The Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCFF) program provides grants of state aid for the development of public spaces and civic, community, and recreation centers, as well as historic buildings or districts. The purpose of this program is to support, enhance, and grow the Good Life throughout Nebraska. Awarded to municipalities and administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED), CCCFF grants of assistance encourage and foster quality of life in our communities. This is a competitive program and total requested funds in a single application cycle routinely exceed the amount of funds available for award.

On an annual cycle, the program operates on a two-part application process. Applicants meeting eligibility requirements, (1) provide a signed letter of intent to apply on or before January 15 of the current program year and (2) submit a completed application using the online application portal, https://neded.fluidreview.com. Upon submission of the letter of intent and within the appropriate program year, Applicants may submit their application at any time from January 15 to February 15. Through an announcement made no later than June 1 of the current program year, DED reserves the right to hold a second application cycle.

These application guidelines, grant schedule, sample application form, sample letter of intent to apply for funds, progress reporting form, compliance and reimbursement request form (final report), listing of prior awards, and other documents can be found at the CCFFF webpage (https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/program/civic-and-community-center-financing-fund-cccff/) or by contacting the Program Coordinator.

Eligible Projects
In general, a municipality may use a CCCFF grant for new construction or the renovation and/or expansion of existing public spaces and civic, community, and recreation centers, which may include the conversion, rehabilitation, or reuse of historic buildings. The fund may also be used for preliminary planning related to the development or rehabilitation of eligible projects. Awarded projects should be completed within two years of notice of approval.

Applicants apply for one of two grant types available in a single program year:

- Planning (i.e., engineering and/or technical studies directly related to eligible projects as defined below.)
- Construction

Eligible facilities defined:

- **Public Space**: property located within the traditional center of a community, typically comprised of a cohesive core of residential, civic, religious, and commercial buildings, arranged around a main street and intersecting streets. A community center is therefore an area of multiple buildings with both internal and external elements.

- **Civic Center**: a facility that is used to host conventions, meetings, and cultural events or a library. **NOTE**: what is commonly called a “community center” is a likely a “civic center” under this statutory definition.

- **Recreation Center**: a facility or park used for athletics, fitness, sport activities, or recreation that is owned by a municipality and is available for use by the general public with or without charge. A recreation center does not include any facility that requires a person to purchase a membership to utilize such facility (e.g., country club), but may include facilities that charge a reasonable user fee (e.g., wellness center).

- **Historic Building or District**: a building or district eligible for listing on or currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places or a building that is certified as contributing to the significance of a registered state or national historic
district. **NOTE:** Where an application involves an historic building or district, special policies apply; see *Special Policies for Historic Buildings*.

While some facilities are likely to incorporate multiple uses and may meet the definition of more than one type, eligible activities by facility type are:

- **Civic Centers and/or Recreation Centers:** used for new construction or renovation and/or expansion of existing facilities.
- **Historic Buildings or Districts:** used for preservation, restoration, conversion, rehabilitation, or reuse of historic buildings or districts. For more information, see *Special Policies for Historic Buildings*.
- **Public Spaces:** used to construct or upgrade public spaces; for such purpose, included is demolition of substandard and abandoned buildings.

**Ineligible Expenses**

Not eligible for grant funds, nor for consideration as required local match, are those costs incurred prior to a grant award. Also ineligible are costs associated with facility programming, marketing, advertising, or facility-staffing activities. For construction grants, monies may be used for the purchase and installation of fixed seating, lighting, carpeting, and other fixtures at a facility, but not for temporary and/or portable furniture or equipment.

**Eligible Applicants**

This program is only open to municipalities. Most Nebraska municipalities are eligible and may apply in competition with other municipalities seeking funds. Awarded projects should be completed within two years of the contract start date. Eligibility requirements and thresholds include:

- **Ownership** – Must conform to one of the two options described below. In any case, the municipality shall be the applicant (and, if awarded, recipient) for the grant of assistance.
  - Municipality must own the facility.
  - Municipality may jointly own an eligible facility with a political subdivision if the municipality’s ownership interest in such facility is at least fifty percent. Political subdivision means a county, school district, community college area, or natural resources district. For more information, see *Special Policies for Facilities Having Joint Ownership with a Political Subdivision*.

- **Location** – Must conform to one of the two options described below. In any case, the municipality shall include a map identifying the location of the facility for the grant of assistance in relation to the community, identifying any relevant sites or related projects. The intent of the map is to provide context to the proposed project. Also appropriate may be photographs, which – in addition to the required map – may also be included.
  - The facility is located within the boundaries of the municipality applying for the grant.
  - The facility is located within the municipality’s extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction. For more information, see *Special Policies for Facilities Located within the Applicant Municipality’s ETJ*.

