# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

## Parks with Purpose: Parks for Health and Equity

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Opportunity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Submission Guidelines and Specifications</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Apply</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Requesting Decision Support Tool Help</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Resources and References</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Overview

- Funding Opportunity Executive Summary
- About St. David’s Foundation

## Funding Opportunity

- Envisioning Parks with Purpose
- Parks with Purpose Funding Opportunity
- Anticipated Questions

## Proposal Submission Guidelines and Specifications

- Applicant Eligibility
- Review and Selection Criteria
- Parks Plan Release Event and RFP Information Session
- Timeline
- Foundation Contacts

## To Apply

- Application Link
- Submission Elements

## Appendix A: Requesting Decision Support Tool Help

## Appendix B: Resources and References
Overview

Funding Opportunity Executive Summary
St. David’s Foundation is pleased to announce the availability of funds to leverage the power of parks to improve community health in Bastrop, Caldwell and Travis counties through this request for proposals (RFP). The Foundation maintains an Opportunities to Be Active portfolio under its Healthiest Places strategic priority. Opportunities to be Active is laser focused on maximizing park assets, broadly defined, to support and promote not just physical activity for good health, but mental wellbeing and community connection with a strong emphasis on equity and underserved communities.

Because community park need far outpaces available resources, the Foundation engaged the Trust for Public Land to create the Healthy Parks Plan for Travis, Bastrop, and Caldwell Counties (Parks Plan) to support strategic investments. This RFP is informed by and builds on the data, tools, and resources of the plan, which was driven by a stakeholder and community-engaged 18-month process. Prospective applicants should familiarize themselves with the plan and resources, which are posted at http://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/.

Available grants may range from $20,000 to $200,000. Requests should be commensurate with the project scope and scale of potential community impact. Eligible projects will fall into three categories:

1. **Activation grants** for organizations seeking to learn how to more effectively bring existing parks to life and build community. These grants will support projects including, but not limited to marketing, programs, community engagement, and evaluation. First and foremost, activation grants are about learning how to build community around a community asset -- in this case parks -- for health. The projects are vehicles for inquiry, learning, and planning. Grants are not intended to fund the operations of off-the-shelf programs not tied to a higher parks purpose.

2. **Infrastructure/amenity grants** for organizations seeking to add or renovate park infrastructure or amenities that promote health. Applicants must demonstrate that the community wants and will use proposed improvements. These grants will support projects from small to midsize that can include, but are not limited to, shade structures over swimming pools, playgrounds, outdoor fitness equipment, and trails. First and foremost, infrastructure/amenity grants are about parks users’ experiences over building things. Grants are not permitted to fund infrastructure commonly considered municipal responsibilities (e.g., sidewalks, lighting).

3. **Hybrid grants** for organizations that want to bring together complementary activation efforts with amenity improvements in one proposal.

Eligible applicants are non-profit organizations and public entities serving Bastrop, Caldwell, and/or Travis Counties. Proposals are due August 19, 2019 by noon CST by online submission. An optional information session will be hosted Monday, July 15th at St. David’s Foundation.

About St. David’s Foundation
St. David’s Foundation is a health foundation funding in a five-county area (Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson) surrounding Austin, Texas. Through a unique partnership with St. David’s HealthCare, a Malcolm Baldrige award-winning hospital system in Central Texas, the Foundation reinvests proceeds from the hospital system back into the community, with a goal of building the healthiest community in the world. St. David’s Foundation also operates the largest mobile dental program providing charity care in the country and runs the largest healthcare scholarship program in Texas. Learn more about St. David’s Foundation at www.stdavidsfoundation.org.
Funding Opportunity

Envisioning Parks with Purpose
Think about your favorite park. Why do you go there? How do you feel there? How does it help you to get and stay healthy? Imagine if all people had easy access to safe, vibrant park spaces where they could gather in community with their family, friends, and neighbors of all ages and abilities. Where visitors could find a range of amenities that support the different ways that different people enjoy being active -- nature walks, play, swimming, pick-up sports -- with design features that mitigate the Texas heat. Where greenery, native plants, and water features invite users to stop and smell the roses, breathe deeper, and shed some of the stress they carry through life.

