

Philadelphia & Camden Community Land Leadership Cohort

Statement of Interest

About the Program

The Greater Philadelphia Land Protection Program (GPLPP) advances land conservation, equitable access to nature, and climate resilience across the Greater Philadelphia region. Building on more than a decade of partnership between the Open Space Institute (OSI) and the William Penn Foundation, the GPLPP supports the protection of critical lands and the Foundation's goal of conserving 3,300 acres by 2035. In its first three years, OSI aims to protect 1,000 acres and support regional partners through conservation, planning, and collaborative green space initiatives.

As part of the GPLPP, OSI is convening a cohort of organizations working across the cities of Philadelphia and Camden to strengthen collaboration and advance land protection and security efforts. These convenings are designed to build relationships, facilitate peer exchange, and identify ways to address barriers to land protection and land access. Participants will engage in a series of full day convenings, focused on connection, dialogue, and shared problem-solving.

About Just Strategies

These convenings will be co-facilitated by Dwayne Wharton and the Just Strategies team, a Philadelphia-based consulting practice experienced in designing equitable, multi-stakeholder processes that build trust, navigate power dynamics, and move groups from conversation to action. For this cohort, Just Strategies will support inclusive facilitation, peer learning, and collaboration across Philadelphia and Camden's land protection and stewardship ecosystem.

Program Details

The Philly & Camden Community Land Leadership Cohort (The LLC) is designed to reduce barriers to permanent land protection in Philadelphia and Camden. Through the program, participants will engage in a combination of peer learning, facilitated convenings, technical assistance, and access to funding opportunities to help move community-informed land protection ideas toward implementation.

OSI and Just Strategies will also support participants in strengthening relationships, clarifying project ideas, identifying implementation pathways, and building the partnerships needed to advance community-informed land protection efforts.

Participation & Commitment:

The LLC will include 10-15 organizations, with 1-2 participants per organization.

Participants are expected to commit to full participation in all three convenings.

Consistent attendance is essential to support relationship-building, trust, and continuity across the cohort. This is particularly important given the program's focus on engaging thoughtfully with the historical and ongoing impacts of land loss, displacement, and disinvestment in Philadelphia and Camden.

We are intentionally building a cohort that includes:

- Organizations that have experienced historic disinvestment and face barriers to land tenure
- Organizations with the capacity, experience, or interest in holding land long-term.

A strong cohort will reflect a mix of perspectives, alongside diversity in geography, size, and approach.

Convening Date Holds:

- Interviews & Orientation: Week of September 7, 2026
- Convening 1: October 8, 2026
- Convening 2: November 12, 2026
- Convening 3: December 17, 2026

If these dates do not align with your availability, we still encourage you to stay connected. This cohort is part of a longer-term investment in land protection work in Philadelphia and Camden, and there will be future opportunities to participate and connect to the effort.

Participants should expect to:

- Attend and actively participate in all convenings. To support continuity and trust-building, organizations should designate consistent representatives who participate across the full cohort experience.
- Engage with peers and contribute to a collaborative learning environment rooted in openness, curiosity, and mutual respect.
- Be open to dialogue and learning with organizations that may differ in size, structure, geography, experience, or approach.
- Complete pre-work and follow-up between convenings, including small-group collaboration to develop and strengthen potential funding proposals.
- Honestly share relevant organizational experiences, challenges, and ideas in ways that support collective problem-solving and learning.
- Help identify opportunities for partnership, coordination, and continued engagement beyond the formal cohort sessions.

Stipends and Participation Support:

To support participation, each organization will receive a stipend. This stipend is intended to recognize participants' time and contributions and is structured with an emphasis on equitable compensation.

Organizational Budget	Stipend Amount
Under \$1 million	\$3,000
Over \$1 million	\$1,000

Program Structure

The cohort will convene for **three full-day, in-person sessions**, each designed to build on the previous and support participants at different stages of their work.

Convening 1: Grounding in Place, Trust and Purpose

Date: October 8th

Location: Philadelphia

Focus:

- Connecting as a cohort, building trust, and establishing shared agreements for a respectful, inclusive learning space.
- Grounding in place, local context, participant priorities, and the historical and ongoing impacts of land insecurity, displacement, and disinvestment.
- Surfacing participant goals, challenges, loved experiences, and key opportunities related to community-centered land protection.

