

**JUST
TRANSITION
FUND**

2026 Local Economy Lab Request for Proposals: Place-Based Infrastructure Investments

Deadline: July 24



ABOUT THE JTF

The Just Transition Fund is on a mission to create economic opportunity for the frontline communities and workers hardest hit by the transition away from coal.

Our goal is to strengthen and diversify local economies by advancing economic solutions that are equitable, inclusive, and low-carbon.

Our [Local Economy Lab](#), launched in 2025, is a one-stop hub that helps coal communities seed, grow, and scale transformative economic projects. Through this Place-Based Infrastructure RFP, we'll support investments in the foundational assets communities need to take part in the new economy.

We fund projects at every stage—from early planning and pilots to full implementation and growth. **Whether you're testing a new idea or expanding one that already works, we want to hear from you!**

2026 PLACE-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS CYCLE

Infrastructure helps keep people in a community and draws new people in.

This cycle, we'll support community-driven infrastructure projects that build the physical and digital foundations coal communities need to create lasting economic opportunity.

We're focused on three priorities:

1. Coal Plant & Mine Redevelopment

Reusing and redeveloping coal plant and mine sites, with economic and energy resilience in mind.

2. Community Revitalization

Investing in the physical assets that anchor a local economy—including historic buildings, natural landscapes, and cultural landmarks.

3. Broadband & Digital Connectivity

Building broadband, closing the digital divide, and growing the local economy by connecting homes, businesses, and institutions to high-speed internet.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

You can apply for any of these priorities, and we encourage projects that combine ideas across more than one.

1. Coal Plant & Mine Redevelopment

Coal plants and mine sites pose different challenges, but share a common thread. When either closes, jobs disappear and the local tax base shrinks. Yet the sites themselves often hold real value.

Plant sites already have grid connections, transmission, rail and water access, industrial buildings, and large tracts of developable land. That's why clean energy developers, data center operators, and advanced manufacturers are drawn to them. Mine sites are a different story: surface mining has left millions of acres of abandoned land that still threaten water quality and community safety. But once that land is cleaned up, it can support new industry and new use.

Putting these assets back to work is one of the most direct ways to turn the infrastructure of the old economy into the foundation of a new one. We're looking for projects that return former coal plant and mine sites to productive use and deliver real benefits to the community—pairing redevelopment with concrete economic opportunity. We will also support inclusive planning efforts ahead of a plant or mine closure.

2. Community Revitalization

After decades of disinvestment, the downtowns, neighborhoods, community buildings, parks, trails, and public spaces of coal communities often badly need revitalization. At the same time, these places hold real assets—historic buildings, cultural landmarks, natural landscapes—that can anchor an economic comeback with the right investment.

We're looking for projects led by residents and rooted in local identity. The best projects serve people who live there first. In doing so, they both keep and attract residents, support local businesses, draw visitors, and show that a community has a future.

Strong applicants will show how their infrastructure project connects to a bigger economic plan—not just fixing up physical assets, but building community ownership and generating local wealth.

3. Broadband & Digital Connectivity

Lack of affordable, reliable high-speed internet is one of the biggest barriers to economic development in coal communities. Broadband isn't a luxury—it's a basic need for remote work, telehealth, and running a small business. Federal funding, notably through BEAD, has opened a real but uneven chance to close long-standing gaps, especially in the hardest-to-reach rural and Tribal areas.

But broadband infrastructure alone isn't enough. A connection only closes the divide when people can afford it, have the skills and devices to use it, and can put it to work for their livelihoods.

We'll fund community projects that advance digital connectivity and connect clearly to the federal broadband landscape—whether you're carrying out or coordinating with a federal award, adding digital-equity or economic programming on top of federally funded infrastructure, or building capacity in places federal programs won't fully reach.

SELECTION CRITERIA

PROJECT EXAMPLES

These examples show the kinds of projects we expect to fund, across a range of strategies.

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive, and we welcome any project that meets the criteria.

Successful projects will make a significant impact, either by growing a model that works or by testing a new one.

We'll evaluate every proposal against these criteria:

- **Big ideas that can change local economic opportunity.** We especially encourage projects that build an export economy—connecting coal communities to larger markets.
- **A growing sector.** We don't favor any one industry, but we look for demonstrated growth potential and a strong local fit.
- **Strong partnerships.** Real engagement from local partners, such as community organizations, local government, employers, and schools.
- **Existing investment.** Funding already secured or committed from public and/or private sources—seed money for early projects or larger commitments for proven ones.
- **A model that others can replicate.** Approaches that other rural coal communities could adapt, even with limited access to resources and services.

Coal plant closure and reuse planning: A regional economic development corporation works with the plant owner, local government, and a Tribal nation to lead a community planning process ahead of a plant's closure. Together they produce a shared vision for the site, a plan to replace lost tax revenue, and a pipeline of aligned federal funding.

Clean energy on former mine land: A community development nonprofit and a county partner to build utility-scale solar and battery storage on reclaimed mine land, using AMLER funding to move the site from cleanup to reuse. A community benefit agreement returns a share of revenue to the county to replace lost taxes and fund local hiring.

Downtown revitalization: A community development organization buys and redevelops a former coal company building in a historic downtown, turning it into mixed-use space with a health clinic, a co-working hub, and housing. Using New Markets Tax Credits, historic tax credits, and ARC investment, the project anchors a wider Main Street effort that fills nearby vacant storefronts.

Trails on reclaimed land: A regional trail organization, a land trust, and local government reclaim a former surface mine for a multi-use trail linking three communities. The project pairs AML cleanup funding with trail infrastructure, a trailhead with space for new businesses, and a strategy that connects visitors to local outfitters, lodging, and restaurants.

Broadband build-out: A rural nonprofit, chosen as a BEAD subgrantee, builds open-access fiber across a multi-county region. The grant funds the capacity to deliver: outreach so the hardest-to-reach homes get connected, oversight of construction and coverage, governance to set the nonprofit up as a long-term owner, and a digital navigator program so residents can afford service and use it to get ahead.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

The benefits of participating in the Local Economy Lab and the wider JTF network include:

Flexible, one year grants

Typically \$50,000 to \$300,000, depending on your project's stage and needs. Funds cover operating expenses; they can't be used for construction or capital costs.

Tailored technical assistance

Help matched to your project, such as finding public and private funding and tracking and telling your impact story.

A national peer network

Sponsored attendance at the JTF National Convening, plus peer learning and exchange opportunities with practitioners across the country.

OUTCOMES

We back projects that build infrastructure that communities own and will benefit from for generations. We'll track relevant results at three levels:

- **Individual.** Households/businesses connected, jobs created.
- **Program.** Businesses supported, private/public sector funds leveraged, kWh of clean energy installed.
- **Community.** Acres reclaimed/remediated, tax revenue generated.

We also believe communities should define success on their own terms and will track the measures project leaders find most meaningful.

ELIGIBILITY

We are accepting applications for projects serving counties that are experiencing economic distress as a result of coal plant and/or mine closures, from organizations that are deeply rooted in coal-affected areas.

Qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofits, local governments, and Tribal governments can apply. Commercial internet service providers are not eligible.

HOW TO APPLY

Please submit your organization's details and a two-page concept paper through our [application form](#). The deadline is Friday, July 24. We'll invite a select group to submit full proposals and will share guidance on grant amount and timeline when we do.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Marissa Berkley at mberkley@justtransitionfund.org.