



Collaborative Funding Opportunity with the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund

Letter of Interest Deadline: Tuesday, January 19, 2021, 11:59 pm ET

- Overview:** This funding opportunity involves the contributors to the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund ([NYC Green Fund](#)) and other foundations. It focuses on supporting innovation and systemic changes that will enable New York City to manage open space more effectively, equitably, efficiently, and collaboratively. Grants will come from the NYC Green Fund or from participating funders directly. To facilitate separate grants, grantseekers will submit a substantial Letter of Interest (LOI) that contains sufficient information to allow funders to either make a grant or proceed to the next step in their grantmaking process.
- Goal of Funding:** To support nonprofit coalitions/collaborative efforts from across the parks/ open spaces, health, arts, and environmental justice sectors to address systemic challenges in our parks and open space network in New York City (NYC). The successful coalitions will be able to use these resources to 1) educate policy-makers on the importance of open space and spur them to provide stable, sufficient funding, 2) identify opportunities to improve critical governance processes including capital planning, discretionary contracting, and maintenance/ operations, 3) support the development of a more holistic understanding among policymakers and park users of the broad range of benefits and ecosystem services provided by parks and open spaces, 4) encourage cross-sectoral collaboration and establish shared services for efficiency, and/or 5) develop recommendations and improve equity in access, capital planning, operations, maintenance, programming, and community engagement in parks. The ultimate goal of this funding is to raise awareness and increase understanding of the importance of NYC's parks and open spaces, while supporting needed systemic changes in the sector.
- Deadline:** LOIs must be submitted electronically no later than 11:59 pm on January 19, 2021 on the New York Community Trust's Grants Portal.

Background

This moment presents a singular opportunity for the City's parks and open spaces, with the confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing risks associated with climate change, and the shifting political landscape heralded by the 2021 election cycle. The pandemic has highlighted to the public how essential parks and open spaces are for the health and well-being of our communities, and election day 2021 will decide a new mayor, comptroller, four borough presidents, and more than two-thirds of the city council. This new political leadership will shape the future of the City's green spaces. In addition, the pandemic has both highlighted and compounded historical inequities in our city, further limiting access to open

spaces for many New Yorkers at a time when that access has been critically needed. Low-income communities also face the most dire effects of an increasingly hot and flood-prone city. The vital importance of stewardship and maintenance of parks and public spaces has never been clearer, as well as the need for the construction of new parks in addressing issues of access and equity.

Purpose

In August 2020, the Central Park Conservancy's Institute for Urban Parks conducted a literature review on critical parks and open space-related issues in New York City at the request of the NYC Green Fund supporters. The resulting report and subsequent discussions with practitioners have provided guidance in determining priority areas of investment for strengthening the parks and open space sector [see report [here](#)]. Against this backdrop, the NYC Green Fund seeks to support projects that address one or more of the key areas identified below. Ideas for representative projects are provided for each area of interest as a guide, but these are only examples. They should not limit an applicant's funding request.

Activities that will help educate policy makers about the importance of parks and open spaces and spur them to provide sufficient - and stable - funding:

- Efforts to identify or develop feasible alternative funding models (i.e., dedicated taxes or millage) and/or improvements to existing funding models
- Conduct research and develop strategies to make the case for the value of parks and open spaces and their quantifiable financial ROI for New York City. In particular, economic impact and improved public safety were highlighted as areas that could use additional study.
- Projects that build a compelling narrative around the value of parks and open spaces and raise public awareness to support increased funding from NYC and NYS to build new open spaces and support ongoing maintenance costs
- Conduct research and develop strategies to make the case for how parks and open space add to climate resiliency and mitigate heat island impacts

Activities that will help improve processes:

- Develop recommendations and help support the creation of a 10-year citywide capital plan for parks and open spaces
- Conduct research highlighting the differences in process, project cost and duration under NYC's capital system vs. other cities and/or privately-managed projects in NYC and build awareness of an alternative path for effective capital projects to shorten start-to-completion time (could include increasing public-private partnership options)
- Explore the relationship between city agencies and their nonprofit partners to develop a strategy to help improve the structure and nature of these collaborations for NYC Parks and its nonprofit partners (relative to other partnerships in NYC or elsewhere)

Activities that help New York City create a more holistic view of parks and open spaces:

- Identify the specific and precise steps needed and the interagency players involved in order to create a systems-oriented approach to the development and stewardship of NYC's open spaces
- Identify a specific community where space is managed by multiple agencies (NYCHA, DPR, DEC) and investigate the whole ecosystem -- parks, open spaces, green roofs, green streets -- to measure overall impact and use this as an example to highlight the opportunities open spaces and critical infrastructure offer to cities and pave the way for transformative change. This may include ecosystem services, such as carbon storage, water management, etc.
- Investigate the value of creating a Director/ Czar of the Public Realm for NYC to ensure multi-agency collaboration

