Request for Proposals
Partners for Places Equity Pilot Initiative
November 3, 2015

Overview

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. Through these investments, Partners for Places fosters long-term relationships that make our urban areas more prosperous, livable, and vibrant.

In the first four years, Partners for Places funded 55 proposals. For more information on the awardees, please visit http://www.fundersnetwork.org/partnersforplaces. Over the next several years, the Funders' Network and USDN anticipate this initiative will result in dozens more partnership projects, strong and robust working relationships between local sustainability directors and place-based funders, new sustainability practices and innovations in the community, and new sources of financial support for this work.

One of the goals for Partners for Places is to identify sustainability practices of broad interest to USDN members and to help take them to scale. Embedding equity in sustainability and climate action is a practice ripe for replication and in high demand. It is now possible to create standardized processes and tools for initiating and developing in city government a capacity to learn and act on equity related sustainability goals/activities, to go beyond the talk in a way that can be tested, assessed, and then, perhaps, broadly deployed. The hope is that doing so will unleash a new wave of equity-in-sustainability actions, which will provide the next innovations from which to learn.

> *The social equity dimension of sustainability seeks a fair distribution of burdens and benefits of actions among current and future stakeholders, access to resources in a way that is not reliant on position or group, and ways for all stakeholders to be included in the process of shaping the strategies and policies that are adopted.*

With this RFP, Partners for Places is launching a two-year, pilot initiative separate from the general grant program to provide financial and technical support to a cohort of cities and place-based foundation partners that are committed to building local capacity to address equity in sustainability and climate action and intentionally learn together.

Information on Partners for Places Equity Initiative

Partners for Places is inviting participants in the 2015 USDN Equity Workshop to partner with local place-based foundations to apply for one or two years of financial support and technical assistance to build local capacity to use an equity lens in sustainability and climate action initiatives.

> *Using an equity lens for a project is a means to actively insert racial equity into your decision making process from project design through project evaluation. The steps include finding shared language to talk about race and institutional inequities; analyzing data about who will benefit or be burdened by an initiative; setting a concrete goal for a specific improvement in racial equity; engaging internally and with the community—especially those most impacted—in developing strategies to spread benefits or mitigate burdens; staying focused on equity throughout implementation; making communication and evaluation of progress in advancing equity a priority throughout the initiative; and taking the time to figure out how to institutionalize what has worked in your process to advance equity.*

For two-year grants, payment in the second year will depend upon having built an effective team that is making solid progress together. Single-year grantees can apply for second year if they are making good progress towards their goals. If some of the partnerships end after the first year, Partners for Places will reach out to new cities to apply for the second year RFP.

There are three steps to the application process:

1. Demonstrate Baseline Capacity: Applicants must complete the USDN five-part equity professional development program, submit the five homework assignments, and fully participate in the USDN Equity Workshop in October 2015.
2. Submit a Letter of Inquiry: Applicants are asked to submit a 3-4 page Letter of Inquiry, which Partners for Places will use to determine if applicants have a robust project concept and the capacity to be successful. Partners for Places technical experts will provide applicants with advice on what they need to do to develop a robust final proposal. Applicants can use the USDN equity workshop project worksheet for their Letter of Inquiry. (See Appendix A.)
3. Submit a Full Proposal: The full proposal must follow the instructions in this RFP. Potential applicants that cannot identify local funding partners, may request advice and introductions from Partners for Places funders and staff.

Applicants must participate in all five dimensions of the Partners for Places Equity Initiative:

1. Project: Undertake a sustainability or climate action project for which a team will identify and address specific racial equity disparities with the authentic involvement of impacted communities in program design and implementation.
2. Equity Expert: Include in the project team an equity expert or hired consultant who can help the team to develop a common understanding of structural and institutional inequities and a shared methodology and process to dismantle these inequities.
3. Technical Assistance: Participate in Partners for Places technical assistance, including a kickoff in-person workshop for champions from each grantee city and four hours per year of expert consulting support for grantees to address challenges.
4. Peer Learning: USDN will create and staff a learning group for grantees to learn from and support each other and share lessons for an annual lessons learned report. Other USDN members that are using an equity lens for a significant sustainability or climate initiative will be invited to be part of the learning cohort.
5. Evaluation: Grantees must agree to pre- and post-grant surveys of their team members seeking to identify changes in beliefs, attitudes, priorities, relationships, and personal plans for action. Grantees also must submit an annual report for each grant year documenting project and team progress, lessons earned, and changes in city policy or practice. There also will be annual team interviews to identify lessons for how to build capacity to address equity that can be shared with other cities.

