Greater Philadelphia Land Protection Program Neighborhood Conservation Grant Package

The Greater Philadelphia Land Protection Program ("GPLPP") supports permanent land protection and planning to increase equitable access to open space, preserve critical ecological values, and enhance community resilience to climate impacts. GPLPP is made possible with generous support from the William Penn Foundation.

This Neighborhood Conservation Grant package includes the following:

- **Grant Summary**
- **Scoring Guidance**
- **Anticipated Questions**
- **Definitions**
- Reference Copies of **Application** & **Budget Summary Form**

Grant Summary

Purpose

Neighborhood Conservation Grants support planning, partnership development, and systems-level work to reduce barriers to permanent, community-centered land protection in Philadelphia and Camden.

Geography

Eligible entities may apply for a Neighborhood Conservation Grant for work focused within the cities of Philadelphia and Camden.

Eligible Entities

OSI invites applications from land trusts, nonprofit organizations, and Philadelphia or Camden City municipal agency partners committed to advancing permanent land protection in those cities. Collaborative applications are encouraged, with one eligible entity serving as the lead applicant. Applicants may also apply through a fiscal sponsor.

Timing Considerations

Applications are due by 11:59pm on Monday, February 15, 2027 and must be submitted through OSI's grant management system, Foundant (see **Next Steps to Apply**, below). An application form is enclosed for reference and planning purposes.

Applicants will be notified of grant decisions in April 2027. Projects should be designed for completion within 12 -18 months of the award.

Grant Awards and Fund Availability

Applicants may request up to $40,000 in grant support. $240,000 is expected to be available in this round.

Match

There is no match requirement. Applicants will report the full project budget and any funding sources in addition to the grant request on the financial summary form. Applicants are encouraged to document any in-kind or cash contributions, if available.

Scale

Proposed projects should demonstrate potential for impact beyond a single site or parcel. This could include replicating an approach at other sites or applying a model to other neighborhoods or communities. OSI recognizes that neighborhood change can start small.

Applicants may define what "neighborhood" means for their own work. The program will not impose outside definitions of neighborhood boundaries or size. Multi-neighborhood or city-level projects are also eligible.

Scale may also reflect:

- Community impact and reach
- Number or diversity of people engaged and/or impacted by the project
- Strength and breadth of partnerships
- Replicability of the approach
- Contribution to long-term land protection infrastructure

Project Types

To accommodate a wide variety of planning needs identified by community members in both Philadelphia and Camden Cities, the Neighborhood Conservation Grant program has been organized to support two broad project types. These were developed in response to feedback from prospective applicants about the need for work that addresses both systems-level issues and community-specific opportunities. By providing examples below of the types of activities that may fit within each project type, OSI hopes prospective applicants will see their work reflected in the goals of this program. OSI does not prefer one project type over another, nor has it established a predetermined allocation of funding by type. Some projects may span project types. If <u>any</u> portion of the proposed project involves advocacy, applicants should select Type A.

A. **Advocacy/Systems-level change:** Projects focused on systems-level change that help make land acquisition/security/protection more viable.
B. **Organizational Infrastructure, Strategy, and Planning:** Building systems and strategies that help an organization, community, or coalition be better set up for successful long-term ownership and/or stewardship of green space. This may include community gardens, parks, and greenway trails.

Potential activities in each project type may include, but are not limited to:

Type A (Advocacy/Systems-Level Change)	Type B (Organizational Infrastructure, Strategy, and Planning)
• Engagement with councilmembers to share greenspace priorities • Research and/or recommendation on Land Bank disposition/application processes • Projects that address systems-level recommendations identified in existing plans, such as the Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Implementation Plan • Research and/or educating the public on the need for greenspace and housing to co-exist as City priorities	• Community or Conservation Land Trust feasibility study • Community organization governance development • Organizational succession planning • Multi-stakeholder partnership development • Mapping priority land parcels for desired acquisition/community preservation • Planning for climate resilience (such as flood resilience and reducing heat inequities) or open space, including greenways and park expansion • Identifying most at-risk parcels and planning for acquisition and long-term stewardship, including succession planning • Collaboration with conservation and community partners to enhance acquisition/preservation approaches and increase capacity

Use of Funds

Neighborhood Conservation Grants may support a broad range of activities that contribute to the development of land protection and stewardship strategies, strengthen partners' capacity to achieve conservation outcomes, and/or guide future investment in land protection.