- **Operation** – A municipality must operate the facility directly, or under contract.

- **Limitations and Priority Applicants** – related to the following information, contract start date shall be used for reference when determining eligibility/priority following a prior award. *Example: Anytown received an award for a planning grant to develop a community and wellness center, and a year later received a construction grant for the Anytown Community & Wellness Center. That following year, Anytown is eligible to apply for their library expansion.*
• A municipality may only receive one grant of each type (planning or construction) in any two-year period.
• Applicants not receiving CCCFF aid within the last ten years receive priority.

• **Ineligible Applicants** – whereas otherwise eligible based upon the above statutory requirements and thresholds, the following are also explicitly ineligible:
  o Not eligible to apply for a CCCFF grant are the cities of Omaha and Lincoln, or other municipality that has received funding through the Convention Center Facility Financing Assistance Act.
  o No project may receive assistance under both the Sports Arena Facility Financial Assistance Act (SAFFA) and CCCF Act, including Ralston.

### Matching Requirements

Recipients must match grant funds at least equally from local sources (1:1 local cost-share). **Matching funds must be injected into the project within the contract effective dates.** Neither the local match nor the items listed for grant assistance may include amounts already expended prior to the date of application for grant assistance. Any expenses incurred prior to award are not eligible as match, but may demonstrate project readiness and local support.

- CCCFF grant funds cannot account for more than 50% of the total project costs.
- Consideration given for in-kind services; however, at least 50% of local cost-share must be in cash.

### Grant Amounts

Assistance from the fund cannot amount to more than one-half of the (1) cost of construction, renovation, or expansion of the eligible facility or (2) completion of planning document. Planning grants are available for $3,000 – $15,000. Construction grants are available for a minimum of $15,000 and a maximum as defined below. CCCFF uses Schedule A until the balance of the Fund reaches $3.75M. Use of Schedule B is triggered after the balance of the Fund reaches $3.75M and until it falls below $1.5M. DED will allocate no more than ten percent of annual grant funds awarded for planning projects.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality Population</th>
<th>Grant Maximum Schedule A</th>
<th>Municipality Population</th>
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</table>

Potential applicants should contact the CCCFF Program Coordinator to confirm which grant maximum schedule to use for the current program year. The Legislature annually allocates funds to DED. A listing of all prior awards is available on the CCCFF webpage. In 2020, DED anticipates approximately $5.4M will be available in state aid.

### Letter of Intent

A municipality seeking a grant first submits a signed letter of intent to apply. Issued on official municipal letterhead and signed by applicant municipality’s chief elected official, the letter of intent serves as a letter of support for the forthcoming application and identifies the type of grant (planning or construction), brief description of the project, estimated total project budget, amount of assistance requested, and local contact person. Signed letter may be sent to CCCFF Coordinator in full-color PDF via email attachment or original letter by postal mail. A template is available on the CCCFF webpage.
Application Review & Approval Process

Applications are submitted using https://neded.fluidreview.com at any time after submission of the letter of intent and prior to application due date. **DED does not issue an “invitation” to apply.** Applicants create a user profile, select the CCCFF program, and complete the application form. Once created and to avoid data entry duplication, municipalities may maintain user profiles over multiple program years. Where an application preparer is used, it is recommended they create a profile on the municipality’s behalf. The user profile allows for saving of partially completed applications until the Applicant is ready to submit their form. For consideration, an application must be finalized and submitted by the Applicant (or their preparer) on or prior to the due date.

The application must include a clear and concise summary describing the nature of the overall project. This project description determines the proposed project’s eligibility under the Act. Applications for eligible projects are reviewed and scored by a committee consisting of DED staff as well as invited members of other vested State agencies. Depending upon the type of grant being applied for, eligible project applications are competitively scored based upon review criteria established in statute (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§13-2707 and 13-2707.01). See Review Criteria by Grant Type. Review committee issues recommendation of top scoring applications to the DED Director, or their designee, for final approval. To meet fiscal responsibilities, DED reserves the right to establish the maximum-awarded amount of funds in any given year. DED sends formal notification to all applicants following official action by the Director. For more information, see Awarded Projects section below.

Special Policies for Facilities Located within the Applicant Municipality’s ETJ

Where an application involves an eligible facility not located within the municipality, special policies apply. The municipality must provide documentation that the project for which the grant is requested shall be located, for any city of the first class, city of the second class, or village, within the municipality's extraterritorial zoning jurisdiction.