Dollars Available; Size of Awards; Term: Single-year grants will be between $25,000 and $75,000, with a 1:1 match required by one or more local, place-based foundations. Two-year grants will be in the range of $40,000-$125,000, also with a 1:1 match requirement.

- Applicants requesting a single year of project support should indicate if they are likely to apply for second year support.
- Applicants requesting two years of project support will be required to demonstrate a two-year match commitment up front from local funders. Please note that second year support will be contingent on Partners for Places receipt of second year anticipated grant funds.
- We expect the current grant pool to support about seven projects. Five of these projects must contribute to climate change adaptation or reduce GHG emissions.

Documenting the Matching Requirement: At the time that the application is submitted, the Selection Committee needs to know that a sustainability director and a funder partner(s) have worked together to develop the proposal and that the funder is intending to support this project financially, subject to board review and approval. A letter(s) of commitment or intent to commit shall be sufficient to make an application eligible for review. However, in order for the Funders' Network to release the matching grant, we will need to receive the grant letter or grant agreement from the local partnering funder(s) showing proof of the match within three months of the award date.

Application Deadlines: The Funders' Network and USDN will approve matching grant investments during one application round in 2015. Unless all of the first round grantees receive

two-year grants and all of the available funds are expended, there will be a second application round in 2016. Partners for Places will reserve some second-year funding for applicants who are funded only for the first year. Please see below for details on the application deadlines and timeline.

Selection Process: A Selection Committee made up of two foundation program officers, two local government sustainability leaders, and a representative from the Funders' Network from Smart Growth and Livable Communities will award the matching grants. The Funders' Network administers the grant program. A technical team including project consultants, Glenn Harris and Julie Nelson, and project manager Julia Parzen, co-founder of USDN, will provide feedback on Letters of Inquiry and technical support to the Selection Committee and grantees.

- Glenn Harris, President of the Center for Social Inclusion, is the former Program Manager of the Race and Social Justice Initiative in the City of Seattle. (http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/, gharris@thecsi.org
- Julie Nelson, Director of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (http://www.racialequityalliance.org/cohort/), is the former Director of the Office of Civil Rights in the City of Seattle. She is a Senior Fellow at the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, University of California, Berkeley, working with john powell to build a 15-community cohort of jurisdictions with change agents within government. They also want to build pathways for new jurisdictions to begin. The Alliance has conducted a variety of racial equity workshops and provided leadership coaching for a dozen jurisdictions.

Project Eligibility

Eligible Partnership Projects:
Application for the Partners for Places Equity Pilot Initiative RFP is by invitation only. Partners for Places is seeking applicants who are committed to building local government capacity to identify and address specific racial equity disparities, use racial and social impact criteria in decision-making processes, and maximize benefits and mitigate burdens to low-income communities and communities of color with the full involvement of these communities in program design and implementation.

Partners for Places is inviting all participants in the 2015 USDN Equity Workshop to partner with local place-based foundations to apply for one or two years of financial support and technical assistance. Applicants who respond to this Equity Pilot Initiative RFP may also apply for support in the next RFP round of the Partners for Places general grant program. The two RFPs will be released late Fall at roughly the same time. Applicants who apply for both, or have an existing Partners for Places grant, will have to demonstrate their capacity to effectively manage both projects well. Partners for Places is unlikely to fund work in cities that have a Partners for Places project underway that applies an equity lens to a policy, program, or department.

The Partners for Places Equity Pilot Initiative is open to a variety of projects to which applicants could apply an equity lens. Good projects will vary in scope and scale, depending on local

conditions. The following list of examples of good projects is intended to reflect the variation we expect to see.