St. David’s Foundation believes that all people in Central Texas need and deserve such parks, which are a crucial component of any community’s public health strategy. There is much work to be done. Park inequity maps to the same places that disproportionately harbor health inequity. There are numerous historical (e.g., segregation, underinvestment) and modern (e.g., long commutes, technology) barriers that prevent underserved residents from using parks and, by extension, reaping the health benefits. While getting 100% of the community to use parks on a regular basis is beyond aspirational, opportunities to convert more seldom and non-users into park lovers exist at every turn.

The Foundation maintains an Opportunities to Be Active portfolio under its Healthiest Places strategic priority. Opportunities to be Active is laser focused on maximizing park assets to support and promote not just physical activity for good health, but mental wellbeing and community connection with a strong emphasis on equity and underserved communities.

Community park need far outpaces available resources making the triad of public-private-community partnerships essential. Inspired by successful work done in Harris County and funded by the Houston Endowment, St. David’s Foundation engaged the Trust for Public Land to create the Healthy Parks Plan for Travis, Bastrop, and Caldwell Counties (Parks Plan) to support more strategic investments. This RFP is informed by and builds on the data, tools, and resources of the plan, which was driven by a stakeholder and community-engaged 18-month process.

The Healthy Parks Plan provides stakeholders with the tools to build healthier communities through parks. The project’s community engagement process collected input from over 2,000 community members, learning what a healthier park looks like to local residents, and how government and nonprofit institutions can help to make that vision a reality. The project’s maps can help stakeholders locate areas that lack park access and identify communities with the greatest need for the health benefits provided by parks. The Decision-Support Tool allows users to view this data in an interactive manner, adjust weights based on their organization’s priorities, and measure the impacts of potential park projects. The Healthy Parks Design Guidelines provide a science-based toolkit for making existing parks healthier for the mind, body, and environment, and for designing new parks to maximize health benefits. Implementing this vision will be a collaborative effort, led by the many passionate park and health advocates that are already leading the fight for a greener, healthier, and more equitable Central Texas.

This RFP serves to move the Healthy Parks Plan into action and competitive applications will be informed by and reference its data and insights, http://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/.
Parks with Purpose Funding Opportunity

Funding is available for activation, infrastructure, and hybrid grants.

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3. **Hybrid grants** for organizations that want to bring together complementary activation efforts with amenity improvements in one proposal.

Additional benefits: Funded organizations may be convened by the Foundation up to twice during the grant period for learning sessions. Additionally, funded organizations may be invited by the Foundation to work with capacity building, evaluation, and/or communications professionals to enhance and promote the work.

Anticipated Questions

Q: Why do the Parks Plan and RFP focus on three counties?
A: The Foundation’s initial interest is in addressing urban and rural park need. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps and other data indicate that Bastrop, Caldwell, and parts of Travis County harbor some of the most pressing needs and opportunities related to exercise opportunities, health status, and equity (see Appendix B: Resources and References). For example, in Bastrop County, 54% of residents lack exercise opportunities, as do 41% in Caldwell County according to 2019 County Health Rankings. At this time, the Foundation is focusing its resources on those counties.

Q: What does St. David’s Foundation mean by parks?
A: “Parks” is shorthand inclusive of traditional parks of all size (i.e., metropolitan, district, community, neighborhood, pocket), schoolyards with health promoting amenities open to community use after hours, greenspaces, trails, outdoor recreation venues, swimming pools, and beyond. Neighborhood and pocket parks are held in the same high regard by the Foundation as iconic parks because local residents may be more likely to use them on a regular basis. Convenience is a factor in access and use, which is why the Trust for Public Land campaigns for a 10-minute walk standard for cities. Most park spaces are publicly owned. Privately owned spaces will be considered if agreements are in place to meaningfully open them up to the applicant’s defined target populations. Whether publicly or privately owned, applicants must be able to successfully navigate proper channels to implement their proposals.
Q: What does St. David’s Foundation mean by activation?
A: Essentially, activation is when a critical mass of people use a park space in different ways to meet different needs, and their presence creates a sense of vibrancy and a reinforcing connection to place and each other. Activated parks attract and engage users. One of the most effective strategies to improve the safety of parks, in fact, is to activate them. Zilker Park and Mueller’s Lake Park are clear examples of highly activated Austin parks. Run down, deserted, unloved parks are the opposite scenario. Most parks fall somewhere in the middle and such parks may be ripe with opportunity through this RFP.

