creative or compelling way.
- The organizational capacity of the applicant to successfully implement the proposed program.
- The methods by which the applicant proposes to measure/evaluate program outcomes.
- **As previously stated, the role and level of involvement of the Mayor in the proposed program.**
- The extent to which the proposed budget expenditures are consistent with the interventions/activities proposed as part of the program.
- The potential for the proposed program to sustain itself beyond the support provided by this award.
- The potential for the proposed program to be replicated and be successful in other communities.

### 6. Who are the judges?

In order to preserve the integrity of the program we cannot reveal the identities of the members of the independent panel of judges who review applications.

### 7. What is the deadline to submit an application?

The application deadline is **Monday, October 27, 2025 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time.**

### 8. Where do I submit my application?

Only applications submitted through the [online application portal](#) will be accepted. ([Go to https://survey.usmayors.org/s3/The-2026-Healthy-and-Sustainable-Communities-Grant-Awards](#) to apply.) We will not accept mailed hard copies of applications, or applications submitted via email, fax, or any other method.

### 9. How can I confirm that our application was received? Can I print a copy of my application?

Once you submit your application, a confirmation email will automatically be generated and sent to the contact(s) listed on your application. A PDF of your full application will be included as an attachment to your confirmation email. If you have not received an email within an hour of submitting your application (and you have checked your filters to make sure said email was not flagged as spam), you should [contact us](#) to confirm receipt.

### 10. When will we know whether our application has been selected to receive an award?

The winners of the 2026 Awards will be announced during the 94th Winter Meeting of The United States Conference of Mayors. The winners will have been contacted in advance of those dates by USCM staff. We will make every effort to notify all applicants of their status by then, via the email addresses provided as Mayoral staff and program contacts as part of your application. However, **if you have not received a notice by January 31, 2025, you may take that as confirmation that your application has not been selected for an award, unless we directly communicate otherwise.**

**11. Our application was not selected for an award. Can you provide any feedback on how we could have strengthened our application?**

Yes! Contact us at [abfha-awards@usmayors.org](mailto:abfha-awards@usmayors.org). Because of the volume of requests we receive, it may take up to 90 days to receive feedback.

**12. I have a question that isn't listed here. How can I get it answered?**

Contact us at [abfha-awards@usmayors.org](mailto:abfha-awards@usmayors.org). Or visit [www.usmayors.org/abfha-awards](http://www.usmayors.org/abfha-awards).