- <u>Undertaking a neighborhood planning process that is inclusive of communities of color</u> – Too often city-led planning has not included the voices or priorities of communities of color. For example, engaging people most affected by growth and potential displacement provides the opportunity to develop anti-gentrification strategies so that people currently living in a neighborhood benefit from anticipated growth and reinvestment. Likewise, community-targeted climate resilience or adaptation planning efforts will be more successful if they have the engagement of residents from all neighborhoods.
- <u>Integrating equity into an existing effort, such as a program that encourages city residents to walk or bike</u> – Some existing sustainability programs may unintentionally better meet the needs of white residents. Conducting an assessment of program objectives, gaps and opportunities could allow teams to expand or re-design an existing program to actually advance racial equity.
- <u>Developing a new sustainability or climate action plan using an equity lens</u> – As equity has become more prominent in sustainability and climate action, cities have begun to apply an equity lens to the development of these plans. With capacity building, the equity lens can be more rigorously applied and is more likely to open up opportunities for institutionalizing equity into core city government operations and work plans.
- <u>Bringing equity into implementation of an existing sustainability or climate action plan</u> – A city may already have a rigorous sustainability or climate action plan that it is actively implementing and want to bring a stronger equity lens to its implementation by undertaking an equity self-evaluation.

The key attributes that the committee will look for when reviewing the proposals are detailed in the selection criteria table below.

Eligible Applicants:
The proposal must be submitted by a team of at least two partners who are: (1) the sustainability director of a city (municipality) that participated in the 2015 USDN Equity Workshop, and (2) the local, place-based foundation(s). Either partner may email the proposal. A local, place-based foundation may include a community foundation or a private or corporate foundation that focuses on a greater metropolitan area or region. A national investor in the Partners for Places fund may not provide the local match.

Eligible Grant Recipients:
Local, place-based foundation, a public charity (501c3) created by a city or county government to accept grants, or a partnering nonprofit organization.

Selection Criteria

	Criteria	Points Value (max per criteria)
1	**Project Design**: The thoughtfulness of the project design, including clarity about the desired project results communitywide and for racial equity, and plans for developing a common understanding of racial inequity, communicating and educating about racial inequity, analysis of community data to identify disparities, authentic community engagement, team and partner capacity building, developing strategies for advancing racial equity that avoid unintended consequences, and maintaining a focus on equity throughout implementation.	30 points
2	**Team Preparation**: The readiness of the champion and team chosen to lead and guide the project, including evidence of interest in and preparation to use an equity lens, senior leadership support, and plan for team capacity building and engagement of internal and external partners who can support development and implementation of the project. Applicants can show evidence of interest and expertise by submitting the five homework assignments that were part of the USDN Equity Professional Development Series or by providing other evidence.	20 points
3	**Commitment to Equity Impact**: The degree to which the proposal identifies specific racial equity disparities, sets goals for reducing disparities, identifies performance metrics for reducing disparities, and includes a plan to monitor progress in eliminating disparities.	10 points
4	**Community Involvement**: The degree to which the proposal involves residents most deeply affected by the disparities in developing and implementing solutions.	10 points
5	**Equity Expertise**: The qualifications of a team expert or equity consultant who will provide guidance in implementation of the proposal. The team expert or equity consultant must have experience helping teams to build a common understanding of institutional inequities and a shared methodology and process to dismantle them.	10 points
6	**Sustainability**: The potential for the team and project to continue beyond the period of the grant.	10 points
7	**Structural Change**: The potential for the project to open up opportunities for institutionalizing equity in core city government operations and work plans, i.e. making it a normal part of service delivery and investment.	10 points

Application Timeline

The Partners for Places Equity Pilot Initiative first RFP cycle is as follows:

November 4, 2015	Release RFP
November 9, 2015	Information call for interested applicants
December 7, 2015	Letter of Inquiry (LOI) Due
December 14, 2015	Comments Returned on LOI
February 4, 2016 (12 a.m. midnight, any time zone)	Proposals Due
April 24, 2016	Awards Announced

The second cycle will be similar. The information call will be held on **November 9th, 2pm Eastern.** You may register for the call on the Funders' Network website by clicking here.

