



## Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Local Sustainability Matching Fund As of 1/31/2012

**1. Are the cities of members of the selection committee eligible to apply for this first round of grants?**

No, during this first round, the sustainability directors who are members of the selection committee and their cities may not apply. The ineligible cities for just the first round are Asheville, Denver, Dubuque, New York City, Phoenix, and Vancouver. We want to thank these sustainability directors for stepping up to launch this new grant program, even though it means that their communities would have to sit out the first round. You may still want to learn about the Fund now to help you prepare to submit a proposal for the next round.

**2. 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, Facilities Maintenance Manager, Election Commissioner, or another person?**

The application must be submitted by a team representing 1) a sustainability director 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 can 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, the application would be ineligible.

**3. 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.

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

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

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

Yes. A sustainability director is defined as any person who leads a multi-department and community wide urban sustainability initiative from within local government (“sustainability director”). Half of all grants are reserved for USDN members and half are not.

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

Yes, as long as the director meets the definition of sustainability director above in question #2 AND the director is leading the local government's community-wide sustainability initiatives, not just the initiatives within the transit authority or local housing authority.

7. **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.

8. **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-sectional 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.

9. **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.

10. **Are regional council of governments eligible to apply? For instance, our COG is a sub-regional planning agency that includes 17 cities, a county, two regional water districts, and the superintendent of schools, and we address issues of regional concern, ranging from air quality, transportation, environment, economic development, sustainability, energy, and water.**

No.

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

The Fund can only support projects in the United States and Canada.

12. **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, and 2) a local, place-based foundation. A community group or a non-profit may be an additional partner or the grant recipient.

13. **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.

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

A community foundation is 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.

**15. 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.

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

An “urban sustainability initiative” is one that would advance a key aspect of an officially adopted local sustainability, climate action, or energy efficiency and conservation plan.

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

Yes. The Fund is intended both to help build new relationships and strengthen existing ones. Additional points are awarded for new relationships.

**18. Does the local match have to be committed or the funds received before submitting an application?**

No. We’ll be looking for some kind of letter expressing interest or letter of intent from a local funder/funders, but the funds do not have to be in hand. However, in order for the Funders’ Network to release the grant funds, the match will have to be in hand.

**19. Would a prior grant to a government entity fulfill the match requirement?**

No. The purpose of Fund is to facilitate new grants from a local funder. The local, place-based foundation grant decision must be made after January 3, 2012.

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

No. The matching funds must be a cash match.

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

Yes.

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

No. The match must be made by one or more local, place-based foundations. Proposals will receive points for bringing additional dollars to the project beyond the local match.

**23. What is a local government foundation?**

This is a typographical error. What is meant is a local government fund set up as a 501(c)(3) to receive grants.

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

Both are the applicants together. One or the other or another party may be the grant recipient.

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

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

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

After this first round, we can provide actual examples, but the types of projects we are hoping to fund would help advance a key aspect of an officially adopted local sustainability, climate action, or energy efficiency and conservation plan and involve a cross-section of the community working together. The plan must be adopted by the time the proposal is submitted to the Local Sustainability Matching Fund.

**27. 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 an officially adopted local sustainability, climate action, or energy efficiency and conservation plan and is chosen through a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation.

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

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

**29. What are eligible expenses?**

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

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

The Fund is unlikely to fund salaries for existing local government staff, major capital projects, or endowments. Funding could be used for project costs related to projects such as gardens, EV stations, and bike stations, if these are key projects of an official adopted local sustainability, climate action, or energy efficiency and conservation plan. Funding could be used for existing staff at a partner nonprofit organization for a new project that advances the local government's officially adopted local sustainability, climate action, or energy efficiency and conservation plan.

**31. Does our local government have to have some kind of officially adopted local sustainability, climate action, or energy efficiency and conservation plan in order to apply?**

Yes. Successful projects will advance a key aspect of their local government's officially adopted local sustainability, climate action or energy efficiency and conservation plan. The plan must be officially adopted by the mayor or city/county manager. It does not have to have been adopted by the legislature.

**32. Beyond Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plan adopted in conjunction with Federal Stimulus EECBG Grants, the City does not yet have an "officially adopted" sustainability, climate action, or eecbg plan. Can funding be applied for to engage local stakeholders in the development of quantitative sustainability goals and metrics necessary to undergird the creation of such a plan?**

Yes. If there is an officially adopted energy plan in place and creating a sustainability plan will advance a key aspect of the plan.

**33. Does an officially adopted local sustainability, climate action, or energy efficiency and conservation plan include a comprehensive plan or master plan?**

No.

**34. What recent trends in sustainability have most influenced your strategic planning for the fund?**

Urban sustainability directors and local foundations already work closely together in Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Dubuque, Vancouver and other cities, but this is still the exception, rather than the rule. The Matching Fund aims to change this dynamic by providing matching fund incentives to begin to build these valuable working relationships and projects in local communities, while at the same time building the visibility and importance of this work in the local philanthropic community. The Funders' Network and USDN believe that sustainability directors are natural allies for nonprofit leaders and community-based foundations. By combining forces they can become powerful allies to promote more sustainable, prosperous, and equitable places.

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

This is not required, but extra points are offered for projects where the sustainability director and local, place-based foundation demonstrate interest in a relationship that extends beyond the grant term.

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

The grants generally are intended to fund activities that can be completed with 12 months, although they may be part of longer term projects.

**37. May we submit more than one proposal?**

Yes. The team may submit more than one proposal, though it is highly unlikely that more than one grant would be awarded to any single locality.

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

No. But all participants will be able to see summaries of all eligible proposals on the Funders' Network website.

**39. When is the second application round anticipated to open up for 2012, and will the RFP be the same/similar to the priorities outlined in the current overview?**

The second round is scheduled to open on August 1, 2012, and the RFP will be a revised version yet similar.

**40. Who can we contact for more detail?**

If the answers to your questions are not in the RFP or FAQ, you may contact Ann Wallace at [ann@fundersnetwork.org](mailto:ann@fundersnetwork.org).