Grants may cover staff time spent completing the project, consultant fees, or other technical assistance. They may also provide stipends to partners and/or residents engaged in the planning process and cover convening or meeting expenses.

Neighborhood Conservation Grants **cannot** support:

- Projects focused on a single site/parcel that do not have wider community impact or serve as a replicable model
- Projects solely requesting funding for operational support for current activities
- Purchase of land or easements (inquire about GPLPP Capital Grants)
- Land protection transaction costs (inquire about GPLPP Capital Grants)
- Restoration capital costs
- Stewardship implementation
- Tax liens or insurance fees
- Any political activity, or legislative or administrative lobbying at state or federal level

Deliverables

Because Neighborhood Conservation Grants support a wide range of planning, partnership-building, advocacy, and capacity-building activities, grant deliverables will vary based on the nature of the proposed project. Applicants should propose deliverables that are appropriate to their work and demonstrate meaningful progress toward reducing barriers to conservation, strengthening community leadership and partnerships, or advancing long-term land security, stewardship, or equitable access to green space.

Deliverables may include, but are not limited to:

- Community-driven plans, strategies, or action frameworks
- Feasibility studies, assessments, or research reports
- Maps, inventories, spatial analyses, or parcel prioritization tools
- Community engagement processes and summary findings
- Partnership, coalition, or governance development outcomes
- Policy recommendations, advocacy strategies, or educational resources
- Community land ownership, stewardship, or land security models
- Training materials, toolkits, guides, or other resources that can support future work
- Documentation of lessons learned, key findings, and recommended next steps

Applicants should identify appropriate anticipated deliverables in their application. Grant recipients will participate in periodic check-ins and submit a final report summarizing project activities, accomplishments, lessons learned and recommended next steps.

How Applications Will Be Reviewed

The Neighborhood Conservation Grant program supports community-centered projects that advance conservation, stewardship, land security, community ownership, and equitable access to green space. The feasibility of the proposed work, the appropriateness of the budget and timeline, and the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the project will all be considered. Each application will also be assessed holistically using the four criteria listed below and described in detail in the enclosed **Scoring Guidance**:

- Alignment with Program Priorities
- Reducing Barriers
- Community Leadership & Partnership Development
- Broader & Lasting Impact
- Awareness & Power

Next Steps to Apply

Applications must be submitted on Foundant, OSI's grant management platform. All available OSI grant opportunities can be accessed here: *https://www.grantinterface.com/Opportunity/Catalog?urlkey=openspace*

Applicants must be logged in to the system to apply; otherwise, the grant opportunity can only be previewed. Select "Log on/Create Account" in the upper right corner of the main page.

Creating a free account involves providing contact and Tax ID information and an email verification step. Applicants should not create a new account if one is known to already exist for their organization. Please reach out to Sarah Wells (swells@osiny.org) if assistance is needed to add a new user to an existing account or reset a password.

Foundant Tips

Foundant should automatically save work, but applicants are encouraged to save responses in a Word or Google document as a back-up. The latest version of Google Chrome or Safari 16 or higher are the recommended browsers. The platform works best on a desktop or laptop, not a smartphone.

For help with Foundant, please contact Sarah Wells (swells@osiny.org). OSI is committed to supporting applicants throughout the application process so that technology does not become a barrier to accessing grant funds.

Staff Contact

Applicants are encouraged to contact OSI staff with any questions about GPLPP funding opportunities. For questions regarding Neighborhood Conservation Grants, contact Aisha Rodriguez at arodriguez@osiny.org. **Please include "NCG Inquiry" in the subject line.**

Optional office hours will also be offered in January for those seeking additional guidance. Schedules and registration information will be available through the **Mapping Resource Center** in December. Applicants with questions before January are encouraged to contact staff directly, as described above.

Aisha Rodriguez
Greater Philadelphia Program Manager
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Scoring Guidance

Reviewers will consider the feasibility of the proposed work, the appropriateness of the budget and timeline, and the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the project in addition to scoring each proposal using the rubric below.