Proposal Requirements

A complete proposal should include four components: (1) Proposal including the Cover Page (2 pages) and the Proposal Narrative (no longer than 9 pages) as a Word file, (2) a project budget that highlights projected income and expenses, (3) grant recipient's IRS Form 990, and (4) evidence of match or intention to provide match. Please use the proposal form, which includes detailed descriptions of the various requirements; click here to access the proposal form.

1. **Proposal** (no longer than 9 pages including cover sheet)

Cover Sheet: (2 pages)
   A.   Name of applicants, including partnering Local Government Sustainability Director and Local, Place-based Foundation(s)
   B.   Primary Contact Person and Contact Information
   C.   Proposed grant recipient (local foundation, 501c3 created by city or county government, or partner nonprofit)
   D.   Amount requested from Partners for Places by year for one or two years (Applicants requesting a single year of project support are asked to indicate if they are likely to apply for second year support. Applicants seeking two years of support should note that payment of a second year of a two-year grant is contingent on Partners for Places receipt of second-year anticipated grant funds.)
   E.   Amount and sources of local match (Applicants requesting two years of project support must have a two-year match commitment up front from local funders.)
   F.   Total project budget
   G.   Project Title
   H.   Purpose of project (25 words or less):
   I.   Brief description of project goals, strategy, and key activities (250 words or less)

J. Description of whether and how the project will reduce GHG emissions or increase adaptive capacity.

Proposal Narrative (no longer than 7 pages). ***Address each area below in order.***
   A. Background rationale for project (Why this project? How did it come about?)
   B. Project goals and desired results communitywide and for racial equity.
   C. Detailed work plan that describes project activities, deliverables, and timeline, including plans for developing a common understanding of racial inequity, communicating and educating about racial equity, analysis of community data to identify disparities, authentic community engagement, team and partner capacity building, developing strategies for advancing racial equity that avoid unintended consequences, and maintaining a focus on equity throughout implementation.
   D. Plans for evaluating success and tracking/demonstrating impact on racial equity.
   E. Key staff or implementation partners.
   F. If a city is responding to both the Partners for Places general grant program RFP and the Partners for Places Equity Pilot RFP in the same timeframe, or has an existing Partners for Places grant, please include a description of your capacity to effectively manage both grants.
   G. Information on how the project addresses key selection criteria. Remember to address each of the key areas listed below in order. Points will be awarded based on the extent to which your proposal explains the following related to the Selection Criteria:
      i. Project Design: The thoughtfulness of the project design, including clarity about the desired project results communitywide and for racial equity, and plans for developing a common understanding of racial inequity, communicating and educating about racial inequity, analysis of community data to identify disparities, authentic community engagement, team and partner capacity building, developing strategies for advancing racial equity that avoid unintended consequences, and maintaining a focus on equity throughout implementation. (30 points)
      ii. Team Preparation: The readiness of the champion and team chosen to lead and guide the project, including evidence of interest in and preparation to use an equity lens, senior leadership support, and plan for team capacity building and engagement of internal and external partners who can support development and implementation of the project. Applicants can show evidence of interest and expertise by submitting the five homework assignments that were part of the USDN Equity Professional Development Series or by providing other evidence. (20 points)
      iii. Commitment to Equity Impact: The degree to which the proposal identifies specific racial equity disparities, sets goals for reducing disparities, identifies performance metrics for reducing disparities, and includes a plan to monitor progress in eliminating disparities. (10 points)

iv.   Community Involvement: The degree to which the proposal involves residents most deeply affected by the disparities in developing and implementing solutions. (10 points)

v.   Equity Expertise: The qualifications of a team expert or equity consultant who will provide guidance in implementation of the proposal. The team expert or equity consultant must have experience helping teams to build a common understanding of institutional inequities and a shared methodology and process to dismantle them. (10 points)

vi.   Sustainability: The potential for the team and project to continue beyond the period of the grant. (10 points)

vii.   Structural Change: The potential for the project to open up opportunities for institutionalizing equity in core city government operations and work plans, i.e. making it a normal part of service delivery and investment. (10 points)

2. **Project Budget and Financial Information**. Attach a project budget that includes:
   a.   Projected sources of revenue, including additional funds that partners will bring to the project
   b.   Line item details of project expenses, including personnel and other direct costs
   If you are proposing a two-year project, you must provide a separate budget for each year.

