



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Grant Funding Available (\$140K) from the Nutrition Equity Fund of the Nourishing Power Network

Planning Grant: Establishing Nutrition Equity Zones in Greater Cleveland

Application Due October 23, 2024 at 11:59pm.

Background and Aspirations of the Nutrition Equity Fund

Cleveland's food system can produce justice and sovereignty within historically redlined neighborhoods. The Nourishing Power Network seeks to make this happen. We hope for a local food system that is known for creating freedom, hope, and dignity in food traditions resulting in holistic health. The Nutrition Equity Fund, managed by the Nourishing Power Advisory Council, is one component of Nourishing Power Network's community action research. Through the Fund, we are testing ways to unify resources to root and grow a local food system that works for Black, Latino/a/x, Asian, and Indigenous communities in Cuyahoga County (hereafter referred to as BIPOC communities). The purpose of the Fund is to support community-driven initiatives that uplift equity, embrace learning as we go, and amplify BIPOC experiences and expertise. We seek to use the Fund to share power, promote connectivity, and spur collective action as community leaders and organizational partners work together to disrupt the status quo and drive transformation within our local food system. We want to ignite community action that leads to a vibrant and nutritious food system that is equitable and fair and deeply anchored to local community institutions and assets. During its testing phase, the Fund is managed by Neighborhood Connections with fundraising support from CWRU's Mary Ann Swetland Center for Environmental Health and members of the Nourishing Power Advisory Council. Learnings from its initial launch will inform the future organizational home of the Fund.

Planning Grant Opportunity: Establishing Nutrition Equity Zones in Greater Cleveland

The purpose of this planning grant is to identify two (2) **collectives** (at least 3 different organizational partners per proposal) who are collaboratively doing the work and have "skin in the game" to achieve nutrition equity in Greater Cleveland. Skin in the game means that these partners are deeply embedded in the community with extensive lived and work experience solving problems related to injustices of the food system. Our goal is to work with these two collectives to formally recognize their creativity, innovation, collaborative spirit, and ongoing investments to realize freedom, hope, and dignity in food traditions resulting in holistic health for BIPOC communities in Greater Cleveland. This unique funding opportunity is designed to work with these collectives to connect and amplify their work as they plan to become a Nutrition Equity Zone.

What is a Nutrition Equity Zone*?

A Nutrition Equity Zone (NEZ) is an area within a community intentionally developed to realize a vibrant and fair food system that is powered by community engagement, collaboration, and partnerships. Within a NEZ, community presence is alive, serving as the driving force behind its initiatives. Residents within NEZs are active agents of change, deeply invested in the collective effort to flip the food system to fairness.

NEZs have many pathways for residents to get fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant foods through community-run markets, cooperative grocery stores, or urban agriculture initiatives. They are also hubs of education and empowerment. Holistic health workshops, cooking classes, and gardening events led by residents are a few examples of the diverse capacity building opportunities available within NEZs.

A hallmark of NEZs is the presence of local growing initiatives. Community gardens and urban farms are common, providing residents with opportunities to actively engage in food production and cultivation. These are linked to pathways for residents to activate their skills and resources to generate economic opportunities within their community. Whether through small-scale food production, value-added food processing, or

entrepreneurship ventures, NEZs empower residents to create and sustain local economies that lead to healthy people and communities.

With a focus on sustainability, NEZs across the city are connected for advocacy and activism. Community organizers and grassroots leaders from different NEZs link together to strategize and mobilize around issues related to food justice and equity. Through collaborative partnerships with residents, organizations, and institutions, NEZs leverage their collective power to mobilize systemic changes to transform the food system so that it works for all.

**A concept developed by the Nourishing Power Network Advisory Council.*

Important Dates

Grant Application Opens	September 24, 2024
Information Session	October 3, 2024 from 2-3pm via Zoom .
Application Closes	October 23, 2024 at 11:59pm. Late applications will not be accepted.
Announcement of Award(s)	November 1, 2024
Grant Start Date	December 1, 2024
Grant End Date	June 13, 2025

Key Information about the Planning Grant Program

- Award Type: Grant
- Total Funds Available: \$140,000
- Number of Awards Granted in 2024: 2
- Maximum Award: \$70,000 per collective of three partners
- Award Timeframe: December 1, 2024 – June 13, 2025
- Applicant Eligibility:
 - Collective of at least three organizations located in Cuyahoga County. Organizations must include at least one non-profit and may include a mixture of other organization types, such as businesses, government, schools, coalitions, neighborhood associations, etc.
 - Lead applicant must be a nonprofit or, if not a nonprofit, the lead applicant must engage a fiscal sponsor to receive the award. A letter of support from the fiscal sponsor is required. This should be on the fiscal sponsor's letterhead declaring they agree to serve as the fiscal sponsor for the proposal being submitted.
 - Collective agrees to conduct their joint work as a Nutrition Equity Zone in Cleveland or East Cleveland, Ohio.
 - Members of the collective are only involved with one grant application for this RFP.
 - Organizations have demonstrated experience (i.e., at least 1 year per organization in the collective) doing work related to the definition of a nutrition equity zone, including at least two of the following:
 - Supporting many pathways to get fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant foods through community-run markets, farmers markets, local food ventures, restaurants, value-added product development, etc.
 - Serving as hubs of education and empowerment for holistic health through nutrition education, culinary arts, agricultural education, etc.
 - Investing in local growing initiatives, such as community gardening and urban farming.
 - Supporting policy and advocacy efforts around issues related to food justice and equity.
 - Collective is committed to complete their Nutrition Equity Zone planning grant by June 13, 2025.
 - Collective is willing to participate in the required evaluation of the proposed project. The evaluation will be developed in partnership with grantees after the award is provided.
 - Collective is willing to share lessons as you go through two check-ins during grant cycle: one in January 2025 and the second in April 2025.
 - Collective is committed to using Nutrition Equity Zone marketing developed through this process for at least 6 months after receipt of the marketing materials.