- Conduct research on and identify a strategy for the development of an Open Space Plan for NYC
- Support and build upon targets and approaches laid out through Nature Goals 2050

Activities that encourage collaboration, capacity building, and improved sustainability for the nonprofits that work in the open space arena:

- Provide consulting and convenings to allow nonprofits to discuss and consider options for shared services and new collaborative efforts
- Investigate and support the development of a cross-sector nonprofit alliance network using the collective impact model
- Create strategies for shared services -- hiring new positions, merging functions, offering training and support
- Create and build on opportunities for collaboration across sectors, including arts and culture (especially at a time when indoor theater spaces remain closed), environmental justice, health and wellness

Activities that improve equity within the open space arena:

- Create strategies for the identification, funding and development of new open spaces in areas of need
- Identify improvements to existing open spaces or improve connectivity between existing open spaces
- Develop strategies that improve equity in access, capital planning, operations, maintenance, programming, and community engagement in parks
- Explore and encourage the creation of a new model of public-private partnerships that is better suited to high-need communities than the traditional conservancy model

Funding Opportunity

Through an aligned funding strategy, the philanthropic partners investing in this work are seeking to build awareness of the importance of NYC's park and open spaces and address necessary system changes in the sector.

Funders will award approximately 2-3 grants of up to \$200,000 and 3-6 grants of \$50,000-\$100,000, dependent upon funding available. Grant funds may be spent over a period of up to 24 months.

- Grants of \$50,000-\$100,000 are available to support pilot or demonstration projects, localized place-based work, and research efforts
- Grants of up to \$200,000 are available to support projects addressing complex systemic issues, raising awareness or increasing understanding of key issues citywide, and research projects that also include the development and implementation of strategies and advocacy campaigns

Priority will be given to organizations that:

- Are well-positioned to deliver on intended results and objectives and have the relevant relationships and experience needed to execute the proposed project
- Have experience in leading a public awareness campaign if applying for such a project
- Build a diverse coalition of strategic partners to inform and advance the project goals
- Demonstrate a long-standing commitment to racial equity in operations & governance

Eligibility Criteria

We are looking for submissions from coalitions/partnerships involving New York City-based

organizations with missions that align with the responsible creation, use, and stewardship of parks and green spaces. Organizations eligible to serve as the submitting applicant are listed in the “How to Apply” section below. The submitting applicant can submit an LOI on behalf of a coalition or partnership. Projects should be mutually beneficial to all applicants and support collaboration between parks/open spaces, arts & culture, health, and environmental sectors. Priority consideration will be given to coalitions or partnerships that include appropriate representation from the communities served. Members of the coalition or partnership should have a demonstrated history of managing funds from foundations or government and be aware of both funder and nonprofit lobbying restrictions.

Diversity Statement

This project embraces diversity and inclusion across multiple dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and socioeconomic status. We strongly encourage applications from organizations that will help expand the perspectives and experiences the NYC Green Fund brings to its work.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be judged based on their:

- **Strategic alignment:** The project aligns with at least one of the priorities identified above. The submitting organization’s mission aligns with the grant purpose.
- **Innovation:** Bringing new modalities and technologies to the task of improving the quality and accessibility of NYC open space
- **Feasibility:** The intended outcomes or results of the proposed project are feasible considering the activities and resources. The applicant is well-positioned to deliver on intended results and objectives and has the relevant relationships and experience needed to execute the proposed project.
- **Equity & Community Served:** The proposed project is serving a high-needs community, has the potential to significantly improve NYC’s system of parks and open spaces for the long term, and/or will help address systemic inequities. Priority will be given to applicants that are from and reflect the communities that the proposed project serves. The proposed project should demonstrate an understanding of the historical and current structural and institutional barriers faced by underserved communities and communities of color in accessing parks and a commitment to advancing equity.
- **Collaboration:** The partnership or coalition that will work together, the individual organization’s roles, and how they will engage and include various voices and perspectives from across the City and across sectors into their work are thoughtfully articulated. The proposed project is mutually beneficial and works to break down silos. The collaborative effort builds the capacity of the applicants and creates potential for continued collaboration after the grant period.
- **Budget:** The budget is reasonable considering the activities, outputs and scale of the proposed project.

