



## **Establishing a Groundwork Trust in Your Community 2019 Questions and Answers**

**During and following our June 4<sup>th</sup> “Establishing a Groundwork Trust in Your Community” webinar, we received a number of questions. We have cataloged those questions and answers below and will continue to update this document with questions we received.**

**If you have questions about establishing a Groundwork Trust in your community, please contact Stacey Moran, Groundwork USA’s Director of Operations, [stacey@groundworkusa.org](mailto:stacey@groundworkusa.org).**

### **Groundwork Model**

**Q:** Can a 501c3 create and implement a Groundwork USA project within the boundary of a National Park unit? What if NPS is not the land owner? What if NPS is the land owner?

**A:** Groundwork USA is a model, not a project. As such, Groundwork Trusts carry out all Groundwork programming and projects. While we may collaborate with other non-profits, we do have these partners carry out our projects. With regards to the National Park, Groundwork often implements projects on National Park lands to achieve shared goals. These projects are done in collaboration with National Park service Parks, Monuments and Recreation Areas. Additionally, in the LOI we are looking for substantial opportunities transforming underutilized lands into parks and green spaces; one project within the boundary of a National Park unit would not be considered “substantial”.

**Q:** Does it need to be called "Groundwork Trust" or can it be "Local Nonprofit Name, a Groundwork Trust Initiative". Our current program has its own name and profile in the community, and I would hope that it can remain the most prominent.

**A:** A Trust must adopt the Groundwork name, logo and mission. The purpose of requiring this adoption is, (1) to build the brand recognition nationally in order to see the benefits of that recognition locally and (2) to create a cohesive Network of similarly situated and represented Trust.

**Q:** Can a GW chapter encompass more than one city?

**A:** Yes. In fact, we have a couple of existing Groundwork Trusts that have a geographic scope that beyond the bounds of one city. For example, Groundwork Rhode Island does a

lot of work in Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls. Groundwork Elizabeth concentrates most of its work in Elizabeth, NJ but does a lot of work in Union County.

Communities should consider the capacity to address challenges across multiple cities, the challenges that may arise in working with multiple local governments and the ability to create a Steering Committee that is representative of all communities the potential Trust intends to work within.

**Q:** What is the expectation from the trust after the 3-4 year establishment period?

**A:** The Groundwork Trust would have likely exhausted all of their “capacity building funds” that each new Trust receives from our federal partners, National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. During these 3-4 years, it is expected that the Trust is creating the foundation of an organization that is financially and organizationally healthy. Groundwork has developed sustainability thresholds must be met during the first few years of establishing a Trust. These are reviewed with the new Trust during the Feasibility Study phase.

**Q:** We're interested in establishing a park/wilderness area/ recreational space for a park-poor area in Central California. Work has been done to identify area, meet with land owners (public water company), and NPS RTCA has been out to site and suggested groundwork. The question is, can/should GWUSA funds be used to establish a "park"?

**A:** Groundwork is a model and a Network of Trusts, not a funding source or project. We invest in communities for the long term. While funds received by the local Trust could potentially be used to develop a park, we do not specifically fund communities to solely develop parks.

**Q:** How many trusts are there currently?

**A:** The Groundwork Network is currently 20 Trusts strong will another in the works in Kansas City, KS!

## **Funding**

**Q:** Can the ratio of public and private funding commitments be adjusted? \$10k public and \$35k private?

**A:** No, these cannot be adjusted. Groundwork USA requires a \$35,000/year for three years funding commitment from the local government. This ensures the local government is committed to supporting the Trust, recognizes the benefit to the City and is a committed partner in the work. The \$10,000/year for three years funding commitment required from

a private source is required to ensure the local Trust begins to establish a funding relationship in the local community and begins to create a funding portfolio.

**Q:** Can public contribution be in the form of staff time, or does it have to be financial?

**A:** With regards to local government contribution, the \$35,000/year for three years is required. It cannot be in the form of staff time.

**Q:** How is private support defined?

**A:** The private \$10,000/year for three years funding commitment can be from a Foundation -Family, Corporate, Community, etc. – or Corporation.

**Q:** Can the funding from the local government be allocated with a specific programmatic purpose (i.e., moving out a relevant program from City Hall to the newly created Groundwork Trust), or would the letter of commitment need to be completely flexible/unassigned?

**A:** The local government funding commitment is required to (1) support the newly established Trust during its early years and (2) to ensure commitment and investment from the local government for establishing a Groundwork Trust locally. To that end, it is not typical that funding is allocated to a specific programmatic purpose.

**Q:** Can the public contribution be made by a coalition of several local governments?

**A:** This should not be an issue as long as all of the governments are committed to a financial commitment of \$35,000/year for three years collectively. A local community should consider if they are able to commit to working in multiple cities as this would likely be required should multiple local governments contribute financially to a new Trust.

