



Grants to Advance Systems and Policy Change to Benefit New York City, Long Island, and Westchester

Request for Proposals

Background

New York City's five counties (Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, and Richmond), Long Island's two counties (Nassau and Suffolk), and Westchester County may appear very different from one another. Long Island's counties are perceived as affluent, New York City is viewed as an incredibly economically diverse but challenging place to live, and Westchester is often described as idyllic for middle- and upper-income class families. However, across these eight downstate counties, 12.4 million residents face similar challenges including a lack of affordable housing or difficulty accessing high-quality, affordable healthcare and childcare.

Many of the pressing issues affecting the lives of people across the eight downstate counties are systemic—the result of outdated and/or inequitable public policies, laws, and institutional practices. Solving them requires action at the regional and state level. State agencies, authorities, and commissions control many functions that affect residents of all eight downstate counties, including rent regulation, zoning, Medicaid spending, the public university system, transit, and others. Advocacy efforts that are informed and led by diverse constituencies across the region can create systemic change and widespread benefits for all residents.

The New York Community Trust (The Trust) was founded in 1924 and is the community foundation for the eight downstate counties. Our mission is to foster and engage in enduring and innovative philanthropy and our vision is equitable and thriving communities throughout New York City, Long Island, and Westchester. While our grants typically focus on the needs of one of the three downstate regions, over the years, our three offices have joined forces—usually opportunistically—to address issues of common concern to all downstate residents, such as improving public transit, developing sustainable food systems, and enhancing supports and services for people with disabilities and older adults.

The Opportunity

This year we are issuing a request for proposals (RFP) for nonprofits engaged in state-level advocacy around a major issue affecting the lives and well-being of people across the eight downstate counties of New York City, Long Island, and Westchester. Funding can be used to address any issues within The Trust's Healthy Lives, Promising Futures, or Thriving Communities categories, except for projects that focus on environmental issues, as our work in that area is already regionally focused. The

Trust expects to award up to five 18-month grants totaling \$1 million for advocacy projects aimed at bringing about policy and systems change. Grants will range from \$200,000 to \$350,000.

Grants from this RFP will assist organizations engaged in advocacy and policy change efforts over a couple of state-level budgetary cycles. “Grantees can use up to a total of 10 percent of their grant award for lobbying activities (the 10 percent covers both direct and/or grassroots lobbying). Proposals that enhance existing collaboration among nonprofits to address a policy or systems issue will be considered, although a collaborative project is not required to be considered. Examples of previous regional advocacy work supported by Trust grants are below:

- Community Health Care Association of New York State: [to establish New York’s first medical assistant apprenticeship program in community health centers.](#)
- Make the Road New York: [to advocate for a state unemployment insurance program for undocumented workers.](#)
- CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy: [to advocate for healthier, sustainable, and equitable food distribution in downstate New York.](#)

Applicant Eligibility

- ✓ Be a nonprofit incorporated in New York State and recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) or a fiscally sponsored program of such a nonprofit.
- ✓ Be headquartered in one of the eight downstate counties.
- ✓ Have a track record of advocating successfully for policy or systems change at the state level.
- ✓ Have an advocacy project that will address needs of communities across New York City, Long Island, and Westchester.

NOTE: If the applicant organization operates in a single county, the proposed project must nonetheless affect or influence the entire eight-county region and work collaboratively/have existing relationships with nonprofits in the other counties.

Projects given priority are those that:

- ✓ Have potential to improve on a specific policy or systemic issue in the next two state-level budget and/or legislative cycles.
- ✓ Have clear activities well-designed to achieve the project’s goals in the grant period.
- ✓ Create systemic change and tangible benefits for residents of the eight downstate counties.
- ✓ Are informed by and inclusive of residents who typically do not have access to policy and/or decision makers.

Grants from this RFP will not be awarded for:

- ⊗ Planning and partnership development for a new campaign.
- ⊗ A campaign or advocacy effort that already has Trust support.
- ⊗ Efforts that solely expand an existing campaign in one or more of the eight downstate counties to additional downstate counties.
- ⊗ Programs focused on the environment (The Trust’s ongoing environment grant program offers regional grantmaking opportunities).

