



Families beat the Texas summer heat by enjoying a refreshing day at the pool. Photo courtesy of City of Tyler Parks and Recreation.

## Policy Overview

NRPA's Equitable Grantmaking Policy aims to ensure that our grant opportunities (e.g., funding, training and in-kind donations) positively benefit communities — particularly communities that have historically experienced disinvestment by government and philanthropy. We accomplish this by investing in and championing the park and recreation profession as a catalyst of positive change for equity, climate-readiness and overall well-being.

NRPA seeks a future where all people have access to the benefits of quality parks and recreation. We recognize that we are all on a journey to learning and understanding justice, diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as how our personal and organizational power, actions, practices and policies impact Black, Indigenous, people of color, low-income individuals and historically underrepresented populations. Through this policy, NRPA is committed to centering equity within our grantmaking processes to challenge unfair systems and leverage the power of parks and recreation to create inclusive, climate-resilient and thriving communities where everyone can experience belonging, well-being and joy.

NRPA's Equitable Grantmaking Policy provides consistent, standardized practices and procedures that are centered in equity. These policies and procedures relate to all aspects of the grantmaking process at NRPA — from grant development through evaluation — while seeking to move our grantmaking processes and relationships from transactional to relational. The policy is paired with a set of internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure implementation of the policy. The policy addresses grant development, application development, promotion of grant opportunities, review of applications, grantee selection and grant administrative requirements.



River rafting is a fun way to explore the scenic beauty of the Mississippi River. Photo courtesy of Three Rivers Park District (Minnesota).

## Grant Development

When developing grant opportunities, NRPA will prioritize the needs and interests of park and recreation professionals and community-based allies, in alignment with the primary funder's priorities, using the best strategies to accomplish organizational goals. This includes a commitment to ensuring grant goals and activities are co-created with grantees to challenge power imbalances and provide space for shared learning and growth. This also includes making decisions about the type of grant opportunity available, which may include:

- Restricted or unrestricted funds
- Capital improvement funding
- Programmatic support and training grants
- Planning and systems-change grants
- Emergency relief grants

Length of grant, amount of grant, grant restrictions or conditions are also determined in the development of a grant opportunity. No matter the type of opportunity, NRPA will approach grantmaking with the goal of building long-term, impactful partnerships with grantees and partners.

## Application Development

NRPA will strive to make every grant application inclusive, accessible, approachable and as streamlined as possible. NRPA's grantmaking team will adhere to the following guiding principles for application development:

- Clearly and explicitly state grant goals and objectives, scoring criteria, eligibility requirements and applicant or geographical preferences.
- Use inclusive and accessible language in alignment with our [Equity Language Guide](#) and eliminate jargon and unnecessary terminology.
- Minimize prescriptive requirements and expectations of grantees.
- Use equitable criteria for grant application questions, data collection and evaluation in alignment with NRPA's [Equity Action Plan](#).
- Offer direct support and resources to assist applicants with submitting their best proposal.
- Provide an option for alternative responses to applications that does not rely on written word.
- Provide the opportunity for applicants to share feedback regarding the application process.

## **Recruitment and Promotion of Grant Opportunity**

NRPA will increase awareness of grant opportunities and reach communities that are underrepresented, have experienced a history of disinvestment, are geographically diverse, and/or are led by and serve historically disenfranchised populations. NRPA will work with our marketing and engagement department to develop a comprehensive outreach strategy for each funding opportunity, ensuring the use of inclusive verbiage and language in promotional materials. NRPA will leverage relationships with partners to expand beyond our immediate reach and encourage applications from community-based organizations that partner with park and recreation agencies to implement grants.

## **Reviewer Selection and Training**

To ensure fairness and eliminate bias in the review process, all applications will be reviewed by more than one reviewer (internal and external). For awards larger than \$100,000, NRPA's grantmaking team will create a diverse panel of qualified reviewers that includes park and recreation professionals and external allies. NRPA will host a reviewer training that details grant goals and requirements, reviews the scoring rubric, and addresses implicit bias in the review process.

## **Grantee Selection**

NRPA will implement a transparent, consistent and fair application review process that results in the equitable selection of grantees across all projects. This includes ensuring applications are reviewed by multiple reviewers, providing clear scoring criteria to applicants and reviewers, using standard qualitative and quantitative data collection measures and utilizing a defined method for scoring applications. NRPA also commits to providing timely updates and clear communications to grant applicants and giving feedback on unfunded applications, if requested.

## **Grant Administrative Requirements**

NRPA will streamline and simplify grantee administrative reporting and evaluation requirements to reduce burden and increase grantee capacity to focus on project priorities. We will work with grantees to co-create goals, action plans and evaluation plans, and we will continuously assess data collection and reporting methods, deploying new and innovative approaches as available. NRPA will ensure grantees benefit from the reporting and evaluation processes, acknowledging their contributions, sharing data, outcomes and tools that are developed, and supporting their storytelling and advocacy goals.

## **Continuous Improvement and Transparency**

In alignment with NRPA's core values of trust and continuous learning, we will regularly seek feedback from grantees, applicants and reviewers on our grantmaking practices. NRPA will be transparent with our stakeholders in sharing lessons learned through the grantmaking experience and commit to reviewing and updating the Equitable Grantmaking Policy and SOPs every three years.