Special Policies for Historic Buildings

Where an application involves an historic building, special policies apply. For any application for a grant of assistance to assist in the preservation, restoration, conversion, rehabilitation, or reuse of a historic building or district, the Applicant is required to submit verification of the State Historic Preservation Officer’s evaluation and determination. The State Historic Preservation Officer shall evaluate the work as proposed in the application to determine whether it conforms to the United States Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, such determination is formalized on the SHPO Compliance Form. **Applicant must include this form,** and any attachments thereof to notify DED of the determination. Subsequent to this determination, if the work does not conform to such standards, the project is **not** eligible for a grant of assistance.

**IMPORTANT CHANGE:** A 2018 amendment to the Act included a provision for issuance of grants for preservation and restoration of historic buildings owned by a non-profit organization if a contractual relationship is created between a municipality and the non-profit organization. A 2019 amendment subsequently removed this provision and such an arrangement is therefore **not applicable nor allowable** for this, the 2020, program year.
Special Policies for Facilities Having Joint Ownership with a Political Subdivision

Where an application involves an eligible facility having joint ownership with an eligible political subdivision, special policies apply. Under the Act, an eligible political subdivision means a county, school district, community college area, or natural resources district. In such instances, the municipality must have an ownership stake of at least 50%; the remainder may be shared with an eligible political subdivision. See also Neb. Rev. Stat.13-2707(5).

In such cases involving joint ownership with an eligible political subdivision, the municipality, having no less than 50% ownership of the facility, is the Applicant and the political subdivision sharing no more than 50% ownership of the facility is a “Sub-Applicant”.

REVIEW CRITERIA BY GRANT TYPE

All eligible project applications are scored by committee based upon review criteria established in statute (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§13-2707 and 13-2707.01), and any other relevant parts of the Civic and Community Center Financing Act. Where an application meets threshold items, up to ten (10) points are available for each review criterion.

For planning grants, maximum score is 10 points; construction grants carry a 50-point maximum. Where appropriate, attach maps, images, drawings/illustrations, photographs, or other documentation to supplement the narrative. Be sure to make explicit reference to attachments to ensure an accurate presentation for the review committee. Supplemental materials and attachments do not replace narrative and any such materials included within an application submission should complement and not be considered “replacement” for a clear and concise narrative response to the criteria. The sample application form may include additional instructions for Applicants.

Statutory threshold items:

- **Project location.** The facility, unless as allowed by terms described under Special Policies for Facilities Located within the Applicant Municipality’s ETJ, shall be located in the municipality that applies for the grant. See also, Eligible Applicants.

- **Project ownership.** The municipality that applies for the grant, unless as allowed by terms described under Special Policies for Facilities Having Joint Ownership with a Political Subdivision, shall own the facility. See also, Eligible Applicants.

- **Project operation.** A project shall be operated by the municipality that applies for the grant, directly or under contract.

- **Local Match.** Assistance from the fund must include a 1:1 match (i.e., matched at least equally from local sources). At least fifty percent of the local match must be in cash. Neither the local match nor the items listed for grant assistance should include amounts already expended prior to the date of application for grant assistance. Projects with a higher level of local matching funds may be preferred as compared to those with a lower level.

Planning Projects

Planning projects are scored for one criterion; therefore, the maximum score for planning grant application is 10.

- **Financial support.** Assistance from the fund must include a 1:1 match. Preference given to those projects with a higher level of local matching funds compared to those with a lower level of matching funds.
Capital Construction Projects

Construction projects are scored for five criteria as described below. The maximum score for construction projects is 50. **Application preparers should avoid duplicative narrative.**

- **Retention Impact.** Funding decisions by the Department shall be based on the likelihood of the project retaining existing residents in the community where the project is located, developing, sustaining, and fostering community connections, and enhancing the potential for economic growth in a manner that will sustain the quality of life and promote long-term economic development;
  - **Tips for completing the project application narrative:** describe how the proposed project fulfills a known local need, based on a formal or informal assessment of current conditions.

- **New Resident Impact.** Funding decisions by the Department shall be based on the likelihood of the project attracting new residents to the community where the project is located.
  - **Tips:** describe the unique and/or specific services or function to be provided as a result of project completion otherwise not available, specifically related to attracting new residents, include what services or functions would become available should the project be completed.

- **Visitor Impact.** Funding decisions by the Department shall be based on the likelihood of the project enhancing or creating an attraction that would increase the potential of visitors to the community where the project is located from inside and outside the state.
  - **Tips:** describe the unique and/or specific services or function to be provided as a result of project completion otherwise not available, specifically related to attracting visitors and/or tourists into the area.