Q: If you build it, will they come?
A: No. If only it were that simple. Dr. Deborah Cohen’s seminal research on neighborhood parks and physical activity (see Appendix B: References and Resources) found that while infrastructure and amenities matter to an extent, programming and marketing are what activates park use. For example, Dr. Cohen found that simple banners and posters publicizing park amenities and programs can significantly increase park use. While this funding opportunity makes resources available to improve infrastructure and amenities, as well as for programming and marketing, projects will fail if done in a vacuum. The RFP is titled “Parks with Purpose” because the emphasis is on the purpose. The imperative to activate community park assets, the call for equity, and the need for improved health are all here to stay. This opportunity is intended to fund both what applicants know will support those aims as well as to enable applicants to experiment with different approaches to learn what sticks. Applicants whose first inclination is to build things or run programs are encouraged to challenge their frame and assumptions.

Q: What are the outcomes St. David’s Foundation is looking to fund?
A: Applicants will be asked to select the top three outcomes measures that relate to their project proposal from the menu below. In the proposal narrative, applicants must articulate what the outcomes would look like in the context of their proposal, how they would advance them, what indicators they would use, and how they would track indicators.

a. Increased or improved park equity
b. Increased or improved park access: proximity
c. Increased or improved park access: walking
d. Increased or improved park access: connectivity
e. Improved or increased park amenities or programs for active living health and wellness
f. Improved or increased park amenities or programs for mental health and wellness
g. Increased or improved park amenities or programs for community/social connection
h. Decreased nature/outdoor gap
i. Improved or increased use of park for physical activity
j. Improved or increased park activation
k. Increased or improved park visitation: frequency
l. Increased or improved park visitation: duration
m. Increased or improved community engagement and stewardship
n. Other ______________________________

Q: What will NOT be funded through this RFP?
A: Infrastructure commonly regarded as municipal responsibilities including, but not limited to, sidewalks, parking
lots, and lighting will not be funded. Many ideas fall in a gray area. While the establishment or renovation of park facilities may follow a more conventional approach to park activation and health promotion, “creative placemaking” can also serve to encourage related behaviors. This approach (see Appendix B: Resources and References) involves art-oriented utilization and revitalization of parks and serves to both benefit and represent the community through the inclusion of their perspective throughout the process. Further, given the Foundation’s interests as a health funder, activities that may entice the public but send a message counterproductive to health (e.g. pizza festival) will not be considered for this opportunity. If a proposal idea falls in a gray area, demonstrate to reviewers that it is part of a viable overall plan to leverage parks to improve community health with supporting evidence.

Q: Will the grants be renewable?
A: At this time, St. David’s Foundation does not have plans to offer a renewal opportunity.

Q: What data and literature should applicants review and reference?
A: The most important resource for preparing a strong proposal is the Healthy Parks Plan itself, including its component parts. The Parks Plan, including the plan’s appendix, cites published literature and provides extensive local quantitative and qualitative data. Plan highlights relevant to this funding opportunity will be presented at the public release and RFP info session on July 15th (see Event and Information Session Details). Slides will be posted after the event. Additionally, RFP Appendix B provides a curated list of resources and references on the relationship between parks, greenspace, nature and health; park equity; social connection and health, creative placemaking concepts; and measurement.
Proposal Submission Guidelines and Specifications

Eligibility
Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be a tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization or a public entity
- Proposed project must serve residents of Bastrop, Caldwell, and/or Travis County. Applicants may have business or headquarter offices located outside these counties if the project clearly benefits local residents and the organization has strong partnerships with local organizations and communities.
- Fiscally sponsored groups may apply. The sponsoring organization must serve as the lead applicant.
- Collaboratives of multiple organizations are eligible to apply, but a single organization must serve as the lead entity for the application.
- Lead applicants must demonstrate strong fiscal management, which at a minimum requires: program operations for at least three years; two consecutive years of a clean audit; and the ability to access working capital or line of credit that could cover at least two months of organizational expenses.
- Existing St. David’s Foundation grant recipients may apply, but the proposal must be distinct from current funding.

All eligible applicants may submit a proposal; no invitation or letter of intent required.

Review and Selection Criteria
Awards will be made on the strength of the proposal, alignment with the Parks Plan, and alignment with the Foundation’s goal to maximize the power of parks as health promoting assets in underserved communities. The Parks Plan provides a menu of high priority parks identified with data and stakeholder input through the planning process. Applicants proposing to improve or activate priority parks named in the plan will receive bonus points. The Foundation welcomes applicants to make their case for parks not on the list if the proposal otherwise aligns with the RFP. Decisions will be made on a number of considerations.

Funding will be awarded in all three counties.