3. **IRS Form 990 (or Canadian annual information return)**

4. **Matching Fund Commitment Letter or Letter of Intent**: Provide evidence of a 1:1 match by including either (1) a grant letter or grant agreement from the local, place-based funder(s) or (2) a letter from the funder(s) showing a strong intention to approve the matching grant should your proposal be approved for funding from Partners for Places. If you are proposing a two-year project, you must provide a commitment for both years of the project. A national investor in the Partners for Places fund may not provide the local match.

If you still have questions about criteria, you may contact Julia Parzen at julia@juliaparzen.com or 773-288-3596.

Submit your proposal electronically using the Proposal Form to Adrian Martinez at adrian@fundersnetwork.org by February 4, 2016. The proposal cover sheet and narrative need to be submitted as a Word document.

Investors in Partners for Places

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About TFN

Since 1999, the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) has worked with foundations, nonprofit organizations, and other partners to address the environmental, social, and economic problems created by sprawling patterns of development and urban disinvestment. The Network believes that the suite of tools available to funders—investing, grantmaking, collaborating, convening, facilitating, and more—uniquely position philanthropy to play a leadership role in advancing smarter growth policies and practices that improve decision making about growth and development issues, leading to more prosperous, livable, and vibrant communities for all. From its inception, the Network has been committed to advancing not only triple-bottom-line returns for people, place, and prosperity, but also strategies that recognize the interconnected nature of the issues that grantmakers care about and outcomes they hope to achieve.

About USDN

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network is a peer-to-peer network of 140 sustainability directors from municipalities across North America who share best practices and foster innovative solutions to common problems. Cities are leading in the creation of policies and programs that enhance sustainability. USDN supports members in promoting successful ideas, policies and programs that make communities more livable.

USDN accomplishes this by focusing on three core objectives:

- Offering members peer-to-peer networking opportunities, enabling lessons learned in one city to be adapted and applied in others
- Accelerating innovation in urban sustainability through an Innovation Fund
- Supporting regional networks designed to expand the number of sustainability directors served by networks and/or to address specific issues

USDN members work together in user groups on dozens of sustainability topics, such as how cities are preparing for a changing climate, how to use indicators to drive change and inform decision making, how cities can develop sustainable food systems from production to distribution to waste, the best recipe(s) of programs and policies for cities to achieve ambitious community energy goals, and how cities can achieve higher waste diversion rates through changes to existing strategies and technologies.

Appendix A. Template for Letter of Inquiry: Partners for Places Equity Pilot Initiative

Letters of Inquiry to Partners for Places Equity Pilot Initiative should use the Equity workshop worksheet for describing a plan for adding an equity lens to a sustainability and/or climate action initiative and to embed change in your institution.

> *Using an equity lens for a project is a means to actively insert racial equity into your decision making process from project design through project evaluation. The steps include finding shared language to talk about race and institutional inequities; analyzing data about who will benefit or be burdened by an initiative; setting a concrete goal for a specific improvement in racial equity; engaging internally and with the community, especially those most impacted, in developing strategies to spread benefits or mitigate burdens; staying focused on equity throughout implementation; making communication and evaluation of progress in advancing equity a priority throughout the initiative; and taking the time to figure out how to institutionalize what has worked in your process to advance equity.*

Date:

City:

Name:

Please indicate here if you believe that the February 4, 2016 deadline for submitting final proposals is too soon and, if so, state what you think the deadline should be:

1. **Project Description** -- Describe your project in concrete terms (What is the goal? What will you actually do? Why did you choose this project?):

   Things to think about:

   - Try to describe your project in terms of your goal for eliminating racial inequities ***and*** for improving overall community conditions.

2. **Desired Results, Outcomes, and Data Evidence** – What specific outcome is your project aiming to achieve? Will achieving this outcome address a specific identified racial inequity? How? What is the historical and current data disaggregated by race that informed the development of your project goal and desired outcome? What do the data tell you about barriers or gaps?