Convening 2: Moving Ideas Towards Implementation

Date: November 12th

Location: Camden

Focus:

- Deepening project development with attention to community context, impact, and readiness for implementation.
- Exploring strategies, partnerships, tools, and technical assistance needs that can help move land protection work forward.

- Creating space for peer exchange, shared problem-solving, and collaboration around emerging project or funding ideas.

Convening 3: Refining Pathways and Next Steps

Timing: December 17th

Location: Philadelphia

Focus:

- Refining project pathways, partnerships, and next steps in preparation for potential Neighborhood Conservation Grant applications (due Jan 31, 2027).
- Strengthening cohort connections and identifying opportunities for continued collaboration beyond formal convenings.
- Gathering participant insights to inform future technical assistance, funding opportunities, and subsequent grant rounds.

January Office Hours

OSI and Just Strategies will offer office hours throughout January to support participants as they refine project ideas, strengthen partnerships, and prepare potential Neighborhood Conservation Grant applications ahead of the January 31 deadline.

Neighborhood Conservation Grants

Participants will have an opportunity to apply for Neighborhood Conservation grants to advance planning, partnership development, or early-stage project work that increases the likelihood of permanent land protection in the cities of Philadelphia and Camden.

To be eligible, proposed projects must contribute to a broader vision for community-centered land protection and should extend beyond a single parcel or standalone effort. Collaborative proposals are encouraged, and grant amounts will vary based on the scope and level of partnership. Awards are expected to range from \$15,000–\$40,000.

Additional eligibility criteria, application guidance, and other details will be shared in the Fall of 2026.

Please download a copy of this form to your device and remember to save your answers before closing the file. Please return to Aisha Rodriguez at arodriguez@osiny.org.

SOI Question Form

Questions marked with an asterisk () are required.*

About Your Organization

1. Tell us about your organization, and how you are working on issues related to land protection, stewardship, or land security.*

2. How would you describe your organization's current stage of work in land protection, stewardship, or land security?*

 - a. Early/Exploring
 - b. Growing/Actively Developing Projects
 - c. Established
 - d. Other (please specify)

3. Subject Expertise * *Please select all that apply*

 - a. Land Protection/Acquisition
 - b. Land Stewardship
 - c. Environmental Justice
 - d. Community Organizing
 - e. Policy/Advocacy
 - f. Technical/Legal Expertise
 - g. Fiscal Sponsorship or Organizational Infrastructure
 - h. Community Planning or Visioning
 - i. Cultural, Historical, or Place-Based Preservation
 - j. Climate Resilience, Green Space, or Open Space Planning
 - k. Partnership Development/Coalition Building
 - l. Other (*please specify*)

6. What perspective, experience, or knowledge could your organization bring to the cohort?*

7. Tell us about the individuals who would represent your organization in the cohort, including their roles and brief bios. Organizations may identify 1-2 representatives per organization. To support continuity, selected organizations will be asked to maintain consistent representatives throughout the cohort.*

- a. Primary Representative*

- b. Secondary Representative

Logistics

1. Are you available to participate in person on October 8, November 12, and December 17, 2026? *
- a. Yes
- b. No

Challenges, Approaches, & Goals

1. What challenges or barriers has your organization encountered in efforts related to land protection, stewardship, or land security?*
2. What creative, community-informed, or innovative approaches are you interested in advancing to address these barriers?*
3. What role does collaboration or partnership play in your current or future land protection work?*

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Optional: Organizational Demographics and Leadership

1. To help us build a cohort that reflects a diversity of geographies, experiences, organizational sizes, and community perspectives, please share anything you would like us to know about the composition of your leadership, staff, board, membership, or base. This question is **optional** and will be used only to support cohort composition.

Organizational Capacity/Budget *

- a. Under \$1million
- b. Over \$1million

Organizational Financials *

Please attach **one** example of your most recent and comprehensive organization financials. Please select the option below to indicate the document you have attached.

Audited Financials

Balance Sheet

Profit/Loss Statement

Form 990

Geography Served

Please complete the questions below that best describe your geography.

- a. All of Philadelphia
- b. All of Camden
- c. All of Philadelphia and Camden

Neighborhoods served:

Zip codes served: