

PROGRAM HISTORY AND PURPOSE

San Diegans consistently reaffirm findings from a Foundation-facilitated survey, *Our Greater San Diego Vision*, that a healthy, beautiful and accessible environment is a high priority for regional residents. This value builds upon a long history of pride in protecting our region's spectacular natural areas, from the beaches to the bays, mountains, canyons and desert. According to the regional park finder, [Get Outside San Diego](#), there are more than 1,100 parks within our region, highlighting the many opportunities in our region to access the spectacular natural amenities in San Diego County.

However, our [Parks for Everyone](#) (P4E) report in 2010 found that while more than 45% 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. While The San Diego Foundation is in the process of updating the data from the Parks for Everyone report, early findings show that despite strong regional programs to better connect communities to the outdoors, as a region we still have significant opportunities to build more equitable access to the outdoors for current and future generations. Indeed, according to national [ParkServe](#)® statistics, in communities such as El Cajon and Escondido, more than half of local residents live farther than a 10-minute walk to a park.

The San Diego Foundation launched the [Opening the Outdoors](#) (OTO) program in 2013 to better protect, connect and increase equitable access to nature throughout San Diego County. Since then, The San Diego Foundation has worked with a diverse set of donors and foundations to award almost \$2 million through 45 grants for projects involving more than 60 organizations working in partnership to increase San Diego's natural amenities, promote community ownership of local natural spaces and inspire the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts, as shown in the [2018 Impact Report](#).

2019 OPENING THE OUTDOORS GRANT CYCLE

The 2019 Opening the Outdoors grant cycle will continue to focus on supporting initiatives that build long-lasting solutions to overcoming the underlying barriers preventing low-income and park poor populations from accessing the outdoors. This year, upwards of \$400,000 in total funding is available to award. Applicants may request between \$25,000 and \$65,000 in funding support. Project partnerships and collaborations between nonprofits are strongly encouraged. Approximately \$75,000 of this funding must be used for capital needs to help create more green space in communities (see the eligibility section below for more information).

2019 GRANT GOALS AND PRIORITIES

For the Spring 2019 OTO grant program, TSDF will support projects that clearly contribute to one or more of the following goals:

1. Create and sustain new natural amenities in low-income communities where access to green space is most limited, as defined in resources such as the [Parks for Everyone](#) report and [Parks for All Californians](#).
2. Build community support for timely public policies or funding measures that will significantly expand more equitable access to green space in communities with greatest needs.
3. Implement programs offering repeat, reinforcing opportunities for youth from communities with low park access to positively engage in nature.

This year, the Opening the Outdoors Initiative will prioritize applications that:

1. Demonstrate they are developing long-lasting solutions to overcoming the underlying barriers preventing low-income, park poor populations from accessing the outdoors, with a particular focus on the communities of El Cajon, Escondido, Lemon Grove, National City and other areas of San Diego County with limited access to green space;
2. Are led by organizations or partnerships with a well-established history of leadership in the community they are serving.

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 the [Parks for Everyone](#) report.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

The Foundation anticipates granting upwards of \$400,000 through 8 to 12 grants. To be eligible:

- Each proposal must be led by a nonprofit with 501(c)(3) public charity status, located in and serving San Diego County.
- A 501(c)(3) public charity may serve as a fiscal sponsor for another applicant to administer the grant and provide regular financial reporting to The Foundation.
- 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 - 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 also 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 their longevity into the future. Given limited funding, this grant opportunity is also not intended to fund programs of universities or large cultural institutions not based in communities with low park access.
- For the 2019 OTO grant cycle, The Foundation has \$75,000 in funding specifically reserved for “capital” expenses (i.e. funding spent to buy, maintain or improve fixed assets such as buildings, vehicles, equipment or land). If you anticipate your project having any capital expenses, please be sure to mention in the appropriate question in your LOI. If invited to submit a full proposal, you will need to identify which expenses are capital in your budget.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

We believe that intentional, strategic partnerships can be essential to maximizing the impact and value of this funding. As was the case in past OTO grant cycles, we will continue prioritizing applications with thoughtful collaborations and partnerships in place. Nonprofits and their partners may apply for a grant between \$25,000 and \$65,000. A partnership is defined by shared roles and a shared budget, where at least one-third (no upper limit) of the budget is going to partner(s) rather than the lead applicant.

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LOI deadline: 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Wednesday, March 6, 2019.

One organization will need to serve as lead for the purposes of submitting and managing the grant. Projects must clearly demonstrate in the application how the collaboration and/or partnership roles will be complementary and additive. We encourage you to list all collaborators 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 towards the above goals through metrics. Please note we do not require each project to have measurable goals around all of these, but will take these metrics into account when scoring applications:

- New natural amenities created as a result of the project (i.e. number of parks improved/expanded, native plants installed, miles of trail improved, etc.)
- Number of youth from park-poor or low-income communities engaged in nature-based enhancement, education or other programs through this project
- Number of community residents engaged in nature-based enhancement, education or other programs through this project
- Number of volunteers engaged through this project
- Name of public policy or public funding measures that this project aims to impact
- Amount of additional public or private funding leveraged for this project
- Acres of restored or conserved lands as a result of the project
- Number of organizational partners involved in implementing the project

FY19 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. To streamline efforts and encourage broad participation in the process, we are continuing to include a Letter of Interest (LOI) stage in the application process. As seen in the timeline below, LOIs are due by **12:00 p.m. (noon) on March 6, 2019** through the Smarter Select system linked below. 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. For instance, last year based on interest and budget, approximately half of the 40 organizations submitting LOIs were invited to submit proposals, and approximately half of those submitting full proposals were funded.

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

IMPORTANT DATES

February 7, 2019	FY19 OTO grant guidelines released requesting letters of interest
February 21, 2019 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.	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. Click here to register.
February 19, 26, and March 4, 2019*	Foundation staff available during “office hours” from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. to answer questions by phone or in-person
March 6, 2019	Letters of Interest due online by 12:00 p.m.
By March 25, 2019	Selected applicants invited to submit a full proposal
April 15, 2019	Full proposals due from invited applicants by 12:00 p.m.
May 13-24, 2019	Potential site visits and/or interviews with finalists**
By July 1, 2019	Grant awardees notified and grant agreements due
July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020	Grant start and end date

*Please email Everett Au at EverettA@sdfoundation.org to register for the office hours.

**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 have questions regarding the application process, grant program in general, or want to sign up for office hours, please email Everett Au, Environment and Thomas Murphy Fellow, at EverettA@sdfoundation.org or (619) 235-2300.

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 listed above. 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 Board of Governors for final review and approval. Once funded, grantees will be asked to submit mid-year progress and final reports.