Alignment with Neighborhood Conservation Grant (NCG) Program Purpose			
Absent	**Emergent**	**Developing**	**Strong**
Little or no connection to NCG purpose. Relationship to conservation, stewardship, land security, or community ownership is unclear.	Demonstrates a general connection to NCG purpose, but alignment is limited or insufficiently explained.	Clearly aligns with NCG purpose and demonstrates relevance to community conservation needs.	Demonstrates a compelling connection to NCG purpose and presents a strong opportunity to advance neighborhood conservation, stewardship, land security, community ownership, or equitable access to green space.
This criterion assesses the degree to which the proposed project advances the goals of the Neighborhood Conservation Grants program. Reviewers may consider: How clearly does the project connect to neighborhood conservation goals? Does it address conservation, stewardship, land security, community ownership, equitable development, environmental justice, or related priorities? Is it an appropriate use of NCG funding? Could it contribute to broader GPLPP goals?			
Reducing Barriers			
Absent	**Emergent**	**Developing**	**Strong**
Barriers are unclear, not relevant, or not meaningfully addressed by the proposed work.	Identifies relevant barriers, but the proposed strategy is underdeveloped or unlikely to create meaningful change.	Identifies clear organizational, community, or systemic barriers and presents a reasonable strategy for addressing them.	Identifies significant organizational and/or systemic barriers and presents a compelling, community-informed strategy with strong potential to reduce those barriers and create lasting change.
This criterion assesses whether the applicant has identified meaningful barriers that limit conservation, stewardship, land security, community ownership, or equitable access to land and open space. Reviewers may consider: Are barriers clearly identified? Does the proposal demonstrate an understanding of their underlying causes? Are activities likely to reduce or remove those barriers? Does the work address root causes and create pathways for future conservation action?			

Community Leadership & Partnership Development			
Absent	**Emergent**	**Developing**	**Strong**
Limited evidence of community leadership, partnerships, or accountability to affected communities.	Community engagement and partnership opportunities are identified, but roles and relationships are still developing.	Community members play a meaningful role in shaping the work, and partnerships are likely to contribute to project success.	Community leadership is central to the project. The work builds or strengthens partnerships that increase collective capacity, expand access to resources, and create conditions for long-term conservation success.
This criterion assesses the extent to which the project is informed by community knowledge, priorities, and leadership, as well as its ability to strengthen partnerships and collective capacity. Reviewers may consider: Do community members help shape priorities? Are partnerships clearly defined? Will the project strengthen networks and collective capacity? Could these partnerships help advance future conservation efforts?			
Broader & Lasting Impact			
Absent	**Emergent**	**Developing**	**Strong**
Benefits appear limited to short-term project activities with little indication of longer-term value.	May generate localized benefits, but pathways to broader impact are unclear.	Likely to create lasting benefits, strengthen local capacity, or contribute useful knowledge beyond the grant period.	Demonstrates strong potential to create impact beyond the immediate project through systems change, policy influence, field-building, knowledge sharing, replication, strengthened partnerships, or future conservation efforts in other communities.
This criterion assesses the project's potential to create benefits beyond the immediate grant period. Reviewers may consider: Will the project generate tools, models, knowledge, resources, relationships, or practices that can benefit others beyond those directly involved? Could lessons, tools, or partnerships be applied elsewhere? Might the work influence systems, practices, policies, or future conservation efforts? Scalability refers to broader influence, not project size.			

Awareness and Power			
Absent	**Emergent**	**Developing**	**Strong**
Organization demonstrates limited understanding of power dynamics and intricacies of barriers, with no openness to learning from other perspectives.	Organization demonstrates basic awareness of power dynamics and the intricacies of barriers.	Organization demonstrates a developing systems-level awareness and promotes its intent to support communities	Organization demonstrates robust systems-level awareness and commitment to sharing resources, including capital and/or access to networks.
This criterion assesses the organization's awareness of the opportunities, barriers, and power dynamics that influence its work. It considers whether the organization understands its role within a broader ecosystem, recognizes how power and access to resources shape outcomes, and demonstrates openness to learning from and collaborating with others. Reviewers may consider: Does the organization understand the intricacies of the opportunities and barriers it describes? Do they demonstrate an awareness of their position in an ecosystem of skillsets, specialties and access to power and resources? Does the organization value perspectives, experiences, and forms of expertise different from its own? Does the organization demonstrate openness to learning from, collaborating with, and supporting others in pursuit of shared goals?			