- Commitment to serve as a speaker at the “Nutrition Equity Zones Think Tank Event” planned by the Nourishing Power Network for May 2025.
- Collective is willing to participate in the community action research evaluation process (as described below).

Members of the Nourishing Power Advisory Council 2.0, Nourishing Power Leadership Team, and Nourishing Power staff are **not** eligible to apply for this RFP.

We will **not** fund organizations that have a policy of discriminating based on race, color, religion (creed), sex, gender expression or transition, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, whether the discrimination policies are written or are in practice. Our policy is to not provide grants to any organization that maintains such a policy.

Breakdown of Funding Available

Funds (\$70,000/awardee) are available based on the following anticipated expense breakdown. Grantees must submit a budget reflecting the best use of funds to achieve the following goals.

Goals	Anticipated Costs per Goal
1. Develop plan for the collective to work on a shared initiative as a Nutrition Equity Zone. Outcomes achievable at the end of 6-months of funding should focus on one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and strengthening trustworthy relationships with partners in the collective and with key audiences the collective intends to engage. • Building capacity among the collective to realize nutrition equity through strategic planning, prototyping small-scale pilot of collective work, or developing an evaluation plan for their joint ventures. • Raising awareness about the collective as a Nutrition Equity Zone through dissemination of Nutrition Equity Zone branding, hosting events, pitching joint work as a Nutrition Equity Zone to funders and other decision makers needed to sustain Nutrition Equity Zones in Greater Cleveland. 	\$65,000
2. Participate in up to three storytelling workshops to develop a marketing campaign about the formation of two Nutrition Equity Zones that will be planned through this RFP. Costs are used for the time and effort of team members to fully engage in these storytelling and marketing campaign development steps. These will be scheduled after grantees are funded. At least 2 of the 3 members of the collective must take part in the three sessions. Failure to engage will result in reductions in this portion of the grant funding available to the recipient.	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$70,000

In addition, grantees will receive, *at no cost*, a marketing package for branding their collective as a Nutrition Equity Zone including an initial set of storytelling materials, collateral (e.g., signs, social media, print media, etc.), a Nutrition Equity Zone marketing toolkit, and up to \$1,000 in marketing expenditures focused on the Nutrition Equity Zone branded materials (e.g., print media, paid marketing, merchandise, etc.).

Grant Application Process

The application process was designed to honor the time and effort of those working for food justice. Our goal is to establish the least extractive approach to grantmaking while gathering the information needed for informed decision making. Recognizing that there are many potential collectives ready for this funding opportunity, we will randomly select two applicants who meet the RFP requirements for the award. A minimum of one of the awardees must demonstrate an explicit focus on promoting food justice for children and families through their collective. The application review process includes: 1) Written application including budget and timeline, 2)

Screening to ensure fit with RFP, and 3) Random selection by Nourishing Power Advisory Council 2.0. Attachment 1 lists screening criteria and application questions. To apply, you must first [create an account](#) in the Neighborhood Connections grant portal.

Click [HERE](#) to apply online using the Neighborhood Connections Grant Portal

Grant Review Procedures:

Each eligible proposals will be assigned a unique number. Members of the Nourishing Power Network Advisory Council will randomly select a number from all possible numbers until they have selected two applications for this award. At least one application must be focused on promoting food justice for children and families through their collective. We will not provide written feedback to any of the applications not selected for this award due to the random selection method used to review proposals. Applicants may set up a time to discuss their proposal with members of the Nourishing Power Advisory Council 2.0 in December 2024, if desired.

*To maximize reach and impact of this planning grant funding opportunity, organizations may only be a part of **one** grant application for this RFP. If an organization applies to more than one proposal, both collectives will be *disqualified* for funding.

Budget Information:

Applicants should develop a budget in alignment with each goal to be achieved for a maximum of \$70,000. A budget template is available in Attachment 2.

Allowable Expenses

- Personnel (salary, fringe)
- Other Project Costs, such as:
 - General project related supplies
 - Marketing and promotional materials for project goals
 - Community engagement costs (e.g., food at meetings, stipends for participation)
 - Consultation
 - Mileage for in town and statewide travel for meetings: \$0.67 per mile
- Administrative Costs (up to 5% of direct costs)

Unallowable expenses:

- Equipment over \$500 (unless approval is provided in writing prior to award)
- Purchase of land or buildings
- Alcoholic beverages
- Goods and services for personal use
- Lobbying that is substantial in relation to the organization's overall activities or is in support of or against a political candidate or specific legislation.
- Construction
- Capital or building campaigns
- Religious efforts for religious purposes
- Fundraising dinners, galas, or events

Award of Funds:

All grants will be administered through Neighborhood Connections. Fifty percent of the total funding awarded will be provided to the applicant at the start of the grant. The remaining 50% will be awarded after the mid-point milestone(s) is accomplished. This milestone(s) will be based on the grantees proposed project timeline and may be renegotiated with the project officers if the project adapts over time. