



2016 Annual Report

Partners for Places Overview

Over the past six years, the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) and Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) have worked closely with a group of national funders and USDN members to develop, shape, and implement the Partners for Places grant program. Partners for Places is a successful matching grant program that improves U.S. and Canadian communities by building partnerships between local government sustainability leaders and place-based foundations. National funders invest in local projects developed through these partnerships to promote a healthy environment, a strong economy, and well-being for all residents. The program is housed at TFN, which has legal and fiduciary responsibility for its management, and is guided by a Selection Committee comprised of USDN members, foundation investors, and TFN's director of programs.

In 2016, Partners for Places celebrated the completion of ten rounds of grants for over \$4,000,000; there have been nine rounds of grants in the general program for \$3,945,906 and one round of grants for the Equity Pilot Initiative for \$210,981 totaling \$4,156,887. This was made possible with the generous support from seven foundation investors—Bloomberg Philanthropies, The JPB Foundation, The Kendeda Fund, The Kresge Foundation, New York Community Trust, The Summit Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation. Local place-based foundations matched these grants, bringing the total invested in local sustainability projects to over \$8,200,000. Grantee communities, as shown in the map below, can be found across the United States and Canada.

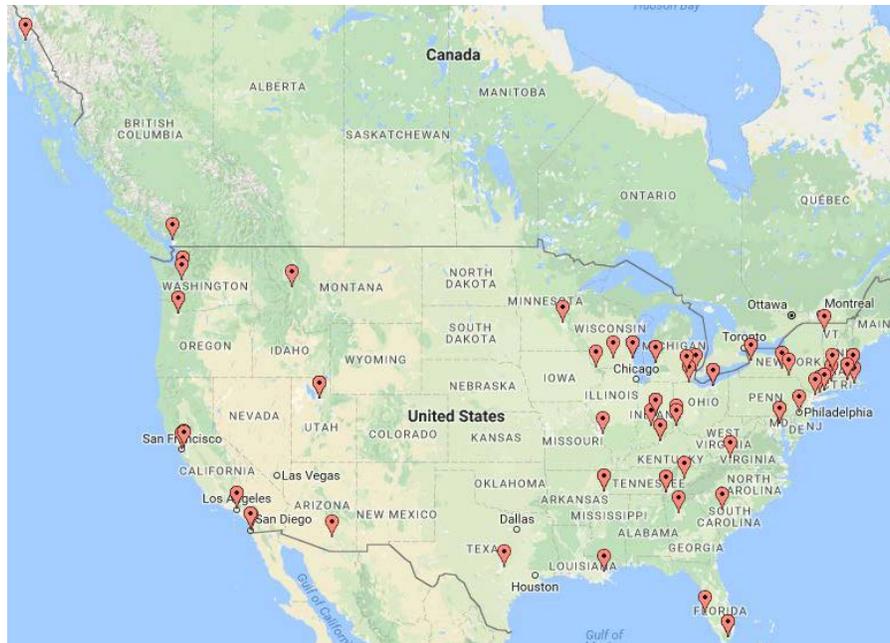


Figure 1. Geographic Reach of Nine Rounds of Partners for Places Grants

In 2015, Partners for Places launched the first of a two-year Equity Pilot Initiative, with leadership support from The Kendeda Fund and The Kresge Foundation. Now in its second year, the Equity Pilot Initiative is providing a test bed for how to help cities build their capacity to address equity in sustainability. Four cities—Baltimore, Knoxville, Las Cruces, and Providence—received \$211,000 in funding during year one of the [Equity Pilot Initiative](#). Partners for Places provided a range of support services in addition to grant dollars, including coaching from our equity consultant team, an in-person kickoff meeting, and a monthly learning cohort hosted by TFN and USDN. The general grant program continues to encourage sustainability projects that reduce disparities for the most marginalized in order to improve the well-being of all. We look forward to making the second round of grants in the spring of 2017, and incorporating lessons learned from the Equity Pilot Initiative into future rounds of the Partners for Places general grant program.

2016 Progress in Achieving Impact Goals

Bringing Together Local Government Sustainability Leaders and Place-based Foundations

By the end of 2016, Partners for Places was well on the way to meeting or exceeding its major impact goals.

Creating vibrant communities is a group effort. 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. Working together results in sustainability

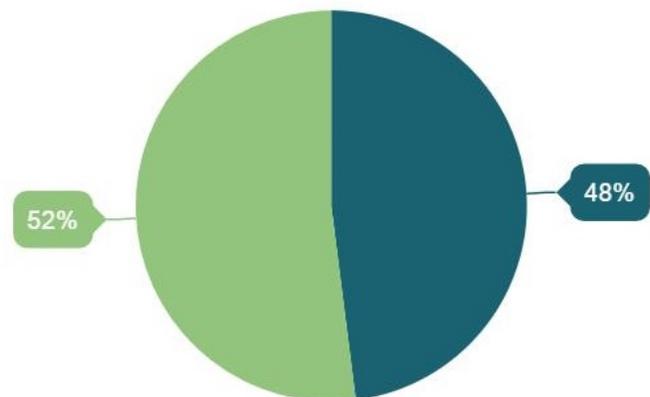
programs that save money, improve the environment, increase efficiency, and promote the well-being of all residents. Partners for Places has helped to build these valuable working relationships and projects in local communities, while at the same time increasing the visibility and importance of this work in the local philanthropic community.

In 2016 Partners for Places fostered relationships not only through collaborative proposal development and project implementation, but also through follow up collaborations and partnerships between local government sustainability offices and place-based funders, many of which have continued after the grant ended. We are seeing these partnerships evolve and deepen in a number of ways. For example, several grantees this past year have established or are working to establish sustainability funds at partnering community foundations or local community-supportive funds (Columbia Sustainability Fund, or Cincinnati's Cincy Food Fund). In other places, local, matching community foundations have helped create sustainability tools and resources to educate community residents or support more informed decision making (Chula Vista's Water Stewardship Plan and New Orleans GIS Tool to guide green stormwater infrastructure investments). We regularly hear stories of projects that have gone forward even when they have not been funded by Partners for Places, and new relationships have been catalyzed by the existence of the matching grant program.

Partners for Places is open to all local government sustainability leaders but has had a special focus on encouraging USDN members to form relationships with place-based foundations. At the end of 2016, 48% of USDN's members had applied for Partners for Places funding. Many initiated their first conversations with place-based foundations because of the program.

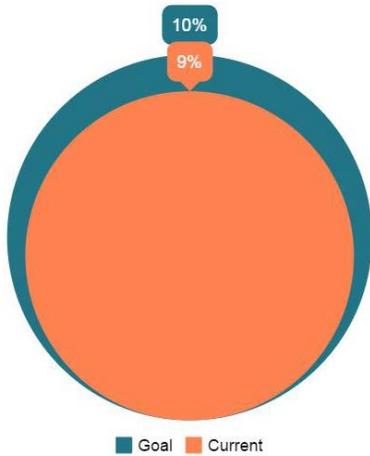
Performance Goal. 50% of USDN members will have applied for funding by end of 2016.

Progress to Date. 48% of core USDN members have applied for a grant since inception of the program. This represents 59 unique local sustainability offices out of 124 core members.¹



¹ USDN differentiates between core and associate members. Since the inception of the program, 66 core and associate members out of a total of 154 have applied for a grant, which is 43%.

The program also set a goal to involve 10% of community foundations in partnerships with local government sustainability leaders. As of the end of 2016, 9% have applied to the program with local government partners. 66% of these community foundations are new to TFN, i.e., they are not members.



Performance Goal. 10% of community foundations (73) will have applied by the end of 2016.

Progress to Date: 9% of community foundations (66) have applied in partnership with their local government sustainability leaders.

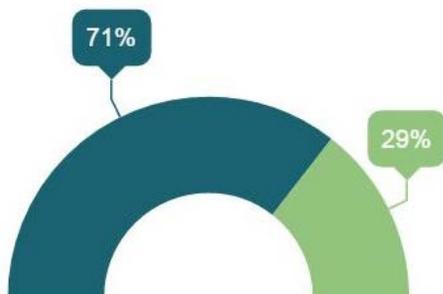
Performance Goal: 50% of those community foundations will be new to TFN.

Progress to Date. 66% of community foundation applicants are new to TFN (non-members).

Partners for Places wants the partnerships it supports to extend beyond the grant. The purpose of the grant is to provide time to explore and build long-term relationships. The signs are good for achieving this goal, too. Of projects completed to date, 88% of the relationships are continuing beyond the grant period.

Performance Goal. 80% of partnerships continue 12 months beyond grant period.

Progress to Date. 88% (30 out of 34) partnerships have continued beyond the initial grant period.



Performance Goal. 20% participate in specific, collaborative, follow-on projects.

Progress to Date: 71% (24 out of 34) have indicated that they participate in follow-on projects.

Advancing Sustainability, Climate Action, and Equity

Starting in 2015, the program has focused on two other primary goals: to support projects that help to advance climate action plans, and encourage local projects to address equity as part of sustainability. Partners for Places is doing well on both counts. Of new grants made in 2016, 75% of the projects address climate change in a number of ways, such as supporting climate mitigation or climate resilience. And when we look at the 2016 general grants from the perspective of equity in sustainability, we see that 75% are advancing equity by providing benefits or reducing disparities for disadvantaged residents.

In reviewing round five and six final reports submitted in 2016, we were pleased to see that almost all had achieved their proposed grant outcomes and helped implement goals and objectives laid out in their community's sustainability, energy conservation, or climate action plans. Grants have resulted in impressive and real outcomes—significant reductions in residential and municipal energy consumption through Columbia, Mo.'s CoMo Energy Challenge; transformation of city-owned vacant lots into six new parks and 14 neighborhood orchards in Milwaukee, Wis.; new Transportation and Safe Routes to School plans in Tacoma, Wash., that expand active transportation choices; and activation of a new 2030 District in downtown Stamford, Conn., which benchmarked energy and water use for 4.4 million square feet of commercial and municipal buildings. As in prior years, the results of most projects involving USDN cities, have been shared with peer cities on webinars, through the USDN website, and in annual meeting workshops.

Descriptions of all proposed and funded projects are shared at the Partners for Places Idea Bank ([here](#)).



Performance Goal. Starting in 2015, 50% of grants will help communities reduce GHG emissions or build resilience in face of changing climate.

Progress to Date. 66% of grants since 2015 (23 out of 35) addressed climate mitigation or adaptation in a variety of ways.

Performance Goal. 50% of projects will address procedural or distributional equity in sustainability or climate action.

Progress to Date. 66% of grants since 2015 (23 out of 35) addressed equity in sustainability or climate action.



Scaling Proven Sustainability Practices

Since its creation, one of the Partners for Places goals has been to work with USDN to identify areas of deep concern to USDN members. The intent of this exercise is to support the development of sound sustainability practices from concept to scale. Through this partnership with USDN, Partners for Places has made important progress on some of the more difficult to implement aspects of urban sustainability, such as embedding the practice of equity into climate action. Recognizing that this practice is in high demand and ripe for replication, Partners for Places has been actively helping cities learn to standardize processes and tools for initiating and developing a capacity to learn and act on equity issues. In large part because of this work, grantee cities are finally able to do more than just discuss broad concepts of what equity can look like in their communities in the face of climate change. They now have access to training and tools that enable them to understand how to implement equity in climate action.

The equity work began with a 2012 Partners for Places grant to a partnership between the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and the Bullitt Foundation. This grant produced a Portland Climate Action Plan that purposefully engaged disadvantaged communities. Then, in 2013, USDN provided a Peer Learning Exchange grant to nine communities to travel to Portland to learn how Portland integrated equity into its climate action plan. Because more USDN members wanted access to this kind of professional development, USDN then launched an integrated process for building the capacity of USDN members to address equity in sustainability and climate action in 2015. This work included 1) a five-part professional development series, including webinars, videos, and worksheets ([click here to view](#)); 2) an October 2015 workshop; and 3) plans for a learning group to help cities refine equity projects planned at the workshop.

Simultaneously, Partners for Places began to design a two-year Equity Pilot Initiative with three components: 1) financial and technical support to a cohort of cities and place-based foundation partners that are committed to build local capacity to address equity in sustainability and climate action; 2) intentional learning from the pilot; and 3) consideration for an expanded effort to transfer this capacity to many more cities. Partners for Places and USDN joined forces to ensure coordinated outreach and strong technical assistance. Partners for Places used the USDN Equity Professional Development Series and workshop to provide pre-Request for Proposals (RFP) capacity building.

In 2016, the Equity Pilot Initiative RFP was opened to all 24 USDN members that participated in the USDN Equity Workshop. In May, Partners for Places provided \$210,981 for projects to embed equity in sustainability and climate action in four USDN cities—Baltimore; Knoxville, Tenn.; Las Cruces, N.M.; and Providence, R.I. (see the Appendix for all 2016 Partners for Places awards). The grant awarded to Knoxville builds directly on the work this city began with a 2015 USDN Innovation Fund grant to explore incorporating equity into ongoing energy efficiency work.

In early November 2016, Partners for Places released a second RFP for the Equity Pilot Initiative. The intent of this RFP is to provide financial and technical support to a cohort of USDN member cities and their place-based foundation partners committed to building local capacity to address equity in sustainability and climate action. Partners for Places looks forward to another round of Equity awards in spring of 2017.

A unique element of the Equity Pilot Initiative is the creation of a learning cohort or community of practice comprised of sustainability directors from the Partners for Places grantee cities and other USDN colleagues doing similar work. Coaching is provided by Julie Nelson from the Government Alliance for Race and Equity, Simran Noor from the Center for Social Inclusion, and USDN peer coaches—Desiree Williams-Rajee from the City of Portland, Ore., and Sudha Nandagopal from the City of Seattle.

The partnership is allowing Partners for Places to attract well-prepared applicants for the RFP and to have a ready dissemination mechanism for lessons learned. It is providing USDN with a means to help its members implement equity projects that have been established through the professional development series and learn together about what works. As cities learn how to advance equity from a concept to scaling it into a practice, Partners for Places continues to work with USDN to coordinate funds, tools, and programming to smooth the way.

In Closing

With gratitude and thanks to our investors, local matching funders, and community partners, the Funders' Network and USDN celebrates five years of grantmaking through the Partners for Places grant

program. This past year has been fulfilling, as we watched the progress that has been made and outcomes achieved through prior grants, and look toward a next set of exciting partnership projects moving ahead in twenty new communities. We are proud of the accomplishments of the past several years, including expanded work to ensure that people most impacted by environmental degradation and injustices are fully engaged in and beneficiaries of sustainability and climate solutions.

As we enter the new year, the Partners for Places Selection Committee and staff are excited to be launching a strategic planning effort that will look at ways to grow and strengthen the program for its next chapter. The program has tried to be flexible, adaptive, and responsive to changing priorities and needs of local government sustainability leaders and funders, while simultaneously providing a catalyst for both sectors to build new or stronger relationships with one another. We are pleased to be adding in the coming year a stronger emphasis on green stormwater infrastructure projects with generous support from the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation and the Pisces Foundation.

As the political landscape changes before us, we know that local initiatives, commitment, and actions will be increasingly important if we are to create a healthier and more sustainable world for our children and theirs. We will continue to work hard in 2017 to stay responsive and attuned to ways that can best advance sustainability and climate action. One of the ways we will do this is to continue to align and work closely with the other funding mechanisms offered by USDN: the Peer Learning Exchange, the USDN Innovation Fund, and the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance Innovation Fund. Increased alignment can allow innovations to evolve from concepts into scalable practices in a more coordinated manner, as communities utilize the different funding mechanisms to understand context—and to test and grow good ideas.

APPENDIX - 2016 Partners for Places Grants

Project Description	Amount	Lead City	Grant Foundation Partner
Spring 2016 Round 8 Grants			
To create green jobs for unskilled workers through a training program that employs residents from one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods on an urban, aeroponic farm.	\$75,000	Atlanta, GA	The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
To bridge the solar divide and ensure that all Berkeley residents have access to renewable energy sources by providing solar installations for low-income communities, including multifamily affordable housing developments, and offering free hands-on solar job training.	\$35,000	Berkeley, CA	The San Francisco Foundation, and The East Bay Community Foundation
To provide green job training in urban farming to young returning citizens and offering healthy, fresh produce to residents in underserved neighborhoods.	\$50,000	Boston, MA	The Boston Foundation
To engage residents in developing a plan to create more tree	\$45,138	Bridgeport, CT	The Emily Hall

