



Frequently Asked Questions regarding Partners for Places  
As of 6/6/2016

**1. What's new since Round 8?**

The RFP has the following changes for Round 9.

- The grant program will now consider requests to support the creation of a sustainability or climate action plan. The planning process must meet minimum requirements. See [here](#) for further guidance.
- The proposal narrative includes a new section on the demographics of the city or county and audiences/stakeholders involved in the project to help us better understand the community context.
- The grant program is setting a higher standard for scoring meaningful engagement of key stakeholders/audiences, including providing guidance on meaningful engagement.

**2. How many applications can a city, or county, submit at one time?**

Each city, or county, may only submit one application per round.

**3. Can the local match be provided by a national investor in the Partners for Places grant program?**

The local match may not be provided by a national investor in the Partners for Places grant program.

**4. Are the cities/counties of members of the selection committee eligible to apply?**

Yes, after the first round, the sustainability directors who are members of the selection committee and their cities/counties may apply. This was not allowed for Round 1. The cities currently represented on the selection committee are Burlington, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dubuque, Montreal, Sarasota County, and Seattle. The sustainability directors from those places may or may not decide to submit a proposal, but if they do they will have to recuse themselves from review, discussion, or scoring of their own application.

**5. Does a city or county have to have a “sustainability director” in order to apply? Could someone else apply such as the Director of Public Works, Public Utilities Commission, Facilities Maintenance Manager, Election Commissioner, or another person?**

The application must be submitted by a team representing (1) a sustainability director of a city (municipality) or county and (2) a local, place-based foundation. A sustainability director is defined as any person who leads a multi-department and community wide urban sustainability initiative from within local government (or is a member of USDN). This person must have a title that includes the word sustainability or be in charge of advancing initiatives in a way that balances economic development, environmental quality, and equity (which means both inclusion in decisions of all parts of the community and equitable outcomes for all people in the community including people of color and low-income communities). This person may have other responsibilities too, and his or her title doesn't need to be sustainability director. If the

local government does not have a sustainability director or someone who performs those duties as described above, the application would be ineligible.

**6. What is your definition of “multi-department”?**

Multi-department means working across many agencies of government including but not limited to transportation, housing, energy, waste, water, economic development, and environment.

**7. Is an Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) Associate member also eligible to apply?**

Yes, a USDN Associate member is also considered a “sustainability director.”

**8. Is a sustainability director who is NOT a member of USDN eligible to apply?**

Yes. A local government sustainability director who is not a member of USDN is eligible to apply to Partners for Places. That said, we plan to allocate at least half of the grants pool to projects from USDN member or associate member places.

**9. Can a sustainability director from a transit authority or local housing authority also be eligible to apply?**

Only if this person is serving as the sustainability director for the local government jurisdiction (city or county). The point of this fund is for sustainability directors from cities or counties to maximize relationships with local funders and implement aspects of their sustainability, climate action, comprehensive plan provision that specifically addresses sustainability, or other plan endorsed by the mayor or city manager that states the goal of balancing economic development, environmental quality, and equity. It is unlikely that the director of the transit or local housing authority is leading a community’s community-wide sustainability initiative.

**10. Would the director of a sustainability initiative, whose consortium members include local government, qualify as a sustainability director, even if the director is technically with a non-profit?**

No. We are catalyzing partnerships between local government and local philanthropies.

**11. If our City has a sustainability director who is a member of USDN, but we would like some other City staff who is more suitable to apply because he or she works on cross-sectoral projects, can we have that staff person (not the sustainability director) apply in collaboration with the local foundation?**

The USDN member needs to be involved in the application, although she or he does not have to be a lead on the project.

**12. Are villages, smaller cities, rural areas or Native American tribes eligible to apply?**

The application needs to show that the local government is a “city” or “county.” Depending on the form of state or provincial government, towns and Native American tribes could be eligible.

**13. Are regional council of governments eligible to apply?**

No.

**14. What countries may the applications come from?**

Partners for Places can only support projects in the United States and Canada.