Anticipated Questions

What is the process and timing for receiving a grant?

Upon approval of a grant, OSI will send a draft grant letter and a checklist of documents. Once the grantee has provided the requested documents, confirmed the project timeline and deliverables, and executed the grant letter, OSI will disburse the full grant award at the start of the grant term.

During the grant term, grantees can expect to complete a mid-year check-in or submit a progress report. At the end of the grant term, grantees will submit a final report detailing work completed, impact, and potential next steps.

What qualifies as a neighborhood project?

Applicants may define what "neighborhood" means for their own work. The program will not impose outside definitions of neighborhood boundaries or size.

Do I have to complete lobbyist registration for Philadelphia and/or Camden?

If you anticipate interacting with local officials or influencing administrative procedures, you may be required to register and report certain activity and related expenses. Consult your advisors to confirm any lobbying compliance obligations.

Can I include the lobbying registration fee in my proposal budget?

Yes.

Can I use these funds for acquisition or stewardship implementation?

No. These funds cannot be used for land acquisition or stewardship implementation activities. However, organizations seeking support for land acquisition may be eligible for OSI's upcoming Capital Grants Program, which is expected to launch in late 2027.

Definitions

Land Protection

A set of strategies to secure land and permanently prevent its development and to ensure long-term stewardship of defined conservation values. Land protection is typically achieved through one of the following mechanisms:

Fee Simple Acquisition

The transfer of all land rights to an entity with a conservation mission, including a land trust or governmental conservation agency.

Conservation Easement

Voluntary legal agreements that extinguish the development rights while private landowners retain the ownership and certain rights. Conservation easements are held by qualified third parties, such as land trusts, municipalities, or states, which monitor annually to ensure that conservation values are upheld.

The following definitions are borrowed or adapted from the William Penn Foundation's Urban Gardens work:

Land Security

Legal or institutional protection of a parcel from development or sale, achieved through fee simple ownership, long-term lease, conservation easement, Land Bank disposition, or adverse possession.

Community

A group of people sharing a geographic area, cultural identity, or common experience. In the context of this funding opportunity, community refers to the residents, stewards, and stakeholders who are connected to a place, such as a garden or farm, and whose wellbeing is tied to its preservation.

The following definition is adapted from the Culture and Community Power Fund and Lead Local:

Community Power

Community power is the ability of those most impacted by structural inequity to join together and set agendas, shift public discourse, influence decision-making, and cultivate relationships that reinforce mutual accountability with decision-makers that change systems and advance land protection.

Strengthening community power is critical for communities that have faced historic disinvestment and exclusion, enabling them to influence the policies and systems that affect their quality of life.

Reference Copy: Application Form

All applications must be filled out and submitted through OSI's grant management platform Foundant: *https://www.grantinterface.com/Opportunity/Catalog?urlkey=openspace*

*** indicates a response is required.**

Organizational Information

Applicant Contact*

The individual from the applying organization who will communicate with Open Space Institute staff.

Character Limit: 100

Type of Organization*

The applicant must be a tax-exempt non-profit organization. If applying through a fiscal sponsor, the sponsor must be a tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

Choices

Land Trust
Other Non-Profit
Municipal Entity

Fiscal Sponsorship

If applicable, please provide the name and contact information of the non-profit organization acting as a fiscal sponsor for this grant application.

Character Limit: 1000

Date Founded*

Enter the date your organization was founded.

Character Limit: 10

Tax Exemption*

Is your entity or fiscal sponsor tax-exempt?

Choices

Yes
No

BIPOC Leadership*

How, if at all, does your organization's leadership (board and leadership staff) reflect the demographic makeup of the communities you serve? Do BIPOC individuals have decision-making power in daily operations and strategic planning?

