



The Rockfall Foundation

2026 Annual Environmental Grant Program Guidelines

Continuing the philanthropic tradition of our founder Colonel Clarence S. Wadsworth, The Rockfall Foundation invites non-profit organizations, municipalities, and schools to apply for grants through our competitive Annual Environmental Grant Program. The goal of the program is to preserve and enhance the environment in the Lower Connecticut River Valley and to increase public knowledge of and respect for its natural resources. Projects that demonstrate new and imaginative ways to achieve this are encouraged.

Funding Priorities

Eligible programs/projects/initiatives must relate to one or more of the following priorities:

- **Preservation:** work to protect ecosystems, species, and other irreplaceable elements of the region's natural heritage.
- **Conservation:** work to minimize our use of finite natural resources and our negative impacts on ecosystems and communities.
- **Restoration:** work to re-establish the healthy functions of an ecosystem or parts of ecosystems.
- **Education:** work to foster a stronger awareness and understanding of environmental and sustainability issues.

Eligibility

- Eligible projects are those that support the environment through preservation, conservation, restoration or education.
- Organizations certified as 501(c)(3) nonprofits, towns, and schools are eligible to apply. Prospective applicants who do not meet this eligibility requirement may partner with an eligible entity as a co-applicant in order to comply. A letter of agreement of this partnership from the host entity must be included with the application, stating that they agree to be equally responsible for compliance with all grant requirements.
- Organizations or projects must be based in one of the focus towns: Chester, Clinton, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield, Middletown, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland, or Westbrook. Proposals that focus on the Connecticut River corridor or Long Island Sound will be considered if there is a demonstrated impact in at least one of the focus towns.

What We Fund

Programs, projects, or capacity building initiatives within one or more of the Foundation's priority areas are eligible for funding. Annual grants support both ongoing programs and start-up initiatives. The Foundation's grants often provide critical seed money and support for groups that do not have large budgets or staff. Ideally, these grants can be leveraged to attract additional funders.

Grants typically range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. The available pool in 2026 for all grant awards is \$34,500. The Grants Committee may schedule applicant interviews at their discretion if they believe it will be helpful to their understanding of the proposal.

Funding for materials, transportation, program/presenter fees, intern stipends and similar items are eligible. Items such as food, regular operating expenses (e.g. insurance, rent, and other overhead), indirect labor, salaries and benefits are not generally funded but may be considered for organizations under financial hardship. Funding must be applied to the items/activities described in the application form. Substitutions are not permitted unless prior approval has been obtained.

Types of programs, projects and initiatives that are funded include the following:

- Environmental education
- Responsible environmental planning
- Preservation of the Connecticut River Watershed
- Innovative solutions to waste stream management and pollution
- Open space acquisition
- Environmental justice
- Or anything consistent with the priorities listed

Environmental education is broadly defined and not limited to school curricula; environmental education programs can target any age from preschool through adults. Activities that engage young people, provide hands-on experiences, offer internships, or creative approaches to learning are encouraged.

Capital projects that facilitate learning are not prohibited but will be carefully scrutinized for their application to hands-on learning.

Planning projects should be approached with consideration for the natural environment and those that support sustainable communities.

Preservation of the Connecticut River Watershed includes projects designed to protect and benefit the water quality of the Connecticut River watershed and raise awareness of responsible living in the watershed.

Grant Requirements

- Experienced supervision for the proposed project should be demonstrated in the application.
- Projects should be for a period of no greater than 12 months and begin no later than July 1, 2026 (may include a planning phase).

- All grants require a match of in-kind items, cash, or professional services. Grant requests require at least a 25% match of the amount requested. Organizations experiencing hardship and having difficulty meeting the match may contact us prior to application submission to discuss their circumstances.
- Funding must be applied to the item/activity described in the application. Substitutions are not permitted unless prior approval has been obtained.
- If the applicant is a recipient of a past grant, grantee must be in compliance with the terms of the prior grant agreement.
- Grantees must detail expected results and agree to submit a final report, in the format provided by the Foundation that details the project's outcomes and provide The Foundation with electronic photos related to the project and with copies of any resulting publications and/or maps of activities and/or results.
- Grantees must prepare and supervise a tabletop exhibit about the project at The Rockfall Foundation Annual Grants and Awards Celebration in the fall.
- Grantees must facilitate a site visit to observe the project in action.
- Grantees must recognize The Rockfall Foundation's grant publicly. Methods of public acknowledgement include, but are not limited to newsletters, websites, press releases, physical signs, printed program materials, annual report, social media, and verbally at events.

Application Criteria

Grant applications are rated on the following criteria:

- Innovation
- Engagement of youth leaders
- Environmental justice/disadvantaged populations
- Previous Rockfall support or existing project with proven progress
- Likelihood of proposal reaching fruition and its target audience
- Clear alignment and benefit to a priority area
- Potential for broader application beyond the proposed activity
- Likelihood of continuation without further Rockfall funding.
- A budget that is clear and reasonable
- Clarity and confirmation of matching funds sources
- Implications beyond the immediate purview of the proposal

Preparing Your Application

Fill out the [2026 Annual Environmental Grant Application Form](#). It can also be found on our website rockfallfoundation.org/grants.

Required Attachments (for applicant and co-applicant, if applicable):

- A one-page summary of the applicant organization's current budget
- A letter of agreement of a co-applicant partnership and a one-page summary of the co-applicant organization's budget, if applicable

For Nonprofits ONLY:

- A copy of the first two pages of the most recently filed 990. For those not required to file a 990, a copy of Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet statements of the most recently completed year as approved by applicant's board
- A list of the applicant's Board of Directors

Timeline

Monday, September 15, 2025, 5-6:30 pm: Information Session – For new and returning applicants, this session will provide information about the grant program, highlight changes to the program requirements and application, and answer questions about the process.

This is an in-person meeting at the deKoven House (27 Washington Street, Middletown). Participants are required to RSVP to hannah@rockfallfoundation.org.

Thursday, November 6, 2025, by noon: Application Deadline – Applications and all required documents must be received electronically by The Rockfall Foundation by noon. Completed applications should be submitted by email to grants@rockfallfoundation.org. Applications received after the noon deadline, incomplete applications, and paper applications will not be considered.

Grant awards are announced in mid-February with funds available by April 1.

Contact Rockfall

Please contact Hannah Huddleston, Grants and Communications Coordinator, at 860-347-0340 or via email to grants@rockfallfoundation.org with questions about the process, required documents, or to discuss project ideas.

Grant application review and selection is overseen by Rockfall's Grants Committee. New applicants are highly encouraged to attend the Information Session. A list of previous recipients in recent years is available on our website, rockfallfoundation.org/grants/recent-recipients.