**15. Is a community group or local non-profit eligible to apply?**

No. The application must come from a team that includes (1) a sustainability director of a city (municipality) or county and (2) a local, place-based foundation. While a community group or nonprofit organization can be the grant recipient and work on the project the sustainability director and the local, place-based foundation must actively participate together in the project development and implementation. The proposal must describe the roles of the sustainability director and the local, place-based foundation, and the nonprofit organization in proposal development and implementation.

**16. What is the definition of a “local, place-based foundation”? I know of several foundations that make place-based grants but over a large geographic region (e.g. corporate foundations that grant in communities where they have presence, which may span over a few states).**

A local, place-based foundation is based in a community or region, committed to local giving, and has many relationships in the community. The goal of this Fund is to build stronger relationships between city or county sustainability offices and local philanthropies so that they can work together to enhance local sustainability. That said, we certainly understand that many funders who are committed to a community and have built strong local relationships in it may have a larger geographic focus than one particular city/county.

**17. What is the definition of a "community foundation"?**

A community foundation is a grantmaking charity composed primarily of permanent funds established by many separate donors for the long-term benefit of the residents of a defined geographic area, which is usually a city or county and rarely larger than a state.

**18. Is a corporate utility an eligible partner for matching contributions?**

Partners for Places will accept a corporate utility as a partner for matching contributions. However, we do prefer that application include a local community foundation in addition to the corporate utility.

**19. Is a municipally owned utility an eligible partner for matching contributions?**

Partners for Places will not accept a municipally owned utility as a partner for matching contributions.

**20. What is your definition of “urban”?**

As a rule, we are using the term “urban” as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, where an urban area is defined as contiguous census block groups with a population density of at least 1000/sq mi (390/km<sup>2</sup>) with any census block groups around this core having a density of at least 500/sq mi (190/km<sup>2</sup>). The census has two distinct categories of urban areas. *Urbanized Areas* have populations of greater than 50,000, while *Urban Clusters* have populations of 2,500 to 50,000. If your community generally is referred to as rural, then you should assume it is not an urban area. Urban areas may include cities, counties, and towns.

**21. What is your definition of “urban sustainability initiative”?**

An “urban sustainability initiative” is one that would advance a key aspect of a local sustainability, climate action, or comprehensive plan provision that specifically addresses sustainability, or any plan endorsed by the mayor or city manager that states the goal of

balancing economic development, environmental quality, and equity (which means both inclusion in decisions of all parts of the community and equitable outcomes for all people in the community including people of color and low-income communities).

**22. Can the match be provided by a local place-based foundation with a prior history of support for our sustainability program?**

Yes. Partners for Places is intended both to help build new relationships and strengthen existing ones. The Partners for Places program seeks to catalyze new relationships between local sustainability offices and local philanthropy, and the selection criteria awards up to 10 points for new relationships. The committee will also award these points to proposals that demonstrate the proposed project is resulting in a measurably stronger and sustained existing relationship.

**23. Our city already received a grant. Can we apply for a second grant from Partners for Places to continue the project?**

Yes. We would need to see evidence of high impact from the prior grant and a strong rationale for renewed support.

**24. Will proposals for a two-year grant period be considered?**

Yes. But we predict that this will be rare because proposals must show a strong rationale for a two-year timeline and also have two-year support from a matching funder.

**25. Does the local match have to be formally approved or the funds received before submitting an application?**

No. We need to know that a sustainability director and a funder partner(s) are working together on the application and that the funder is intending to support this project financially, subject to board review and approval. We understand that there will be challenges with the timing of foundation approval processes and board of director's meetings. As part of the application, the selection committee wants to see a letter from the local funder(s) that expresses a strong intention to provide the matching funds. However, in order for the Funders' Network to release the matching funds we will need to receive the grant letter or grant agreement from the partnering funder(s) showing proof of the match within three months of our award letter date.

**26. Can the match be in-kind instead of a cash match?**

No. The matching funds must be a cash match.

**27. Can the local match come from more than one local place-based foundation?**

Yes.

**28. Can local governments match the funding?**

No. The match must be made by one or more local, place-based foundations.

**29. Would letters of support from our partners help?**

This is not required, but you may submit them if you'd like.

**30. Who is the lead applicant? the local funder or the sustainability director/municipality?**

The applicant should be a partnership between the local government sustainability office and the local funder. However, for the purpose of submitting the application, one of the partner entities should submit the grant application and be identified in the proposal as the primary contact.