Character Limit: 1500

Project Overview

Project Name*

Name of project.
Character Limit: 100

Short Summary*
Please provide a 3-5 sentence summary of your project.
Note: If funding is awarded, this summary may be used to describe the project publicly.
Character Limit: 500

Project Location - State*
Please choose all states that apply.
Choices
New Jersey
Pennsylvania

Project Location - Neighborhoods*
Please describe the scale of the project and the neighborhood(s) within the project area.
Character Limit: 2500

Estimated Project Start Date*
Character Limit: 10

Estimated Project End Date*
Character Limit: 10

Project Details

Project Description*
Describe your project, including proposed approach or methods, desired outcomes/deliverables, and timeline. Please name what barrier(s) your community is facing and how this proposal seeks to address it/them.
Suggested response length: 3 paragraphs or less
Character Limit: 2,000

Project Type*
Please select the Project Type that best reflects the primary focus of your proposed project. Applicants should select **Type A** if any portion of the proposed project involves advocacy activities. This designation enables OSI to accurately track and report funding directed toward advocacy-related work.

A. Advocacy/ Systems-level change: Projects focused on systems-level change that help make land acquisition/security/protection more viable.
B. Organizational Infrastructure, Strategy, and Planning: Building systems and strategies that help your organization, community, or coalition to be better set up for successful long-term ownership and stewardship of green space (such as community gardens and parks, greenway trails, etc.).

Knowledge & Experience*

What lived experience, skills, and expertise do you and your partners bring to this project? Please identify key leaders and decision-makers and describe their roles. These may include staff members of the applicant organization or partner institutions, as well as residents and other community leaders.

Suggested response length: 2 paragraphs or less
Character Limit: 1,500

Community Context*

How does this project fit within a broader vision or practice for community-centered land protection in Philadelphia or Camden? How does the project differ from or complement existing efforts and partnerships?

Suggested response length: 2 paragraphs or less
Character Limit: 1,500

Community Sharing*

How will you share the knowledge, skillsets, or benefits of the project with the wider community?

Suggested response length: 2 paragraphs or less
Character Limit: 1,500

Lasting Value*

If your project is successful, what becomes newly possible, and for whom? What lasting tools, relationships, structures, or capacities will remain after the grant period? What tangible steps, commitments, or changes would demonstrate progress toward your broader goals?

Suggested response length: 2 paragraphs or less
Character Limit: 1,500

Grant Budget and Financial Information

Amount Requested*

Please enter the amount of grant funds requested (up to $40,000).

Character Limit: 20

Estimated Project Budget*

Please note that this field should match the "total project costs" line on your uploaded Project Financial Summary form in the next question.

Character Limit: 20

Budget Form*

Please download the "**Neighborhood Conservation Grant Budget Form**" linked on the Greater Philadelphia Land Protection Program **webpage**, complete it, and upload it here. The budget template is linked in the "Resources" section at the bottom of that webpage; clicking it should prompt an automatic download of the Word document.

File Size Limit: 3 MB

Budget Narrative*

Describe the uses of funds and how your organization(s) plan to raise any outstanding project funds. While match is not required, in-kind or cash match is appreciated as an indication of the organization's commitment to the project.

Suggested response length: 2 paragraphs or less
Character Limit: 1,500

Additional Information

Is there additional information or supporting documentation you would like us to consider in reviewing your application? You may describe it here or upload attachments. You may also upload documents or letters of support from project partners or community members, though these are not required.

Character Limit: 2000 | File Size Limit: 5 MB

Budget Summary Form

Project Name:
Applicant Name:

Directions

- Detail all estimated **Project Costs** and **Funding Sources** including those that will not be covered by this grant request.
- Overhead or indirect costs of up to 15% of the project total may be included in the grant request or in the overall project budget.
- Expenses for staff salaries may be included in the grant request and/or included through in-kind contributions from your organization or other funding sources.
- **Project Costs** and **Funding Sources** should be equal. If full funding has not been secured, please indicate how you expect to secure the funding needed to complete the project.
- Add additional lines to tables as needed.

Estimated Project Costs

Staff	$
Other - please list	$
	$
Total Project Costs	$

Estimated Sources of Funds

	In hand/Pledged	**Anticipated**
OSI Neighborhood Conservation Grant Request	N/A	$
In kind	$	$
Other contributions (please list)	$	$
	$	$
	$	$