



## NRPA Sustainability in Practice Program Application Information

### Overview

Park and recreation (P&R) professionals plan, manage, and maintain over 11 million acres of public parks and green spaces across the country. However, only 14% of agencies currently operate under their own sustainability plan. P&R professionals have the opportunity to serve as leaders in their area, integrating community-driven climate solutions towards a healthy, more resilient future for generations to come. Strong strategic partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) are a critical part of this process, facilitating access to resources, engaging park users, influencing elected leaders, and securing funding for sustainability plans.

**NRPA's Sustainability in Practice program** is a 16-week immersive, cohort-style program for rural and suburban P&R professionals to participate in alongside a partner community-based organization (CBO). Whether ready to take action or uncertain where to begin, park agencies with a vested interest in equitable environmental resilience are invited to apply to receive technical assistance, practical training, and peer networking opportunities to develop and implement community-driven sustainability practices at their parks.

As catalysts for positive change, NRPA is poised to provide guidance toward park-specific sustainability best practices, cost-effective solutions, and cross-sector collaboration. This elevates the essential role P&R professionals in advancing solutions and reimagining the systems that perpetuate climate and health disparities, building stronger, more vibrant, and resilient communities where everyone thrives.

### Program Goals

1. Provide guidance, frameworks, and resources for park professionals and CBO partners through dynamic virtual learning sessions to facilitate the creation of actionable, community-driven sustainability plans and practices
2. Build and strengthen relationships between park agencies, community partners, and other key stakeholders to support resilient and strategic planning and implementation
3. Facilitate opportunities for peer learning, engagement with subject-matter experts, and real-time technical assistance to increase capacity of park professionals to serve as stewards for sustainability actions at their park agency

### Value & Benefits

Through bi-weekly workshops led by NRPA and other P&R experts, participants will expand their network of dynamic professionals and gain practical tools including frameworks, templates, assessments, and new ways of thinking that allow for impactful environmental wins and long-term strategic changes.

The Sustainability in Practice program dedicates time for P&R professionals and CBO partners to strengthen their relationships, explore park-based climate action opportunities, and align efforts to



best serve their local community and successfully involve them in decision-making processes at parks.

NRPA is offering this program free of charge to park agencies selected to participate. Additionally, park professionals can receive up to 0.3CEU for participating in the program and CBO partners of the selected park agencies will be awarded a stipend of \$10,000 to support their collaborative participation in the program. They are encouraged to utilize these funds towards furthering partnership and programming efforts with park agencies.

NRPA's Sustainability in Practice program, supported by The JPB Foundation, aims to advance community-driven, systems-level strategies for equitable environmental resilience through public parks and recreation. NRPA believes parks play a key role in advancing equitable environmental and social resiliency that improves communities and ensures they can meet current and future challenges.

### **What To Expect**

- 10 park agencies + 10 community-based organization partners per cohort (20-25 participants)
- Eight live, 3-hour virtual workshop sessions hosted bi-weekly over four months, led by NRPA and subject matter experts covering topics such as: attainable park-specific sustainability actions, equitable planning frameworks and assessment principles, best practices for strategic relationships and capacity building, collaborative evaluation tools and authentic marketing techniques
- One one-on-one coaching session for agencies and their CBO partner with NRPA staff and/or subject matter experts to offer tailored advice and support with executing goals, strengthening partner relationships, and overcoming obstacles
- Asynchronous trainings, professional development, peer-to-peer support, and networking opportunities offered as optional additional support
- \$10,000 stipend for each participating Community Based Organization (CBO) partner to support their time and collaboration with park agency to strengthen relationships and move towards their collective goal
- Opportunities for national visibility through NRPA and partner publications

### **Participant Requirements**

- At least one representative from each awarded park agency as well as one representative from their partner Community Based Organization must attend and participate in all eight sessions of the cohort, as well as the one-on-one coaching session.

#### **Session Dates (Wednesdays)**

January 22, 2025 - 1-4pm ET  
February 5, 2025 - 1-4pm ET  
February 19, 2025 - 1-4pm ET  
March 5, 2025 - 1-4pm ET  
March 19, 2025 - 1-4pm ET  
April 2, 2025 - 1-4pm ET  
April 16, 2025 - 1-4pm ET  
April 30, 2025 - 1-4pm ET



**Notes:** Post-Program Assessment focus group will be held on Thursday, May 1<sup>st</sup> from 1-2pm ET. Coaching sessions will be scheduled individually with park agency & CBO partners in March-April.

- Each partnership is responsible for participating in NRPA's evaluation efforts including a pre- and post-program assessment as well as a short survey after each session to ensure program growth and iteration.

