



## **Grant Guidelines: 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Community Improvement Grants**

**Application Due: 5pm ET on Mar 16<sup>th</sup> 2026**

**Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.**

### **Overview**

In partnership with its sponsors, including Target and The Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation, Keep America Beautiful® will provide MLK Community Improvement Grants in 2026 to support communities in revitalizing, beautifying and transforming areas in and around Martin Luther King Jr. corridors and neighborhoods. With over 950 MLK corridors across the United States transecting a variety of different neighborhood types and commercial uses, these grants will provide funding to businesses, residents and community groups to address challenges and meet their needs for creating vibrant and welcoming spaces. Past MLK projects have included murals and public art installations, the creation of community gardens and green spaces, tree plantings, and cleanup efforts.

### **Funding Available**

- Up to \$228,000 in funding will be available.
- Cash grants will range between \$5,000 – \$20,000

### **Eligibility**

- These grants are open to Keep America Beautiful affiliates, nonprofits, local governments, and other community organizations. Non-KAB affiliates are strongly encouraged to partner with a KAB Affiliate in their community. KAB affiliates will receive priority review and consideration.
- Project location must be along or near an MLK corridor – these can include streets, roadways, neighborhoods, community spaces, parks and other areas named after Martin Luther King Jr.
- No more than one (1) application per affiliate will be accepted.

### **Application Guidelines**

- Applicants must submit at least one letter of support from a local government representative, community group, or local partner critical to the project's successful execution to demonstrate buy-in for the project.
- KAB affiliates in President's Circle will receive priority review and consideration.
- Proposals must clearly describe the need for the project.
- Projects must address a need identified by the community and foster a sense of inclusion and self-determination.
- Projects with a focus on the following will be prioritized:
  - Projects aimed to have longer lasting or more permanent impacts that build on or strengthen social or community infrastructure.
  - Projects that engage local artists or use native plants (when relevant) and outline maintenance plans.
- Applicant must demonstrate the ability to complete the project and required reporting within the grant implementation period.

### **Other Requirements**

As you plan your grant program activities, please keep in mind that grantees will receive 70% of their grant funding upon executing a grant agreement and submitting an invoice. The remaining 30% of the award will be disbursed after submitting a final invoice and having their final reports approved by Keep America Beautiful.



- Grantees must submit photos of their project including photos of volunteers in action, before and after photos, and any other media that showcase the projects activities.
- Grantees will acknowledge Keep America Beautiful and grant sponsors in any signage.
- Grantees are asked not to solicit national sponsors for additional funding or in-kind support.
- Although participation is not required, our funding partners have expressed interest in supporting funded projects through hands-on volunteer engagement. When feasible, we encourage grantees to accommodate their involvement and provide opportunities for partners to participate in or help lead volunteer efforts connected to the project.

### **Grant Review Process & Considerations**

- Applications will be reviewed & decided by a grant review and selection committee and evaluated for:
  - Clear articulation of program need—strong proposals will address a demand identified by residents, community groups, or business owners/employees along the MLK Jr. corridor. While focusing on community improvement, strong projects would address how the project fosters a sense of inclusion and neighborhood self-determination and how the project builds community/social infrastructure.
  - Expected impact on the project location.
  - Applicant's ability to successfully complete project within grant timeline.
  - Extent to which project will involve community members, residents, businesses and/or other community volunteers as thought leaders and active participants.
  - Extent to which project will support local/community artists or vendors (as applicable)
  - Extent to which the project has community endorsement and is expected to move forward.
  - Leveraging of matching funds or cross-sectoral collaboration.
  - Completeness, clarity, and respect for word limits.

Evaluation criteria above are not all required but highly encouraged to ensure strong and successful applications.

### **Timeline**

- Application Deadline: 5pm ET on Mar 16<sup>th</sup> 2026
- Award Announcements: March - April 2026
- Project Implementation: May – December 2026
- Reporting Deadlines: Keep America Beautiful will require every grant recipient to complete interim and final reports by the following deadlines.
  - Interim Report Due: 5pm ET, August 31, 2026
  - Final Report Due: 5pm ET, December 15, 2026

### **Reporting Requirements**

Grantees will be expected to report the following items in their final report:

- Project's impact/outcomes on the MLK Jr. corridor and on the community or people residing or doing business within the area.
- Quotes or testimonials from community members or groups impacted by the project.
- Photos (before, during and after project) as well as links to social posts or videos documenting MLK grant in action. The photos/video links should capture the initial condition of the project area, showcase project execution, and capture the final result. Photos of volunteers implementing the project (if volunteers were engaged) are also required.
- Verification and/or updates of materials in grant application.



- Articulation of project successes and challenges.
- Metrics such as: Number of volunteers, Number of participants, Number of individuals served, Total number of public spaces cleaning/improved, Location of where activities took place, etc.
- Media outreach and/or coverage.