

Vacancy to Vibrancy Small Grants Program Grant Guidelines

The Vacancy to Vibrancy Small Grants Program (V2V) offers up to \$5,000 to fund vacant lot beautification and activation in St. Louis City. Local organizations and teams can apply to create a vibrant green space on a vacant lot in their community.

All funded projects should contribute to the following goals:

- Reduce Vacancy – Activate unused or underutilized land through creative, community-driven projects.
- Strengthen Community Health – Improve the environmental, social, or physical well-being of their neighborhood
- Improve Quality of Life – Create welcoming spaces that bring neighbors together and enhance daily life
- Increase Awareness of the Vacancy to Vibrancy Grant – Demonstrate what's possible through community-led lot activation and help inspire other residents to get involved

Deadline to submit application: March 31, 2026

To download resources, explore past awardees, and apply, visit:
www.stlvacancy.com/smallgrants.html

Have questions or need assistance, contact: grant@stlvacancy.org



Who Is Eligible

- All applying teams should have at least three members in total
- Community organizations and groups, including neighborhood associations, block units, and churches
- Nonprofits - 501(c)(3) status is not required
- Individual property owners with at least two additional project team members. The property owner should be the applicant
- Collaboration with your community organization or neighborhood association is not required, but it is highly encouraged. Bonus points are awarded for partnerships with other organizations
- For-profit groups will be considered if the LLC or corporation is community-based and truly doing work in the interest of the community
- Business registration and insurance are not required
- Fiscal agents and group bank accounts are not required

What Properties and Projects Are Eligible

- Vacant lots in the City of St. Louis owned by an eligible group (listed above) or an individual owner with at least two project team members
- Property must be open to the public
- **LRA Properties:** Applicants must show proof of plans to purchase the lot. Attach your plans for purchase with your application. *(Tip: include that you are applying for this grant in the LRA application)*
- **Garden Lease:** Groups with garden leases must show proof that they plan to purchase the lot when the lease expires
- New or abandoned projects only. There cannot be any ongoing developments, buildings, garden beds, etc.
- Projects that have already received funding from another source are still eligible if (a) nothing has been planted on the site, and (b) no construction is required.

Property **is not** eligible if it:

- Is a side lot or an extension of someone's residential home
- Has visible infrastructure (i.e., buildings, garden beds)

What Can Grant Funding Be Used for

- Missouri-native plants, including trees and shrubs
- Herbaceous and woody invasive species removal
- Gardening supplies and equipment necessary for project implementation and long-term management, such as hoses, rakes, shovels, etc.
- Contractor support (e.g., landscaping, tree removal)
- Top soil, mulch, compost
- Park signage and interpretive signage (e.g., signage that explains the type of native plant, why it's important)

What Can't Grant Funding Be Used for

- Purchase of property for the use of this project
- Plants not native to Missouri
- Projects that have existing developments, buildings, garden beds, etc.
- Trash cans
- Recreational equipment, including tables, chairs, and benches
- Paint, ribbons, solar lights, decorative supplies, etc.

Helpful Links

Missouri Native Plant Selections - A list of native plants with maintenance info

Potential Products - A list of products (with costs) purchased by previous awardees

Example Projects - Sample green space projects with designs and material checklists

Grantee Commitment and Accountability

By accepting a Vacancy to Vibrancy grant, grantees agree to actively participate in planning, implementing, and sustaining their project. **The following commitments are required:**

Monthly Meetings and Participation

- At least one representative from each grantee team must attend the monthly Committee meetings. Meetings occur on the second Tuesday of each month, 5:30–6:30 PM, virtually.
- Grantees may have no more than one excused absence from monthly meetings during the grant period.

Project Reporting

- Monthly meeting minutes will serve as the primary reporting mechanism. No separate or additional reporting documents are required unless specifically requested for grant compliance.

Project Maintenance

- Grantees must commit to maintaining the project site for at least five (5) years.
- Maintenance expectations include seasonal care, trash removal, basic upkeep, and addressing any issues that impact project safety or function.

Community Engagement

- Grantees must conduct community outreach and engagement throughout the project's planning and implementation phases. The Committee and STL Vacancy Collaborative will provide additional support, resources, and tools for engagement activities.
- Grantees are responsible for leading and coordinating their project, with collaboration from the Committee. This includes participating in planning sessions, preparing and participating in the Placemaking Blitz Day, and ensuring volunteers, materials, and communications are aligned.

How to Apply

- **Download** and complete the grant application
- Email your completed grant application to **grants@stlvacancy.org**
- Remember to include your:
 - Budget
 - Plans for ongoing maintenance
 - Community engagement material (optional)
 - Photos of your project site
 - Simple sketch of your project design and/or project inspiration photos.

NOTE: You may also mail or drop off your application in-person. Please contact us at grants@stlvacancy.org for more information.

Application Resource, Templates, and Examples

You can download templates, examples, and additional resources on our website: www.stlvacancy.com/smallgrantsresources.html

How Applications are Reviewed and Scored

All applications are reviewed by our volunteer Vacancy to Vibrancy Small Grants Program Committee. Each application is evaluated and awarded points based on the following:

- Meet all eligibility criteria
- Demonstrates strong community engagement efforts
- Aligns with community priorities
- Clear and feasible project concept
- Complete and clear maintenance plan
- Proposed budget that aligns with project vision and funding requirements
- Contributed to the four goals of the grant (listed on front page)

Bonus points will be awarded for collaboration with other organizations or community groups

How Grant Funding is Administered

All funds are managed through the Vacancy to Vibrancy Small Grants Program. This means that no grant funding will be sent directly to the grantee. Rather, the grantee will be the primary decision maker, and the Committee will order and procure materials on behalf of the grantee. No funds will be spent without the approval of the grantee.

Our volunteer Committee provides (1) design guidance, (2) financial management, (3) plant selection, (4) procurement of plants and materials, (5) marketing and communications support, (6) general technical assistance and implementation, and more.

Every step in the process leads towards Placemaking Blitz Day, a one-day volunteer event where grantees and community members come together to install the project — planting, beautifying, and bringing the space to life.

Grant Timeline (What to Expect if Your Project is Selected)

- **April:** Grant awardees are notified.
- **May:** Contracts are signed; first Vacancy to Vibrancy Committee meeting; Grantees and Committee conduct site analysis, align on goals, and begin working on timeline for project implementation.
- **June:** Grantees and Committee review community feedback and site design.
- **July:** Continue reviewing design, report on selected plants and materials, and begin maintenance plan for project.
- **August:** Final design is approved, and procuring and purchasing materials begin; Grantees work with the Committee to plan Placemaking Blitz Day (implementation day), including recruiting volunteers.
- **September:** Committee presents maintenance plan to grantee.
- **October:** Grantees hold Placemaking Blitz Day.
- **November:** Finalize all grant reporting and documents.