Reporting

Some of the philanthropic organizations that have come together to create this funding opportunity along with the grant administrator – City Parks Foundation – will form a small advisory board for funded projects. The purpose of the advisory board is to receive updates on projects and provide the grantee with feedback and support to inform the work. Although the body may make recommendations for shaping the effort, final decisions will be made by the grantee and the primary funder.

The successful applicant(s) selected are expected to submit narrative and financial reports, as well as periodic information needed for overall project performance monitoring and management. We may ask the grantee to participate in periodic meetings and give progress reports on the grant. At the close of the grant, the selected organization will be expected to provide a written report for the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund describing the results of the work.

Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, and other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project. Grant funds may *not* be used to support an organization's overhead or facilities costs, to construct or renovate facilities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.

No portion of the grant may be used to lobby or otherwise attempt to influence legislation or to participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

How to Apply

Letters of interest should be submitted by 11:59 pm ET on January 19, 2021. LOI packages should be no more than six single-spaced pages with 1-inch margins and 11-point font. Please complete your summary budget using the template in Attachment 2. Please include resumes for up to three key staff in the appendix as well as an organizational budget for the submitting applicant. Neither the budget nor the appendix will count toward the page limit. Please do not include any other extraneous material in the appendix.

The narrative response should provide:

- Overview of the submitting organization (i.e., primary goals, needs or problems being addressed, population served) and description of experience related to the project. Submitting applicants are those organizations that have been charged with forming an effective coalition or partnership and managing the financial and programmatic aspects of project implementation.
- Description of the project for which you are seeking support
 - Statement of purpose and the needs being addressed by the project as they relate to the LOI's desired activities;
 - Major project elements and activities;
 - Project timeline/anticipated project duration, up to 24 months;
 - List of confirmed and potential partners, specifying which partners are confirmed and which are potential and detailing each partner's role;
 - Brief management plan for the project indicating how decisions will be made and the flow of communication among partners;
 - A description of how the applicant(s) will bring an equity lens to the effort; and
 - How will the effectiveness of the project be evaluated.

A selection panel composed of NYC Green Fund supporters and independent philanthropies will review and make recommendations for awards. We are unable to provide individual critiques of LOIs submitted.

The following organizations have been identified as eligible to serve as a submitting applicant. Submitting applicants are expected to apply in collaboration with partners or a coalition. If an organization is not on this list but is interested in serving as a submitting applicant, please contact City Parks Foundation (see below).

Eligible submitting applicants:

1. ALIGN
2. Center for an Urban Future
3. Central Park Conservancy
4. Citizens Committee for NYC
5. City Parks Foundation
6. Design Trust for Public Space
7. Friends of the High Line
8. The Fund for Public Health
9. Green Guerillas
10. GrowNYC
11. The Historic House Trust of New York City
12. The Horticultural Society of New York
13. Municipal Arts Society
14. The Natural Areas Conservancy
15. The Nature Conservancy
16. New York City Audubon
17. New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
18. New Yorkers for Parks
19. New York Restoration Project
20. The Pratt Center for Community Development
21. Regional Plan Association
22. The Trust for Public Land
23. USDA New York City Urban Field Station
24. Waterfront Alliance
25. WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Contact Information

City Parks Foundation (CPF) manages the day-to-day administration of the NYC Green Relief & Recovery Fund, which is governed by a steering committee of funders.

Questions about this project and applications should be submitted by email to:

Emily Sherrod
Grant Administrator, City Parks Foundation
nycgreenfund@cityparksfoundation.org

Letter of Interest Submission Instructions

Step one: Combine your LOI, project budget (as described above), submitting organization budget into a single PDF no more than 25 MB in size with the filename format "Organization Name.pdf".

Step Two: Go to The Trust's Grant Portal (<https://proposals.nycommunitytrust.org/>). Click on the "Apply Here" button, which will lead you to the list of open LOI submission opportunities. Click the "Apply" button for this funding opportunity to begin the submission process.

Step Three: Upload your LOI as a single PDF file.

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Notification of Awards

Applicants will be notified by email if they have been selected and may be asked to provide supplemental information and attachments. Follow up phone calls may be arranged. Notification of grant awards are expected to be announced in mid-February 2021.

Attachment 2: Project Budget Summary Template

Budget category	Year 1: 2021	Year 2: 2022
Full time staff		
<i>Fringe Benefits</i>		
Part time staff		
<i>Fringe Benefits</i>		
Subtotal Personnel	\$0	\$0
Consultants/ professional fees		
Travel		
Meetings		
Equipment and supplies		
Other		
Subtotal Other Than Personnel Expenses	\$0	0
Total Expense	\$0	\$0