



NIGHT SKY PRESERVATION FUND GUIDELINES



Application Window
Open October 1 - 31, 2026

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT US	Page 2
• We are Stewards of the Night Sky	
ABOUT THE FUND	Page 3
• Understanding the Reimbursement Model	
ELIGIBILITY	Page 4
• Who We Do and Do Not Fund, and Ineligible Uses of Funds	
APPLICANT GUIDELINES	Page 5
• Project Criteria	
BRANDING & PROMOTION	Page 6
• Logo Requirements, Accompanying Credit Line, Digital Linking, and Social Media	
TIMELINE & REPORTING	Page 7
• 2026 - 2027 Timeline, Reporting Rules, and Form Submissions	
TARGET GOALS & DONATIONS	Page 8
• Five Strategic Objectives and a Call to Action	
2025 IN REVIEW	Page 9
• Fund Recipients, Quotes, and Metrics	
HOW TO APPLY	Page 10
• Application Link and QR Code	



ABOUT US

At the Hill Country Alliance, we are dedicated to ensuring current and future generations have the opportunity to experience, enjoy, and benefit from the remarkable beauty of the Hill Country we know and love. Our mission is to bring together a diverse coalition of partners to preserve the open spaces, starry night skies, clean and abundant waters, and the unique character of the Texas Hill Country.



Mike Lundy

We are Stewards of the Night Sky

The Hill Country sits on the edge of the night. To its east is a nighttime landscape dominated by artificial lighting that stretches to the East Coast. To its west lies a less inhabited landscape, famous for its starry skies. Stepping outside on a cool, clear Hill Country night to gaze at the stars helps us escape the fast pace of our daily lives, though few protections currently stand in place to preserve this experience for future generations.

The Hill Country Alliance Night Sky program helps Hill Country communities minimize the impacts of light pollution through education and outreach, adopting night-sky-friendly outdoor lighting policies, and pursuing and celebrating certified Dark Sky Places in our region. Join us in our effort to stop the spread of light pollution and keep our Texas night skies “big and bright.”



ABOUT THE FUND

The Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Preservation Fund provides **financial reimbursement assistance to local grassroots organizations, institutions, and other groups engaged in efforts to improve outdoor lighting and decrease light pollution.**

As a dedicated resource for the region, this fund empowers local stewards to implement immediate, hands-on dark sky solutions that protect our nocturnal ecosystem and preserve our shared starlit heritage.

Understanding the Reimbursement Model

Because the Night Sky Preservation Fund operates on a reimbursement model rather than upfront funding, keep the following details in mind as you plan your project:

Covering Costs

- Award recipients initially pay for project expenses out of pocket.

Eligible Expenses

- The fund reimburses project expenses as approved and noted in the award letter. For a complete list of qualifying expenses, see the [Applicant Guidelines page](#).

Timeline

- Project expenses must be incurred, and final receipts submitted, within the first 11 months of the award year (January through November, with final receipts and reporting due by December 1).

Getting Reimbursed

- Awardees can receive reimbursement in the form of a check or as an ACH payment. The award letter will include additional information.



Apply **TODAY** for up to
\$5,000 in financial
reimbursement assistance
for your night sky
preservation project.

OPENS OCTOBER 1
CLOSES OCTOBER 31



ELIGIBILITY

Who We Fund

Nonprofit Organizations

- Must hold a current 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status

Local Governmental Entities

- Including municipalities, counties, public parks, and public school districts

Small Businesses & Sole Proprietorships

- Must be independently owned and operated

Who We Do Not Fund

Large Corporations

- Multinational or publicly traded corporations

Private Foundations

- Independent, family, or corporate private foundations

Out-of-Region Entities

- Organizations or businesses that do not actively conduct work within at least one of the 22 counties listed to the right

Ineligible Use of Funds

Unrelated Projects

- Projects, programs, or events that do not directly advance night sky preservation

General Overhead and Operational Salaries

- Organizational operating expenses, staff compensation, ongoing payroll costs, overhead, or indirect administrative costs