Additional criteria specific to the type are request are noted below. Hybrid grants will be reviewed using hybrid criteria.

Activation Grants:
- Strong rationale for location selection, including from the Decision Support Tool
- Proposal meets needs of underserved communities. Target population is clearly defined and needs are understood
- Proposed approach is supported by community engagement and an existing successful model and/or the published literature
- Emphasis is on learning how to effectively build community around a community park asset for health
- Project is a good fit for the applicant’s mission
- Applicant has any necessary agreements in place or a plan to put them in place with park owner
- Clear ideas for how learnings will be used to inform future work and for sustaining activation gains
Infrastructure/Amenity Grants:

- Strong rationale for location selection, including from the Decision Support Tool.
- Meets needs of underserved communities. Target population is clearly defined and needs are understood.
- Proposed improvement is supported by community engagement along with an existing master plan, Healthy Parks Design Guidelines, and/or human centered design.
- Project can be completed in 12 months.
- Ability to raise full project budget if resources beyond this request are needed. Leveraging additional funding and resources a plus.
- Has any necessary agreements in place or a plan to put them in place with park owner.

The Foundation expects to receive more requests than it has the budget to fund through this competitive RFP, which will mean that worthy proposals will likely be declined. The Foundation will not provide specific feedback but will share themes with any declinations.

Parks Plan Release Event and RFP Information Session

Date:
Monday, July 15, 2019

Location:
St. David's Foundation Innovation Center
1303 San Antonio Street, 6th Floor
Austin, TX  78701
Free onsite valet parking

RSVP:
Space is limited and advance registration is required. RSVP to lallen@stdavidsfoundation.org. Slides will be posted after the event at https://stdavidsfoundation.org/grantmaking/current-funding-opportunities/ for those who cannot attend.

Schedule Details:
8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.   Registration, breakfast bites, networking
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.   Healthy Parks Plan presentation, Matt Dixit Moffa, Trust for Public Land, and Katie Coyne, Asakura Robinson. This presentation is open to all who are interested in healthy parks regardless of RFP intent.
10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.  Transition and break. Those not interested in RFP may depart.
10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.   RFP information session for prospective applicants, Elizabeth Krause, St. David’s Foundation
11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.   Concurrent optional support for prospective applicants. Decision Support Tool hands on training (bring laptop or tablet), Moffa, and 10-minute program officer consults (sign up day-of), Krause.
**Timeline**
Expected timeline for issuing, reviewing, and awarding grants:

**Pre-Funding Notice Posted**
June 10, 2019

**RFP Issue Date**
June 28, 2019

**RFP Information Session**
Optional, but encouraged
July 15, 2019

**Proposals Due by Electronic Submission**
Late proposals will not be reviewed
August 19, noon CST

**Review**
See note below
August – October 2019

**Applicants Notified of Decision**
By October 31, 2019

**Grant Period**
January 1, 2020 –
December 31, 2020

*St. David’s Foundation follows a multistep review process: Technical review for completeness, panel review by Community Investments staff and an external subject matter expert, Community Investment Committee review, Board of Directors review and approval. The Foundation may ask applicants for additional information or clarification at any time during the review period.*

**Foundation Contacts**

**Programmatic Questions:** Questions regarding the intent of this RFP or applicant eligibility may be directed to Elizabeth Krause, Senior Program Officer, ekrause@stdavidsfoundation.org.

**Decision Support Tool Help:** Requests for assistance with running queries through the Decision Support Tool may be directed to Yutika Diwadkar, Community Investments Intern, ydiwadkar@stdavidsfoundation.org. See Appendix A for guidelines for requesting help. Please note deadline.

**Technical Submission Questions:** Technical questions related to the online application submission may be directed to Vanessa Rocha, Grants Coordinator, vrocha@stdavidsfoundation.org.
To Apply

Complete proposals must be submitted online by 12 noon CST on Monday, August 19th. Proposals will be date and time stamped. Out of fairness to all applicants, late proposals will not be reviewed.

Click here for application link. New users must set up an account. Returning users may use their existing account.

Submission Elements:

• Organizational information
• Identify type of funding: Whether activation, infrastructure/amenity, or hybrid proposal
• Amount requested
• Proposal narrative (log into online application for full narrative questions, maximum 7 pages)
  o Elevator pitch
  o Location of park(s) with supporting descriptions
  o People served
  o Project description and rationale
  o Engaging and activating park users
  o Timeline and project plan
  o Collaborating partners
  o Equity, diversity, and inclusion
  o Evaluation and learning
  o Resources and sustainability
• Supporting documents: Project budget with justification, board list, key staff list, financial documents, organizational diversity chart
• Optional attachments: letters of commitment, reports generated from Decision Support Tool
Appendix A: Requesting Decision Support Tool Help

Decision Support Tool:  https://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/

Competitive applications will reference data and information from the geographic information system-based Decision Support Tool developed for Bastrop, Caldwell, and Travis Counties by the Trust for Public Land as part of the Healthy Parks Plan. The Decision Support Tool is designed to incorporate data, such as community health, demographics, environmental factors, amenities, and park accessibility, into a report for specific parkland. Users can view or create parks within the tool to strengthen their understanding of the populations and environment in the surrounding area.

An optional training on basic functionality will be offered after the July 15 information session. Participants should bring their laptop or tablet. Additionally, a user guide and training videos are available through the above link.

Community Investments Intern, Yutika Diwadkar, is available upon request, to provide help using the tool or can run queries and email reports to applicants. Yutika will not be scoring proposals and is a neutral resource.

To request support, email the following information to ydiwadkar@stdavidsfoundation.org to schedule a phone appointment. Appointments are available between July 17th and August 2nd.

Organization Name:
1) Briefly describe the intended goal of your proposed project. (Up to 200 words)
2) Which of the following describes how your organization is planning to use the Decision-Support Tool? (Please select up to 2)
   o  To develop a park
   o  To improve a park
   o  To learn more about areas in need of potential service through your organization within your county, city, town, etc.
   o  Other – please describe
3) Please identify the county/counties in which your organization will base its work.
   o  Bastrop
   o  Caldwell
   o  Travis
4) The Decision-Support Tool enables users to view data on the following categories. Which of these categories pertain to the goals of your organization in relation to this project? (Please select up to 5)
   For more detailed information on each of these criteria, visit the following link:
   o  Park access and level of service
   o  Community health
   o  Socioeconomic vulnerability
   o  Flooding and water quality
   o  Urban heat islands/air quality
Appendix B: Resources and References

Healthy Parks Plan for Travis, Bastrop, and Caldwell Counties report:  
http://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/

Interactive Tools:  
Healthy Parks Plan Decision Support Tool:  http://web.tplgis.org/healthyparksplan/  
Trust for Public Land Parkscore website:  https://www.tpl.org/parkscore  
Trust for Public Land 10-Minute Walk Campaign website:  https://10minutewalk.org

Parks, Greenspace, Nature, and Health:  

(2016).  Park characteristics, use, and physical activity:  A review of studies using SOPARC (System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities).  Preventive  
Medicine, 86, 153-166.

Twohig-Bennett, C., & Jones, A.  
(2018).  The health benefits of the great outdoors:  A systematic review and meta-analysis of  
greenspace exposure and health outcomes.  Environmental Research, 166, 628-637.  

Vedantam, S., Lu, T., & Boyle, T.  

Measurement:  
Merriam, D., Bality, A., Stein, J. & Boehmer, T.  
(2017).  Improving Public Health through Public Parks and Trails:  Eight  
Common Measures.  Summary report.  US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and  

Park Equity:  
Yañez, E.  
(2019, February 28).  Why we need park equity.  Retrieved from  
https://www.preventioninstitute.org/blog/why-we-need-park-equity

Community/Social Connection and Health:  
Brody, J. E.  
https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/12/well/live/having-friends-is-good-for-you.html

Matthews, T., & Dolley, J.  
(2018, March 18).  Many people feel lonely in the city, but perhaps ‘third places’ can help with  
that.  Retrieved from:  

Request for Proposals  
Parks with Purpose:  
Parks for Health and Equity


Creative Placemaking, Design, and Social Infrastructure:


County Health Rankings and Roadmaps:
Bastrop County: https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/texas/2019/rankings/bastrop/county/outcomes/1/snapshot

Caldwell County: https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/texas/2019/rankings/caldwell/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot

Travis County: https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/texas/2019/rankings/travis/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot

State Funding Opportunities
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Local Grant Programs: https://tpwd.texas.gov/business/grants/recreation-grants/copy_of_grant-deadlines
Deadline for 2020 submissions is December 1, 2019. A 50% local match is required at the time of application and St. David’s Foundation funding may qualify if eligibility criteria met.