

Partners for Places: Connecting Partners to Implement Local Sustainability Projects

More than just a granting mechanism, Partners for Places incentivizes local collaboration between governments, private partners, and philanthropies.

At a Glance: Partners for Places (P4P) grant opportunity.

The purpose of the P4P funding mechanisms is to catalyze a partnership between a local government sustainability director and local, place-based foundation, through impactful projects. The fund grants up to \$1,000,000 annually. Grants range between \$25,000 and \$150,000. A 1:1 match is required from local place-based foundations. General grants are not USDN specific: any community may apply. A team of at least two partners must include: (1) a sustainability director of a city or county in the U.S. or Canada and (2) a local funder. Projects can take between 1 - 2 years to complete. Some P4P initiatives, like the Equity Pilot are by invitation only. P4P area of strength in the Innovation Pathway: Adoption Accelerator.

A Unique Partnership

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) and the [Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities](#) launched the Local Sustainability Matching Fund in 2012. Now called Partners for Places (P4P), the program is managed by the Funders' Network and supported by major national and regional foundations, including Bloomberg Philanthropies, JPB Foundation, Kendeda Fund, Kresge Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, New York Community Trust, Summit Foundation, and Surdna Foundation.

A Connecting Mechanism

P4P is a tool that lends itself well to the development and scaling of urban sustainability innovations. It is a collaborative, competitive matching grant program that connects local government and philanthropy to invest in sustainability projects that promote a healthy environment, a strong economy, and well-being for all residents. Through these investments, P4P fosters long-term relationships that advance the urban sustainability field by making urban areas more prosperous, livable, and vibrant.

P4P connects local government sustainability leaders with the local funding community, leveraging resources and expertise. It also connects national philanthropies to specific locales, opening up new networks and expertise and opening up an opportunity to invest in communities across the United States and Canada. Grants support sustainability projects that demonstrate broad-based community support and engagement.

Mutually Beneficial

Developing and scaling innovations require the time and attention of many different parties. Creating vibrant communities is a group effort. National foundations offer additional resources and insights from their other grantees. Place-based foundations offer unique knowledge of their communities and the ability to provide seed money for important projects. Local government offers the power to move projects through planning and development. P4P emphasizes how these stakeholders can work together to develop sustainability programs that save money, improve the environment, increase efficiency, and promote the well-being of all residents.

Criteria for Success

Successful P4P projects are initiatives that local government sustainability leaders and local funders consider important to the community. The project must either: (1) advance a key aspect of one of several types of community plans that specifically advance sustainability principles; (2) support creation of a sustainability or climate action plan that meets P4P requirements; or (3) address an area identified for performance improvement or implementation for Certified STAR Communities.

P4P also focuses on 6 key project priorities: (1) integrating climate preparation into local government decisions; (2) deep GHG reduction; (3) integrating GHG reductions (mitigation) with climate preparedness (adaptation); (4) incorporating sustainability into economic development; (5) mobilizing community action around sustainability or climate change; and/or (6) comprehensive sustainable neighborhood planning.

Advancing social equity in communities is also a priority for P4P. True sustainability cannot be achieved if any one sector of society bears the burden of growth and development. Through this program, P4P also hopes to encourage a strong emphasis on projects that benefit and engage people of color, people with low incomes, and residents of immigrant and refugee communities in sustainability work in neighborhoods and city-wide.

Through P4P, local foundations are discovering their roles in urban sustainability and increasing the pool of funding and resources. The selection process relies on the expertise of leaders from successful city sustainability programs and national foundations, ensuring that grants are practical and programs are replicable. Grant project results and lessons are shared with USDN members, in the hope that they will be useful in further advancing the urban sustainability field.

