



RATIONALE

San Diegans have a long history of pride in protecting and restoring the region's water, natural lands and air quality. In a Foundation survey of more than 30,000 residents, [Our Greater San Diego Vision](#), San Diegans throughout the region stated that a healthy, beautiful and accessible environment was a high priority. However, our [Parks for Everyone](#) report found that while more than 45 percent of San Diego County's total land area is green space, many low-income, ethnically diverse communities have limited access to parks and open spaces. There was also a strong correlation between communities with high rates of childhood obesity and low park access.

It is with these findings in mind, that The San Diego Foundation launched the [Opening the Outdoors](#) program to connect, protect and increase access to nature across the county, especially for San Diegans in underserved and park-poor communities. Across three grant cycles from 2015 to 2017, The San Diego Foundation has worked with a diverse set of donors and foundations to award approximately \$1.3 million through 33 grants for projects involving more than 50 organizations working throughout the San Diego region. Organizations have led inspiring projects protecting wild places, creating new natural amenities such as parks and trails, revitalizing canyons and vacant lots and engaging youth with otherwise limited opportunities to enjoy nature-based education and recreation. We have also partnered with others to create tools such as [Get Outside San Diego](#), a web-based platform to help San Diegans easily and quickly find and access the 1,100+ parks within our region.

Yet we know that while much has been accomplished, solutions to the challenges presented in the [Parks for Everyone](#) report are both long-term and multi-faceted. According to resources such as [Parks for All Californians](#), some 49 percent of residents in our County still live in areas with less than three acres of parks or open space per 1000 residents, and in cities such as El Cajon, Escondido, Lemon Grove, National City and parts of San Diego, that figure is much higher. Through our Opening the Outdoors program in 2018, The San Diego Foundation will continue its commitment to invest in community solutions that protect, connect and increase access to nature for today's communities and future generations, prioritizing applicants that will have a positive impact on these most park-poor communities.

PURPOSE

For the spring 2018 grants program, The Foundation will support projects/programs of organizations that clearly contribute to one or more of the following goals:

1. Create and sustain access to natural amenities in communities where access to green space is limited, as defined in resources such as the [Parks for Everyone](#) report or [Parks for All Californians](#).
2. Build community support for timely public policies or funding measures that will significantly expand protection, connection or access to wildlands and green space.
3. Connect and protect nature through conservation/restoration/acquisition of open space.

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IMPORTANT: This year, the Opening the Outdoors program will prioritize applications that:

1. Demonstrate they are developing long-lasting solutions to overcome underlying barriers preventing high-need, low-income and/or park poor populations from accessing the outdoors, with particular focus on the communities of El Cajon, Escondido, Lemon Grove, National City and neighborhoods within the City of San Diego with limited access to green space.

and/or

2. Building the capacity of their organization(s) to deliver more effective or efficient solutions to protect, connect and increase access to the outdoors.

By focusing on these core issues, we hope to make long-lasting, sustainable changes that bring us closer to reaching the goals set forth in *Our Greater San Diego Vision* and close the gaps identified in *Parks for Everyone*.

EXAMPLES

We offer the following as general examples of the types of approaches that work toward the above goals and focus area. Please note, this is not intended to be a prescriptive or an exhaustive list, nor a guarantee for funding if you apply for this type of project.

- Building **new strategic partnerships to help multiple organizations lower costs or significantly expand the reach** of programming – such as developing shared solutions to lower the cost of transportation for youth engagement trips, or “train the trainer” type efforts to reach a greater number of youth from communities with limited access to nature.
- Projects working to **streamline permitting or other regulatory barriers** to protecting, connecting or increasing access to the outdoors.
- Organizations getting involved in **timely community planning processes** that will significantly expand green space in park-poor communities, or protect critical wildlands (e.g. County of San Diego General Plan implementation, or community planning that will establish priorities for increasing access to green space and position communities for new state funding).
- Projects that **leverage significant additional resources to build new natural amenities** in park-poor areas where they don’t already exist (pocket-parks, trails that help communities safely access new canyons, etc.).
- **Strategic planning processes** with goals to significantly increase efficiency or effectiveness of programs that connect urban, low-income communities to nature.

IMPORTANT ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

The Foundation anticipates granting approximately \$400,000 through 6 to 10 grants. To be eligible:

- Nonprofits may apply for a grant between \$25,000 and \$75,000.
- Each proposal must be led by a nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status, located in and serving San Diego County.
- A 501(c)(3) organization may serve as a fiscal sponsor for another applicant to administer the grant and provide regular financial reporting to The Foundation.