### **Who Should Apply?**

We welcome P&R professionals at all stages of their sustainability, equity, and resilience journeys. We are looking to provide resources and technical assistance to those that are in a position to operationalize a plan, pivot to overcome unexpected internal or external challenges or ready to start the work of meaningfully engaging key community stakeholders as true partners but unsure where or how to move forward. We are focusing on Park and Recreation agencies in rural, suburban, and other areas beyond the top 100 population cities that are ready to take the leap towards sustainable and equitable planning and practices with their community partners.

### **Eligibility**

The primary applicant must be a local government agency that manages parks and recreation services (e.g., municipal park and recreation department, tribal recreation department, public works department that manages parks and recreation etc.) or affiliated 501c(3) non-profit organization.

### **Application Process**

Applications are open for 8 weeks and announced within one month of the application deadline. Candidates may be contacted via phone or email prior to selection with specific questions.

**Note: Deadline to submit application is November 15, 2024 at 11:59pm PST.**

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Application Open	September 23, 2024
Application Closed	November 15, 2024
Selected Applicants Announced	January 9, 2025
First Cohort Session	January 22, 2025
Final Cohort Session	April 30, 2025



## Documentation

In addition to the application, you will need to submit:

- Statement of Commitment completed by the park agency's selected community-based organization (CBO) partner, received in pdf **or** audio file format using the template provided. Note: Only one CBO partner can apply per park agency. If a written or audio statement is not possible, please contact [resilience@nrpa.org](mailto:resilience@nrpa.org) for more accessible submission options.
- Optional Supplemental Documentation: Agencies are encouraged to share any relevant websites, articles, formal plans, partnership agreements, or other media forms highlighting past or current collaborations between park agencies and their selected CBO partner.

## Review Process

NRPA will conduct a two-part review process. Reviewers will complete implicit bias training ahead of the review process to ensure all applications are fairly judged. The first round of reviews will be based on the application itself including:

- Clear interest and commitment to advance community-driven environmental resilience practices and plans
- Demonstration of an organizational commitment to prioritize justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Clear alignment between park agency and community-based organization's strategic priorities and a mutual commitment to strengthening relationships

The second round of reviews will include objective demographic, geographic, and community metrics (including CDC SVI score, ParkServe data, and local plans and policies provided by the applicant) that will aid in the identification of a diverse cohort of finalists.

## Equity Statement

NRPA strives for a future where all people have access to the benefits of quality parks and recreation. When we achieve equity, all people thrive. NRPA recognizes we are all on a journey to learning and understanding justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion and how our personal and organizational actions, practices, and policies impact Black, Indigenous, people of color, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities. Equity is a core pillar of NRPA, and we welcome the opportunity to support BIPOC-led agencies and nonprofit partners.

## Questions?

If your questions are not answered in this document or the Sustainability in Practice webpage, please contact us at [resilience@nrpa.org](mailto:resilience@nrpa.org).



## Application Questions

1. Select your eligibility category:
  - a. Municipal Park & Recreation Agency
  - b. Tribal Recreation Department
  - c. Public Works Department managing a park
  - d. 501c3 managing a park
  - e. Other (please specify)
2. Park Agency Name
3. Primary Contact(PC) First Name
4. PC Last Name
5. PC Title
6. PC Email Address
7. Primary Participant Name and Email (if different than above)
8. Agency Head Full Name (If different from above)
9. Agency Head Title (Director, Executive Director, CEO, President, etc.)
10. Agency Head Email Address
11. Agency Head Phone Number
12. What municipality and state are you located in?
13. What is the population size of your municipality?
14. How did you hear about this opportunity?

## Community-Based Organization (CBO) Partner

1. CBO Name
2. CBO Primary Contact Full Name
3. CBO PC Email Address
4. CBO PC Title
5. Primary Participant Name and Email (if different than above)
6. Please describe the relationship between your park agency and community-based organization partner.
  - a. Length of partnership
    - i. 0-6 months
    - ii. 6-12 months
    - iii. 1-3 years
    - iv. 4+ years
  - b. List of current or past collaborative projects (Please share 1-3 current or past examples of projects, plans, policies or practices executed collaboratively between the park agency and community-based organization partner. Please outline the mutual benefits and process of working together.) (250 word max)
  - c. What skills, knowledge, or resources do you hope to gain from this program? (please choose your top 3 priorities)
    - i. Types of actions parks can take to be more sustainable
    - ii. Examples of community-led sustainability plans
    - iii. Park sustainability assessment tools and techniques
    - iv. How to support and include community members into decision-making processes



- v. What equity means for parks and why it's important for sustainability
  - vi. What my community's needs and priorities are
  - vii. Reaching other demographics (age, race, gender, class, ability, etc)
  - viii. Effectively collect, interpret, evaluate, and share meaningful data
  - ix. Authentic storytelling to amplify stakeholder engagement
  - x. Other (please specify)
- d. Do you have a formalized agreement with your CBO partner?
    - i. Yes
    - ii. No
  - e. (Optional) Other information you'd like to share regarding the relationship between park agency and CBO partner? (150-word max)
7. Statement of Commitment: CBO partners should download, complete, and upload the Statement of Commitment.