**31. Who are eligible grant recipients?**

Local place-based foundation, local government 501(c)(3) fund, or a nonprofit organization.

**32. What are examples of the types of projects that could be funded?**

You may see the types of projects that were funded in prior rounds by going to <http://www.fundersnetwork.org/partnersforplaces>

**33. Our city is considering the installation of two or three electric vehicle charging stations or a community garden. Is this an eligible project?**

Yes, if it helps to advance a key aspect of a community-focused sustainability, climate action, comprehensive plan provision that specifically addresses sustainability, or any plan endorsed by the mayor or city manager that states the goal of balancing economic development, environmental quality, and equity and is chosen through a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation.

**34. How do you define a “new” relationship between a sustainability director and a local funder?**

A new relationship means that the sustainability director and local funder have not worked together in the past. Partners for Places provides extra points for new relationships because a goal of the program is to build new relationships between local funders and local government sustainability offices. It is important to note that if a proposal includes multiple funders, only one of those relationships needs to be new for points to be awarded.

**35. Our community foundation has worked with the city on other types of projects, but we’ve never worked with the sustainability director before. Would this relationship with the sustainability director be considered new?**

Yes.

**36. Please describe terms of successful public/private partnerships.**

Successful partnerships between local government sustainability directors and local, placed-based foundation are based upon mutual respect, clarity about what each partner brings to the partnership, a joint vision for work together, a joint commitment to the success of the partnership, and agreement on the terms of working together and how the partners will measure progress and success.

**37. What are eligible expenses?**

Grants can be used for projects or programs. Eligible expenses include new staff, consultants, equipment, supplies, and administrative expenses.

**38. What are types of projects and expenses that would NOT be funded?**

Partners for Places will not support salaries for existing local government staff, major capital projects, or endowments. Funding could be used for small capital or equipment costs related to projects such as gardens, EV stations, and bike stations, if these are key projects of a local sustainability plan. Funding could be used for existing staff at a partner nonprofit organization to help implement a new project that advances the local government’s sustainability plan.

**39. Does our local government have to have some kind of officially endorsed local sustainability or climate action in order to apply?**

There are a number of ways to meet our eligibility requirement. The project must either 1) advance a key aspect of an officially endorsed sustainability or climate action plan, or any multi-issue plan endorsed by the mayor or city manager that explicitly states and pursues the goal of integrating and/or balancing economic development, environmental quality, and equity, 2) create a sustainability or climate action plan, or 3) address an area identified for performance improvement or implementation for Certified STAR Communities.

**40. Can funds support implementation of the sustainability or energy elements of a comprehensive plan or master plan?**

Yes. We will accept a comprehensive plan provision that specifically addresses sustainability, or any plan endorsed by the mayor or city manager that states the goal of balancing economic development, environmental quality, and equity (which means both inclusion in decisions of all parts of the community and equitable outcomes for all people in the community including people of color and low-income communities).

**41. Do you anticipate the partnership to be a multi-year commitment?**

This is not required, but we hope you discover the benefits of a long-lasting, collaborative relationship.

**42. What is the term of grant?**

The grants generally are intended to fund activities that can be completed within 12 months, although they may be part of longer term projects. We will consider two-year timelines, but we predict that two-year grants will be rare because proposals must show a strong rationale for a two-year timeline and also have two-year support from a matching funder.

**43. Will there be opportunities for shared learning among grantees as part of the grant cycle?**

We would like to encourage shared learning among grantees, but have no specific plans as of this time. We hope to use the “Idea Bank” on the Funders’ Network website, as one platform for sharing information and lessons learned.

**44. How many grant Rounds do you anticipate for Partners for Places?**

Partners for Places is an ongoing grant program for the foreseeable future. We release our RFPs twice a year in June, and December. Check back at <http://www.fundersnetwork.org/partnersforplaces> for future announcements.

**45. Who may we contact for more detail?**

If the RFP and FAQ documents don’t answer all your questions, please contact Ashley Quintana at [ashley@fundersnetwork.org](mailto:ashley@fundersnetwork.org).