Things to think about:

- It will be easier to build support if you have a clear, simple, measurable and easily understood goal for the project and for <u>how</u> the project will advance racial equity.
- Data disaggregated by race and neighborhood related to your project will help you to find equity gaps.
- Both quantitative and qualitative data should be used to assess and track community conditions over time.
- A general outcome of "increase racial equity" is harder to explain or achieve than a specific change in opportunity for people of color. A specific change could be increased access to a program, reduced burdens from a policy change, a program design that is tailored to work for a community, and/or a greater voice in the decisions about the program.
- <u>Workshop Participant Example</u>: Reuse vacant and abandoned properties throughout the city in a way that involves residents in reuse decisions, doesn't displace neighbors, and allows existing residents to participate in investment programs and local hiring.

3. **Collaboration and Engagement** – How will your project engage and collaborate with others? Who will be your internal and external partners supporting development and implementation of the project? How will you build the capacity of your internal and external partners? Who may be hard to reach and/or highly impacted, and how will you include them in project development and implementation? How can you develop and/or expand cross-sector partnerships that will achieve systemic change?

Things to think about:

- Community engagement is often designed for those who have historically had access. You will need to be intentional to engage diverse communities that have not historically been well-served by government
- Too often, inclusion and engagement efforts don't support long-term relationships. Make sure you are committed to long-term engagement that builds capacity and ensures you will have community partners on an on-going basis.
- <u>Workshop Participant Example</u>: Work with residents in three neighborhoods to figure out what city programs could help increase neighborhood activities, access to health care and active living, energy efficiency, and affordable quality housing.

4. **Strategies**– What strategies will you use in your project and how will they advance racial equity? How will you ensure that your equity goals carry through program implementation? How could your strategies be more than one-offs, for example by changing a practice or policy that allows institutional racism to persist?

Things to think about:

- We tend to think about projects in isolation, aka, a transactional approach. For us to maximize impact, we need to consider opportunities to use our projects to address structural barriers to opportunity within our institutions.
- We typically have the greatest influence within our own institutions, but racially inequitable outcomes are perpetuated through systems and structures. Think about how you can work cross-sectors to enhance your ability to target structural racism.
- <u>Workshop Participant Example</u>: Develop a model TOD or Community Benefit Agreement policy that includes decision criteria for the allocation of benefits and burdens to communities of color.

5. **Education, capacity building, and communication** – How will you educate and communicate about racial equity and sustainability? Who are your target audiences and what are your key messages for each audience? What are your strategies for building the capacity of your own team and organization to advance racial equity? What are your strategies for building the capacity of your key external partners to advance racial equity?

Things to think about:

- Review Webinar 2. Communicating about Equity and Webinar 3. Building Shared Understanding of Equity.
- Your team will need training and capacity building on what racial equity is and how to use an equity lens.
- Include education about the history of how your community arrived at current conditions related to your goal and what past choices may be contributing to racial inequities.
- Be aware of the tendency of many people to want to focus on individuals. This awareness can help you to make clear connections between individual experiences and institutional and structural barriers and opportunities.
- <u>Workshop Participant Example</u>: Will identify a project that involves multiple departments so all can learn together how to make sure programs work well for <u>all</u> residents. For example, community gardening on public land where residents are expected to purchase their own equipment doesn't work for low-income neighborhoods.

6. **Evaluation**– How will you know whether your project is successful? What are the milestones and measures that will tell you if you are making progress? How will your track progress in implementation so you can make mid-project corrections?

Things to think about:

- Evaluation is a key part of accountability.
- Make sure you take time to share lessons learned. This will not only facilitate mid-course corrections, but also help to create more opportunities to advance equity.
- This work can be hard. Think about how you can you take time to celebrate success and recognize progress.
- <u>Workshop Participant Example</u>: For a project to bring an equity lens to the update of a climate action plan, there will be an equity goal for each action for each neighborhood, not just citywide. Every neighborhood will have a target for improvement that will be tracked and shared.

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