Political Campaigns and Lobbying

- Partisan activity, candidate endorsements, electioneering, or formal lobbying activities

Financial Asset Building

- Endowment funds, capital campaigns, or pass-through funding to other organizations

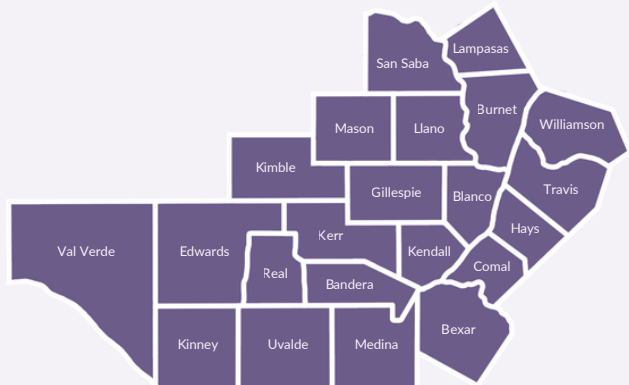
Major Infrastructure

- Capital projects, building construction, or land acquisition



Applicant products or services **must serve at least one** of the counties listed below:

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|
| • Bandera | • Kendall | • Real |
| • Bexar | • Kerr | • San Saba |
| • Blanco | • Kimble | • Travis |
| • Burnet | • Kinney | • Uvalde |
| • Comal | • Lampasas | • Val Verde |
| • Edwards | • Llano | • Williamson |
| • Gillespie | • Mason | |
| • Hays | • Medina | |



APPLICANT GUIDELINES

Project Criteria

To qualify for funding, your proposed project must directly support night sky preservation and meet the following parameters:

Core Mission Alignment

- All funded activities must directly advance night sky preservation and the reduction of light pollution.

IDSP Applications

- Applicants seeking funds for International Dark Sky Place (IDSP) application fees must provide active applicant status confirmation from DarkSky International.

Fixtures & Retrofits

- Any new installations or outdoor lighting retrofits must comply strictly with the [DarkSky International Luminaires Program Guidelines](#).

Shields & Accessories

- Funds used to purchase shields for existing outdoor lighting require documentation proving fixture compatibility.

Bulb Specifications

- Bulbs purchased with grant funds must be 3000K or lower and installed exclusively in fully shielded night-sky-friendly fixtures that meet DarkSky International's [Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting](#).

Community Recognition

- Projects retrofitting lighting for a local business, Homeowner Association (HOA), or Property Owner Association (POA) must include the intent to apply for recognition through HCA's [Night Sky Friendly Business](#) or [Night Sky Friendly Neighborhood Program](#).

Sky Quality Metering & Data Sharing

- Projects incorporating Sky Quality Metering (SQM) should include a plan to collect readings and share data with the [DarkSky Texas SQM Dashboard](#) and the [Globe at Night](#) program.

Education & Outreach

- Whenever possible, public-focused education and outreach projects should be designed to address the accessible, inclusive, and diverse needs of the target audience.

Other Requests

- Proposed uses of funds falling outside these specific categories will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.



BRANDING & PROMOTION

Funding recipients must prominently acknowledge the Hill Country Alliance's (HCA) support in all publicity, marketing, and promotional materials directly related to the HCA-funded project or project phase. Proper recognition raises awareness for the Night Sky Preservation Fund across the Hill Country and highlights your organization's partnership with us.

Note: For larger, multi-phase initiatives, this requirement applies exclusively to the specific activities, retrofits, or components supported by this grant, rather than pre-existing or future phases outside the scope of the HCA award.

Digital Linking & Social Media

Website Links

- For online publications, websites, or digital newsletters, please hyperlink our logo to the Fund webpage at www.hillcountryalliance.org/nightskyfund.

