

2026 Creative Give Back

The Creative Give Back is an award of consulting services valued up to \$25,000. Awards are selected through a competitive proposal process. You may contact us per the question/answer instructions below. **Good luck!**

Scope of Project: The types of projects that will be considered are as wide-ranging as the creativity of the applicant pool. Check out our website for our areas of expertise and project examples to make sure the project is aligned with our firm. You can test your idea during the Q&A period described below. The project needs to be completed between April and November 2026. The total amount of awarded services cannot exceed \$25,000.

Selection Process: Creative EDC staff will select three finalist projects based on the criteria below. The staff-selected finalists will be reviewed by an Independent Review Panel who determines the award. The Review Panel members will not be made public until the 2026 Give Back Award is announced.

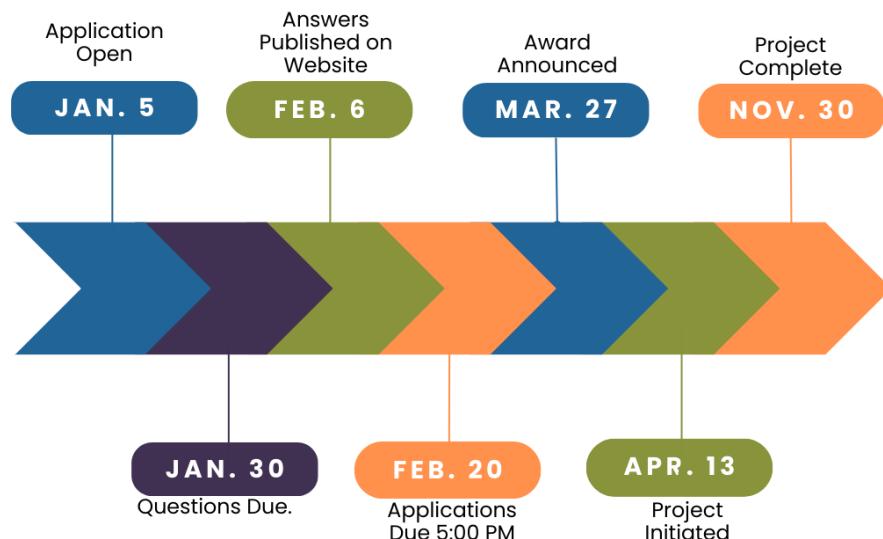
Selection Criteria:

- Creativity
- Innovation
- Ability to be replicated
- Strength of the applicant organization
- Significant economic impact
- Demonstrated consulting need
- And just a few points for how much fun the project will be – If we’re not getting paid at least we should have fun!

Eligible Applicants – Local governments and nonprofit economic development organizations in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia are eligible applicants. We will consider applications from other types of organizations for extraordinary projects. Communities do not have to be economically distressed. There could be many reasons the consulting project has not been funded.

Deadlines – No late proposals. Like a site selector, we’re looking for reasons to eliminate.

2026 CREATIVE GIVE BACK



Required Information

As you organize your application for The Creative Give Back, keep in mind we have a lot of proposals to read. Proposals that are clear, concise, and organized will be more favorably considered. Please see our website for the [online application](#).

Applicant

- Applicant Contact Information
- Project Contact Information
- Organization Name
- Cover Letter - Summarize your proposal in a cover letter to be signed by an official of the organization that can attest to the accuracy of the information in the proposal. Include a contact name, phone number, and email. One pdf file must be submitted.
- Community Overview-Write a one paragraph overview of your community.
- Organization Overview – Tell us about your organization including its legal structure and how this project falls within your program of work. Identify the primary project contact.

Project Scope of Work

- Project Overview - Clearly and concisely describe the project.
- Project Goal - What is the goal of the project?
- Barriers - What have been the obstacles to addressing the project goal? Why has this project not been funded in your program of work?
- Project Innovation - Describe how this project is innovative, original, unique, and in every way CREATIVE.
- Consulting Support - Outline the consulting scope of work needed to achieve the goal.
- Deliverables - What are the expected deliverables?
- In one sentence, say why your project should be selected.

Timeline

- Confirm that the project can be initiated in April 2026 and completed by November 2026.

Questions

- Email questions to cmorphis@creativeedc.com by January 30.

Resources

- Does your community have the resources to pay Creative EDC project expenses for travel to meetings? Estimated travel will be in the award agreement.

Letters from Local Organizations Endorsing the Project and Committing to Implementation Support

We want to see that the project has community support. The best ideas often lay dormant due to lack of community support. Submit support letters (no more than three) from local organizations. Please bundle - one pdf file must be submitted.

Submittal Process - [Submit online application](#) by 5:00 pm, February 20, 2026.

Influencing - Absolutely no influencing allowed. Keep the expensive dinners, sports event tickets, and bottles of wine. If you can afford all of that, then you could hire us instead of applying.

THE FINE PRINT – Read the fine print to avoid surprises.

- Creative EDC reserves the right to refuse any proposal.
- We are not responsible for the cost of proposal preparation or transmittal.
- All proposals will remain confidential. We do reserve the right to publish a list of applicants that apply each year.
- A scope of work will be finalized with the selected community. It will clearly state the services of Creative EDC. Scope creep is not allowed. We are giving away one, defined project, not a lifelong retainer.
- The maximum value of our services to be given away is \$25,000. If the selected project and finalized scope of work exceeds that amount, we will work with you to either redefine the scope/project to \$25,000 or allow you to pay the excess. If Creative EDC and the winner cannot reach an agreement on redefinition of the scope or for the winner to pay the excess, then Creative EDC reserves the right to terminate the relationship.
- Creative EDC is donating our fee for the project, but we require reimbursement for direct expenses such as mileage to meetings. We will clearly state what the expenses will be when we finalize the scope of work. We will use technology to host as many meetings remotely as possible to limit travel costs.
- Creative EDC is donating our services alone. If the project requires additional professional services, such as engineering or legal, we will pass along those fees at cost and will clearly state this upfront before we begin.
- At the end of the project, we require a letter from the organization acknowledging our donation. If we are not getting paid, at least we can try to get some tax relief!
- The winning project must agree to allow Creative EDC to list it as a client; promote the project on our website and through other media; share a project summary with other communities, and potentially enter it for economic development awards.