canopy, open spaces and stormwater solutions that will reduce flooding in a low-income area of this city.			Tremaine Foundation
To improve the water quality in Lake Champlain by developing pilot stormwater management projects on public schoolyards.	\$30,000	Burlington, VT	The Linthilhac Foundation
To make Ithaca more energy efficient by evaluating the policy tools the city can use to incentivize or mandate green building standards for new construction.	\$51,970	Ithaca, NY	The Park Foundation
To provide more open space in underserved communities in Los Angeles—a city where only 33 percent of children are within walking distance of a park—by transforming nine schoolyards into parks for use during non-school hours.	\$75,000	Los Angeles, CA	The Goldhirsh Foundation
To bring the public back to the long-industrial waterfront through community outreach and a greening of the city’s Harbor District.	\$75,000	Milwaukee, WI	The Brico Fund, and The Fund for Lake Michigan
Fall 2016 Round 9 Grants			
To expand a successful program that helps low-income neighborhoods – which use 43 percent more energy per square foot during the winter than the city’s average home – increase their energy efficiency. Residents will be encouraged to create their own locally-based solutions.	\$40,000	Chattanooga, TN	Benwood Foundation & Lyndhurst Foundation
To create an action plan that helps the city scale sustainable approaches across all initiatives – from transit oriented development to building demolition, energy efficiency in older buildings, vacant land reuse, green jobs and more. These design approaches can save money and resources while better positioning the city for the future.	\$25,000	Detroit, MI	The Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation
To create a sustainability director position for the city and a climate action plan that comprehensively addresses energy, land use, transportation, waste and water usage. The plan will look at the root cause of climate change, including ways to improve air quality and reduce flooding, to improve the health and well-being of all residents.	\$125,000	Hartford, CT	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
To provide critical shade along public transit routes in two tree-deprived neighborhoods, so that the low-income residents can comfortably walk to – and wait for – the bus. This effort expands the successful Partners for Places-funded SHADE project and makes riding the bus a more viable option, by creating a humane, comfortable and safe waiting experience for the bus rider.	\$50,000	Miami-Dade County, FL	Health Foundation of South Florida
To strengthen the local food system by helping Minneapolis’ 35 farmers’ markets work together, collect metrics on their impact and conduct a joint “Minneapolis Buy Local” marketing campaign. In addition, the program will expand an innovative program at the West Broadway Farmers Market’s that incentivizes low-income residents to purchase healthy foods by having doctors give patients food prescriptions.	\$75,000	Minneapolis, MN	Greater Twin Cities United Way
To help this city ensure that its successful efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions directly benefit low-income neighborhoods by supporting a resident-led Community Energy	\$50,000	Portland, OR	Meyer Memorial Trust

Plan in the Cully neighborhood. Portland has seen impressive results from its carbon-reduction efforts – in 2014 per person emissions were 40 percent below 1990 levels – and seeks to support historically underserved communities in implementing low-carbon investments and solutions.			
To implement the city’s Equity & Environmental Agenda, a roadmap to ensure that people of color, immigrants, refugees and those with low-income and limited English proficiency both lead and benefit from the city’s environmental progress. Unveiled in April, the agenda provides goals and strategies so that the city, funders, environmental organizations and the private sector can work together with the community for change. Funding will support community participation in a new Environmental Justice Committee and support pilot projects with communities of color that demonstrate environmental justice in action.	\$75,000	Seattle, WA	The Bullitt Foundation, The Russell Family Foundation and the Seattle Foundation
To help the mostly Latino residents of the La Doce neighborhood strengthen their food-based economy by having citizen folklorists trained in ethnographic research assess local needs. The study will look at the informal economy and what home-based food businesses exist, how they and local supermarkets are faring, and what these businesses need to thrive. As UNESCO named Tucson a City of Gastronomy last year, honoring its rich food culture, the city wants to enhance the local food economy in neighborhoods.	\$74,862	Tucson, AZ	Community Foundation for Southern Arizona
2016 Equity Pilot Initiatives Awards			
To ensure social equity is a key consideration and lens in updating and implementing the city of Baltimore’s sustainability plan, in addition to becoming a model that can be replicated and used across departments.	\$35,000	Baltimore, MD	Baltimore Community Foundation
Working with the Change Center Jobs Initiative and the City of Knoxville Save Our Sons Initiative to strengthen career pathways for young adults of color by expanding employment and job-training opportunities, mentoring students and entrepreneurs, promoting diversity and inclusion in the private sector and building the capacity of local government to address equity through a wide variety of projects.	\$74,000	Knoxville, TN	Anonymous
To launch a community engagement project in eight underserved neighborhoods that gathers neighborhood-level data and stories, and then brings residents together with city staff to address institutional barriers to equity in community development, climate preparedness, and emergency planning.	\$51,981	Las Cruces, NM	Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico: Doña Ana Communities United initiative
To better understand the needs of the city’s most vulnerable, address them in an updated sustainability plan and make equity a fundamental part of Providence’s Office of Sustainability’s work.	\$50,000	Providence, RI	Rhode Island Foundation