Social Media Tagging

- If you share project updates, milestones, or event announcements on social media, we would love to celebrate your work! Please tag us and use our preferred handles so we can amplify your posts:
 - **Facebook & Instagram:** @HillCountryAlliance
 - **Suggested Hashtags:** #NightSkyFund #HillCountryAlliance #DarkSkies

Accompanying Credit Line

Where space permits, include this text adjacent to our logo or in your funding recognition:

"This project is supported in part by a grant from the
Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Preservation Fund."

Logo Requirements

Where to Use It

- Include our official logo on all printed collateral, digital content, and permanent project signage.

Proportions & Integrity

- The logo must always be scaled proportionally. It may not be altered, stretched, distorted, or recolored.

Background Contrast

- Ensure the logo stands out clearly—use full-color on light backgrounds and reversed (white) on dark. Avoid placement atop busy textures or competing patterns.

Acceptable



Unacceptable



TIMELINE & REPORTING

2026

October 1

- Application window opens at 12:01 a.m.

October 14

- Online Information Session

October 31

- Application window closes at 11:59 p.m.

November

- Decision Committee application review

December

- Decision Committee scoring and notification of awards sent to applicants

2027

January 1

- Official fund purchase and reimbursement period begins

January 15

- Award acknowledgment and W9 paperwork due

March 31

- First quarter project status updates due

June 30

- Second quarter project status updates due

September 30

- Third quarter project status updates due

December 1

- Last day to submit receipts and project reports

Required Reporting

All HCA Night Sky Preservation Fund awardees must maintain active communication and submit documentation throughout their project lifecycle, including:

Quarterly Status Updates

- Brief updates submitted every quarter until all project receipts have been turned in and the final report is complete.

Final Project Report

- A comprehensive project summary, including relevant project metrics, photos (before and after, where applicable), and a brief testimonial.

To streamline grant management, awardees will be provided links to three user-friendly Google Forms:

Update Form

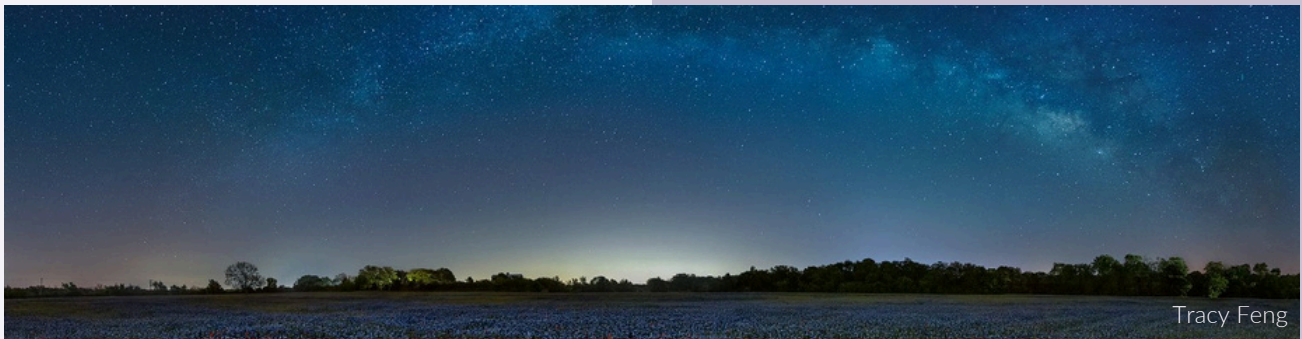
- For submitting your required quarterly status updates

Reimbursement Request Form

- For uploading itemized receipts and invoices for your hard costs

Reporting Form

- For submitting your final metrics, photos, and testimonial narrative





TARGET GOALS

Enhancing Outdoor Lighting

Upgrading fixtures to follow smart, dark sky compliant design principles.

Mitigating Light Pollution

Measurably reducing ecological, physiological, and visual disruptions caused by artificial light at night.

Lowering Environmental Impact

Decreasing community energy consumption, utility costs, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Advancing Dark Sky Designations

Supporting the development, application process, and long-term growth of International Dark Sky Places (IDSP).