### Program Details

1. Does at least one member of your team have the capacity to participate in all eight sessions of this cohort program?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
2. Does your agency currently have a sustainability plan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
    - (If yes,)** Where are you in the process of executing this plan?
      - i. We are currently executing the plan smoothly
      - ii. We are trying to execute on this plan, but facing barriers
      - iii. We have a plan, but are not sure how to begin implementing it
      - iv. Other (please specify)
    - (If no,)** What has prevented you from implementing a sustainability plan?
      - v. Nothing, we are in the process of creating one now
      - vi. Capacity (staff time, skills, resources) has been a barrier to creating a plan
      - vii. Funding has been a barrier to creating a plan
      - viii. Political climate and/or community priorities have been a barrier to creating a plan
      - ix. Other (please specify)
  
3. Please describe your agency's current relationship with your local community. (Check all that apply)
  - a. Our community members feel empowered to share ideas and provide feedback, and play an important role in decision making at the park
  - b. Our community members want to be more involved in decision-making at our park, but we are unsure how to engage them
  - c. We provide surveys and other ways for community members to offer feedback, and we have made changes as a result of their responses
  - d. We provide surveys and other ways for community members to offer feedback, but we haven't implemented their suggestions yet



- e. We are not sure of the needs or interests of our community members, and are struggling to engage them in activities, events, and programs
  - f. Other (please specify)
4. Provide a brief description of your agency's top sustainability and/or equity-related goals or priorities for the next 1-3 years. (250-word max)
- a. How do you see the Sustainability in Practice program supporting those goals? (250-word max)
5. What skills, knowledge, or resources do you hope to gain from this program? (please choose your top 3 priorities)
- o Types of actions parks can take to be more sustainable
  - o Examples of community-led sustainability plans
  - o Park sustainability assessment tools and techniques
  - o How to support and include community members into decision-making processes
  - o What equity means for parks and why it's important for sustainability
  - o What my community's needs and priorities are
  - o Reaching other demographics (age, race, gender, class, ability, etc)
  - o Effectively collect, interpret, evaluate, and share meaningful data
  - o Authentic storytelling to amplify stakeholder engagement
  - o Other (please specify)
6. Please describe your agency's commitment to prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging and how you hope to amplify that commitment through this program. (150-word max)
7. After this program is over, does your agency have the capacity to build upon the relationships and best practices discussed throughout this program?
- a. Yes
  - b. No (please explain)
  - c. Not sure (please explain)
8. Any Questions for us?

### **Voluntary Demographic Questions**

Demographic information will only be used for the purpose of supporting membership engagement. As an organization, we are committed to equity, inclusion and diversity. By collecting this voluntary data, it furthers our goal of ensuring we are representative of all of our members. Providing the requested demographic information is optional. Under NRPA's Privacy Policy, <https://www.nrpa.org/about-national-recreation-and-park-association/the-fine-print/>, all information provided is confidential and will not be shared with unauthorized parties. Information



on your demographics will only be shared in the aggregate (no names and signifiers attached) in order to better understand NRPA membership and leadership information as a whole.

Please share the following demographic information for primary participant from your **park agency**.

1. What are your pronouns?
  - He/him/his (“He is a parker”)
  - She/her/hers (“She is a parker”)
  - They/them/theirs (“They are a parker”)
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not listed (please specify)
2. Birthdate (MM/DD/YYYY)
3. Which of the following best describes you? Select all that apply:
  - African American/Black
  - Asian or Asian American
  - Hispanic, Latino/a/e, or Spanish origin
  - Middle Eastern or North African
  - Native American/Indigenous
  - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Two or more races/Multiracial
  - Prefer not to say
  - Unsure
  - Not listed (please specify)
4. Please indicate if you identify as a person with a disability or differently abled:
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to say

Please share the following demographic information for the primary participant from your **community-based organization**.

5. What are your pronouns?
  - He/him/his (“He is a parker”)
  - She/her/hers (“She is a parker”)
  - They/them/theirs (“They are a parker”)
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not listed (please specify)
6. Birthdate (MM/DD/YYYY)
7. Which of the following best describes you? Select all that apply:
  - African American/Black





- Asian or Asian American
  - Hispanic, Latino/a/e, or Spanish origin
  - Middle Eastern or North African
  - Native American/Indigenous
  - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Two or more races/Multiracial
  - Prefer not to say
  - Unsure
  - Not listed (please specify)
8. Please indicate if you identify as a person with a disability or differently abled:
- Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to say