Proposal Materials

A complete proposal includes a narrative, project budget, organization operating budget, and a board list. Details are below.

Proposal narrative

Please prepare a narrative of three to five pages responding to the following questions:

1. What is your organization’s background (history, mission, main activities) and credentials for carrying out the project for which you are requesting funding?
2. What specific policy or systemic issue do you plan to address? How does the issue affect the residents of New York City, Long Island, and Westchester?
3. How does your project address the issue across all eight counties? Have you already worked across the eight counties, or will this be new work for you?
4. What is the proposed project? Please include:
 - a. Goals—what do you aim to accomplish with grant funds?
 - b. Planned activities—what activities will you undertake to accomplish the project goals? Be specific and describe concrete actions and timeline.
 - c. Collaborating organizations, if any, and the role they will play in the project.
 - d. Expected results—what specific policy or systems change do you expect to see because of the project? (Bullet points are fine.)
 - e. How will you ensure advocacy wins are implemented effectively in each region?

Project budget

Include an itemized project budget that reflects the full expenses to carry out the project (as opposed to just the amount requested), and income. Include other received and/or anticipated funding sources for the project.

Annual operating budget

Provide your organization’s current operating budget—include income and expenses.

List of board of directors, including professional/non-board affiliations

Provide a list of your board of directors with their professional/non-board affiliations. The Trust requires that a board have at least 4 independent members; all board members should be unrelated; and no more than one board member should be a paid staff member. Submissions that are using a fiscal sponsor should provide a board list for only the funds administrator/fiscal sponsor.

NOTE: The project budget, organization’s operating budget, and list of board of directors do not count toward the five-page maximum for the proposal narrative.

How to Submit

Please gather all proposal materials **into a single PDF file (not more than 25 MB)** and be ready to upload and submit them before applying online.

1. Go to The Trust’s Grant Portal at <https://proposals.nycommunitytrust.org/>.
2. Click on the “Apply Here” button at the bottom of the page.

3. Under “Available RFPs,” find “*Eight Counties: Grants to Advance Systems and Policy Change to Benefit New York City, Long Island, and Westchester*” and click “Apply.”
4. Complete the cover sheet questions and upload your proposal materials (a single PDF no more than 25 MB).
5. Click “Submit” to submit your application materials.

Application Deadline

Proposals must be submitted electronically no later than **5pm on Thursday, June 20th** using The New York Community Trust’s Grants Portal (<https://proposals.nycommunitytrust.org/>). The portal can also be reached using [The Trust’s website](#). Applicants are not guaranteed an award and may not receive the full amount requested in their proposal. The Trust may request additional information to learn more about the proposed project ahead of any grant award.

Information Sessions (virtual)

The Trust will hold two identical hour-long virtual information sessions for interested applicants. Applicants are not required to attend a session before submitting a proposal. The sessions are intended to answer questions applicants may have about the RFP. Please limit participation to no more than two people per organization at a session. If interested in attending a session, please email Marc Schell at msc@nyct-cfi.org to get the Zoom link for an information session.

- Thursday, May 23rd from 10 am to 11am (email Marc to attend session by Tuesday, May 21st)
- Wednesday, May 29th from 9 am to 10am (email Marc to attend session by Friday, May 24th)

The two information sessions will be recorded and made available upon request (contact Marc).

Award Notification

Notification of award status (acceptance and declination) will be made by email in October 2024. Grant recipients will be required to provide ACH (electronic banking) information via a secure DocuSign process. Please add noreply@nycommunitytrust.org and docusign@nyct-cfi.org to your address book so that our communications do not get caught in your spam filters.

Questions

Barbara Taveras, Special Projects Officer, is the primary contact for questions about the RFP. You may contact Barbara through email: bat@nyct-cfi.org.

(RFP issued May 13, 2024)