**Q:** How is the Trust funded after the establishment period? At what point are funds available for projects rather than operations?

**A:** All Groundwork Trusts are independent 501c3s. As such, they are responsible for building their own development and fundraising strategies and efforts. Initial launch and capacity building funds are meant to support and supplement funds gained by the local Trust. Groundwork USA does, at times, provide funding for specific projects that advance the Groundwork Network; however, these funds would not come close to supporting a Trusts' programmatic agenda and should not be relied upon for programs and projects.

### **Request for Proposals Process**

**Q:** When talking about the feasibility study I thought I heard Stacey say something about “not being a good idea if the initiative was being undertaken by an existing organization”?

**A:** Stacey mentioned that it would not be a good idea to establish a Groundwork Trust in a community where there are existing organizations already doing the work a Groundwork Trust would accomplish. There must be a need or gap that the Groundwork Trust would fulfill.

**Q:** Would it be possible for the presenter to provide the timeline with rough month/year milestones for the process?

**A:** It is best to consult the request for proposals located on the [Groundwork USA website](#). Below is a quick timeline:

- Letters of interest due July 31, 2019
- Notifications of selections for Site Visits expected August 13 2019
- Site Visits expected August/September
- Full Proposals expected to be due October 15, 2019
- Notification of Community Selection expected November 15, 2019
- Feasibility Study expected to begin December 2019

**Q:** Is it anticipated that this funding/technical assistance opportunity will exist in the next year or two?

**A:** Yes, we anticipate that in January 2020 we will put out a request for proposals. Over the past few years we have opened this request annually.

**Q:** Will only one community will be selected to become a Trust?

**A:** Yes, only one Trust will be established each time we put out a request for proposals. The purpose of this is too ensure we have the capacity to appropriately support the establishment of a Trust and that we are growing our Network meaningfully.

**Q:** What is the structure and content of the LOI?

**A:** Please refer to the request for proposals or “Establishing a Groundwork Trust in Your Community” webinar located on [Groundwork USA’s website](#).

**Q:** Have groups applying been able to find funding to support time for the steering committee and planning process?

**A:** This greatly depends on the local situation. In some cases, we have had an existing local non-profit transform into a Groundwork Trust. In this case, the non-profit acted as the leader in the process and as such, was likely paid through their non-profit. This has also been true when a local government submits a letter of interest. However, most of the

time, a community pulls together a group of invested stakeholders who are volunteering their time to establish a Trust.

**Q:** Does Groundwork try to include Veterans inside those communities with planning into implementation? If, so do you have a couple of examples? Or, if not could your organization consider including veterans?

**A:** Local communities looking to establish a Groundwork Trust should establish a steering committee that is representative of their community. Often, that means veterans should be part of this process by all means.

Related, check out [Groundwork Milwaukee's Green Veterans](#) program!

**Q:** On average how many groups apply each year? How many projects get site visits? And to clarify - only one gets selected each year?

**A:** The number of communities applying to establish a Trust varies greatly by year so it is hard to give a good estimate. It is a competitive process. Typically, we conduct site visits to 2-3 communities per year. Yes, only one community is selected to become a Groundwork Trust each year.

**Q:** Can an existing initiative/partner, that has an existing steering committee, partners and is citizen driven using the existing infrastructure to satisfy the Steering Committee requirement?

**A:** As long as the Committee is representative of the community and does due diligence to ensure this is the case, this should not be a problem.

**Q:** What kind of examples are available for lessons learned from successful and unsuccessful attempts to apply and launch? Better funding models, partnerships, funding streams.

**A:** Below are some suggestions or examples:

- Build a big tent of local stakeholders to ensure your community is represented in the Steering Committee. This truly needs to be a community-driven process.
- Engage your local government right from the beginning.
- Develop collaborations with like-minded organizations locally but be sure to identify where the gap is.
- Seek financial commitments early to ensure you have buy-in from the beginning.

**Q:** When in the process is an ED selected? is the idea that the Steering Committee becomes the nonprofit board and recruits an ED after being selected? Or is the likely ED the person hired during the \$7k "consulting" phase?

**A:** This depends on a lot of local conditions. Generally, we see that an Executive Director is hired during the launch phase. This is after a Feasibility Study has been completed and a vote to establish the Trust is confirmed.

Often members of the Steering Committee do serve on the newly established Trust's Board of Directors. However, this is not required or expected. This is explored during the Feasibility Study.

**Q:** Is it expected that the local government partner serves as the steering committee convener? Or, would any local group be an appropriate LOI drafter/applicant?

**A:** We ask that there is a point organization or local government that can act as the convener and that there is a lead person from that group that to head the process. It is not expected that the local government serves this role but they certainly can.