- **Readiness and local public support.** The fiscal, economic, and operational capacity to finance and manage the project and ability of the applicant to proceed and implement its plan and operate the facility.
  - **Tips:** identify who will handle the day-to-day operation and management of the project, project roles, and established or potential partnerships, as well as any volunteer efforts. Include a summary and description of past and future projects and activities carried out at the local level, and identify partnerships and volunteer efforts. Provide a summary or other evidence of public support in the form of public meetings, design charrettes, fundraising campaigns, etc.
  - **Describe project viability, leverage, and financial resources, as well as efforts to secure non-CCCFF monies from other state, federal, foundation, business, or individual sources.**

- **Project Planning.** Projects with completed technical assistance and feasibility studies shall be preferred to those with no prior planning.
  - **Tips:** describe the level of design or conceptualization of the project, who was involved, historical preservation consideration (where appropriate), etc. Include a planning process timetable that would further illustrate the planning process, as well as a timeline for project implementation, including securing matching funds. Provide any information about initial planning, stakeholder and/or public meetings, as well as a brief summary of comprehensive planning conducted at the project area or community level. When a community’s comprehensive plan has recommended the proposed project, provide a hyperlink to the comprehensive plan and indicate the specific location(s) of those recommendations.
AWARDED PROJECTS

DED issues formal notice of approval to recipients of an award, followed by issuance of CCCFF contracts typically within 30-45 days. Drawn for two years from the contract start date, in most cases the start date is the same as the date of the Notice of Approval letter. Successful applicants must review, sign, and return the CCCFF contract and meet any required special conditions items before issuance of the first disbursement.

Throughout the implementation of the project, at the local-level, the Recipient maintains accounting and financial records relating to the project. In general, throughout and at the completion of a project, it should be possible to compare estimated/budgeted project costs as identified at the time of application with the actual project costs. Depending on the scope and scale of the project, in full or in part, the municipality subsequently provides these records to DED for compliance and review for reimbursement prior to project closeout.

There is a five-year holding period requiring that a Recipient may not sell or transfer ownership interest in any facility receiving a CCCFF grant for at least five years.

Contract & Award Disbursement Process

If awarded, DED issues an electronic copy (PDF) of the CCCFF Contract with additional instructions via email to the local contact(s) identified within the application. The municipality (Recipient) must review, sign, date, and return the agreement to accept CCCFF assistance (“Act Funds”). Upon full execution of the contract and any required conditions met, DED will disburse fifty percent of the Act Funds to the Recipient. Act Funds are transferred electronically to the account designated on the State of Nebraska ACH Enrollment Form as submitted with the signed contract.

As described in the section below, disbursement of the remaining grant (i.e., “final disbursement” or “final payment”) occurs on a reimbursement basis after the allocation of the minimum local cost-share matching requirements, as evidenced by paid receipts and other documentation of expenditures reviewed as a part of compliance review by DED staff.

Progress Reporting Requirements & Final Disbursement

Recipients must submit progress reports on a semi-annual basis for the duration of the project and until closeout by DED. The first semi-annual progress report is due six months following the Notice of Approval date (e.g., where the NOA is dated 03/30/2020, the first report would be due 09/30/2020). To receive the remaining fifty percent of the grant, Recipient must submit for review a completed CCCFF Request for Reimbursement – Compliance Review Checklist and supplemental materials, and/or other reporting form as specified by DED.

Progress reporting and compliance forms are available on FluidReview and the CCCFF webpage. Satisfactory completion of compliance and performance review is required to receive the final disbursement; this includes documentation of eligible costs incurred and project completion.

If completing and submitting semi-annual reports via FluidReview, report preparers will use the same report each time, updating with the most current information for that reporting period. Recipients may also submit reports by downloading the form from the CCCFF webpage, completing the report, and emailing it as an attachment to the CCCFF Coordinator.

NON-SELECT PROJECTS

Due to the competitive nature of the program related to the limited amount of funds available in state aid each program year, some projects are not selected for award. DED issues formal notice of non-selection to applicants not receiving an
award typically within 30 days of award announcements. To assist applicants in improving their applications in future funding cycles, these letters include application-specific feedback.

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<td><strong>Application Due Date</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Anticipated Award Date</strong></td>
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The CCCFF program is authorized and further described within Neb. Rev. Stat. §§13-2701 – 13-2710, and further administered by Nebraska Administrative Code, Title 90, Chapter 1 (“Rules and Regulations for Local Civic, Cultural, and Convention Center Financing Act”) and these Application Guidelines.