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LOI deadline: 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Friday, March 9, 2018.

- Any organization may be part of more than one proposal, but may only serve as lead applicant for one proposal.
- Projects must be completed within a 12-month timeline.
- We will not fund capital campaigns, endowments, existing obligations/debt, scholarships, or projects that promote religious or political doctrine. Given our focus on building long-lasting solutions and the capacity of this sector, we will not fund one-time youth engagement trips or projects such as community gardens that do not demonstrate having other significant resources or plans in place to ensure longevity. Public agencies or schools are also not eligible to lead an application.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

We strongly encourage partnerships between nonprofits to maximize the impact of this funding. As such, with this round of funding we will continue prioritizing applications and increase scoring points for collaborative projects. Nonprofits may apply for a grant between \$25,000 and \$75,000. Projects must clearly demonstrate in the application how collaboration and/or partnership roles will be complementary and additive. Reviewers will assess partnership strength based on how the shared roles of the partners are also reflected in the budget. One organization will need to serve as lead for the purposes of submitting and managing the grant. We encourage listing all partners and their roles even if they will not receive funding in the proposed project.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

The San Diego Foundation is interested in projects that will measure progress toward the above goals through metrics such as the following. Please note we do not require each project to have measurable goals around all of the listed items, but will take these metrics into account when scoring applications:

- Acres of restored or conserved lands as a result of the project
- New natural amenities available in communities where resources are deficient (i.e. number of parks improved/expanded, miles of trail improved, etc.)
- Number and name of public policy or public funding measures which this project aims to impact
- Additional public or private funding leveraged for this project
- Number of youth from park-poor or low-income communities engaged in nature-based enhancement, education or programs through this project
- Number of residents from the community you are working in that are engaged in nature-based enhancement, education or advocacy activities
- Number of volunteers engaged during this project
- Number of organizational partners involved in implementing the project

APPLICATION PROCESS

A timeline of the grant cycle with important dates is outlined below. The San Diego Foundation reserves the right to modify these dates or any other terms or conditions set forth in these grant guidelines. This year, in order to streamline efforts and encourage broad participation in the process, we have introduced a Letter of Interest stage to the process. As seen in the timeline below, Letters of Interest (LOIs) are due by **12:00 p.m. (noon) on Friday, March 9, 2018**. LOIs submitted late or by other methods will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of all applicants to ensure that their organization meets all of the eligibility requirements prior to applying. Through the below process, a select number of organizations will be invited to submit a full proposal which will expand on the questions in the LOI.

To review LOI questions and instructions, [click here](#). All LOIs must be submitted online using the following [application link here](#) through our Smarter Select system.

IMPORTANT DATES

February 12, 2018	Grant opportunity announced
February 27, 2018	Webinar to review grant guidelines and application process for interested applicants. *Please note: No new information will be presented at this webinar but we will run through the guidelines and answer questions from interested applicants.
February 15 and 22, 2018 March 1 and 8, 2018	Foundation staff available during “office hours” from 3-5 p.m. to answer questions by phone or in-person*
March 9, 2018	Letters of Interest due online by 12:00 p.m.
March 23, 2018	Selected applicants invited to submit a full proposal
April 16, 2018	Full proposals due from selected applicants
May 9-25, 2018	Potential site visits and/or interviews with finalists**
By June 30, 2018	Grant awardees notified and grant agreements due
July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019	Grant start and end date

*Please email Everett Au at everetta@sdfoundation.org to sign up for office hours and [click here](#) to register for the webinar.

**For those applicants invited to submit a full proposal, we ask they provide as much flexibility as possible for key leaders of your project to be available during this period.



QUESTIONS?

If you would like to sign up for the webinar and/or office hours, please email Everett Au, our Environment and Thomas Murphy Fellow at everetta@sdfoundation.org to register. If you have questions regarding the application or grants program generally, please contact Everett or Nicola Hedge, Director of Environment Initiatives at nicola@sdfoundation.org.

ABOUT THE REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals will be reviewed by Foundation staff and a review committee comprised of a diverse group of community volunteers with expertise in philanthropy and the environment. The committee will evaluate proposals based on relevance to the Opening the Outdoors criteria. Reviewers adhere to a strict conflict of interest policy and other internal controls to ensure that grant funding is distributed in an objective manner based on the merits of each proposal. The committee will submit final recommendations to The San Diego Foundation's Board of Governors for final review and approval. Once funded, in place of narrative progress and final reports, grantees may be expected to share data and stories of their work for our inclusion in [LiveStories](#), a new data visualization and storytelling platform, which The San Diego Foundation is piloting.