

2026 Houston-Galveston Area Council

Parks and Natural Areas Awards Program Application Guide

We seek projects that expand parks and natural areas for improved quality of life, habitat, and water quality. We also seek projects that provide educational and hands-on programming opportunities for visitors and residents. Winning projects, which exhibit efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation, serve as models to be replicated throughout the region.

DEADLINE Applications must be received by Wednesday, September 30, 2026, by Noon.

Categories: Planning and Policy Tools; On-the-Ground Small, Up to \$250K; On-the-Ground Medium, \$250K to \$1M; On-the-Ground Large, Over \$1M; and Programming

Any public, private, or non-profit organization may apply. There is no entry fee. Submittals in any category must be for activities completed between September 1, 2022, and August 31, 2026. By submitting a project, the entrant agrees contest materials may be used in presentations and publications relating to the Parks and Natural Areas Program at H-GAC. Selected projects may be featured on the H-GAC website.

There is no funding associated with this awards program.

Use this document to prepare your application. Only applications submitted through the online form at h-gac.com/parks (available September 1-30, 2026) will be eligible for the Parks and Natural Areas Awards.

All Categories

- Title of Project
- Project Owner
 - a. Only one application per project may be considered. You will be asked if you are the project owner and confirm there are no other applications being submitted for the project.
- Category
 - a. Programming projects should include an educational or awareness component
 - b. On-the-Ground projects should be completely constructed or part of a phased project
 - i. For phased projects, only include the elements that are complete, not the elements that are under construction or planned
- Best Management Practices used (planning, sustainable design, maintenance, and/or programming)
- Nominated by
- Who should we notify if the project is selected for an award?

- List of project partners
- Provide the location of the project. (You may include a GIS shapefile, latitude/longitude, physical address, a map showing park location and major cross streets.) No more than 20MB
- County
- Size of project (trail miles, acres, etc.)
- Value of the project (cost, in-kind, etc.)
- Briefly describe the key elements of the plan, policy, on-the-ground project, or programming (up to 100 words)
- Please attach at least one high-resolution photograph, suitable for print. Files must be no larger than 20MB each
- What are the project objectives? (up to 250 words)
- How did the project meet these objectives? (up to 250 words)
- Describe cost-benefit and funding solutions for the project. (up to 250 words)
- Describe how the project involves/will involve a collaborative effort between public, political jurisdictions and/or private businesses. (up to 250 words)
- Describe public involvement and/or input related to the project. (up to 250 words)
- Describe how the project meets the needs of the community, including public health benefits, plans for the community's future needs, or new or renewed connections to parks and natural areas, particularly in underserved areas. (Up to 300 words)
- Describe how the project can be a model for similar initiatives in the region, or what innovative practices you used as part of this project. (up to 300 words)
- Supplemental information —photographs, graphics, websites, news articles, or related documents—may be included as a single PDF or Microsoft Word attachment no longer than 10 pages and no larger than 20MB.

Planning/Policy and On-the-Ground Only Categories ONLY

- Describe how the project creates, preserves, restores, or expands natural areas and ecosystems, or how the project improves the quality of nearby water bodies. (up to 300 words)
- Describe how the project creates, expands, or improves park areas. (up to 300 words)
- Describe how the project improves the resiliency and sustainability of the area. (up to 300 words)

Programming Category ONLY

- Describe how the project raises awareness or provides education on the importance of creating, preserving, or restoring natural areas or ecosystems and improving or protecting the quality of local waterbodies. (up to 300 words)
- Describe how the project raises awareness or provides education on the importance of improving the resiliency and sustainability for the area. (up to 300 words)

Question Types and Scoring Weights – Open-Ended Question Unless Otherwise Noted

Question	Choice/Answer	Weight
Title of Project*		
Project Owner*		
Category*	Planning/Policy Tools On-the Ground Project Small - Up to \$250K On-the-Ground Project Medium - \$250K to \$1M On-the-Ground Project Large – Over \$1M Programming	
Best Management Practices Used	Planning Sustainable Design Maintenance Programming	
Nominated by*	Name* Title Address Phone Number* E-Mail Address*	
Who should we notify if the project is selected for an award?	Name* Title Address Phone Number* E-Mail Address*	
List of project partners		
Provide the location of the project. (You may include a GIS shapefile, latitude/longitude, physical address, a map showing park location, and major cross streets.)		
You may attach a GIS shape file (you may attach more than one file) No more than 30MB	Select File Button	
County	List 13 counties	
Size of project (trail miles, acres, etc.)		
Value of the project (cost, in-kind, etc.)		
Briefly describe the key elements of the plan, policy, on-the-ground project, or programming. (up to 100 words)		
Please attach at least one high-resolution photograph, suitable for print. You may include more than one. Files must be no larger than 30MB each	Select File Button	
What are the project objectives?	(up to 250 words)	1
How did the project meet these objectives?	(up to 250 words)	2

Question	Choice/Answer	Weight
Describe cost-benefit and funding solutions for the project.	(up to 250 words)	2
Describe how the project involves/will involve a collaborative effort between public, political jurisdictions and/or private businesses.	(up to 250 words)	1
Describe public involvement and/or input related to the project.	(up to 250 words)	1
Describe how the project meets the needs of the community, including public health benefits, plans for the community's future needs, or new or renewed connections to parks and natural areas, particularly in underserved areas.	(Up to 300 words)	5
Describe how the project can be a model for similar initiatives in the region , or what innovative practices you used as part of this project?	(up to 300 words)	2
Supplemental information —photographs, graphics, websites, news articles, or related documents—may be included as a single PDF or Microsoft Word attachment no longer than 10 pages and no larger than 20MB.	Select File Button	
PLANNING, POLICY, ON THE GROUND ONLY Describe how the project creates, preserves, restores, or expands natural areas and ecosystems or how the project improves quality of nearby waterbodies.	(up to 300 words)	5
PLANNING, POLICY, ON THE GROUND ONLY Describe how the project creates, expands, or improves park areas.	(up to 300 words)	4
PLANNING, POLICY, ON THE GROUND ONLY Describe how the project improves the resiliency and sustainability for the area.	(up to 300 words)	4
PROGRAMMING ONLY Describe how the project raises awareness or provides education on the importance of creating, preserving, or restoring natural areas or ecosystems and improving or protecting the quality of local waterbodies.	(up to 300 words)	4
PROGRAMMING ONLY Describe how the project raises awareness or provides education on the importance of improving the resiliency and sustainability for the area.	(up to 300 words)	5