Amplifying Public Awareness

Expanding community education and local advocacy efforts to inspire a culture of night sky stewardship.

Starlight, star bright—grow our fund, support the night!

The Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Preservation Fund protects our night skies from light pollution and ensures the breathtaking celestial views that define our nighttime landscape remain vibrant and accessible for generations to come.

Donations to the Night Sky Fund will help expand Dark Sky Place designations across the region, implement night sky best practices, support local advocates, and broaden appreciation for our unique nocturnal environment.

Join us in preserving the wonder of the night sky and maintaining the Texas Hill Country's cherished starlit heritage.

Click here to donate: bit.ly/HCAfundthenight



2025 IN REVIEW

Fund Recipients

- Blanco County Friends of the Night Sky
- Camp Riverview
- City of Wimberley Parks and Recreation Department
- Comal County Friends of the Night Sky
- Friends of Guadalupe River/Honey Creek
- Friends of Lost Maples
- Friends of San Antonio Natural Areas
- Hays County Friends of the Night Sky
- Jonestown Night Sky Advocacy
- Keep it Real Beautiful, Friends of the Night Sky
- Kendall County
- Smithwick Mill Estates POA
- Travis County Parks Foundation
- Vision Lampasas

"We are excited and honored to be selected as a grant recipient for the Night Sky Preservation Fund. Thank you for entrusting us with this opportunity to help preserve our Hill Country dark skies."

- Jeff Carter | Treasurer

Keep It Real Beautiful, Friends of the Night Sky



"We are so excited to accept the HCA Night Sky Preservation Fund grant once again! We are furiously planning our event with new and exciting activities."

- Martha Noell | Member & Volunteer

Vision Lampasas, Lampasas County Friends of the Night Sky

By the Numbers

22 | Applications Received

14 | Entities Awarded

11 | Counties Supported *

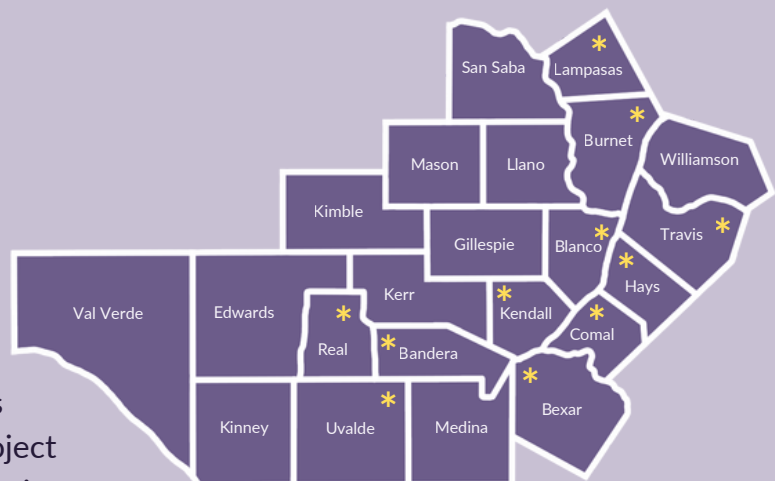
14 | Projects Funded

7 - Sky Quality Meter Projects

5 - Education & Outreach Projects

1 - Night Sky Friendly Lighting Project

1 - International Dark Sky Place Project





HOW TO APPLY

This fund provides financial support for the Texas Hill Country, from the Texas Hill Country! Apply today to benefit from the fund, or reach out to learn how you or your organization can help it grow.

Click the link below or scan the QR code to complete and submit your application for the 2026 Hill Country Alliance Night Sky Preservation Fund.

<https://bit.ly/2026NightSkyFundApplication>



The Decision Committee will review and evaluate each application and reach out with any questions. Awardees of night sky funds will be notified in December.

Thank you for helping preserve our Hill Country night sky!

NEED ASSISTANCE? HAVE QUESTIONS?

Email info@hillcountryalliance.org with the subject line Night Sky Fund.

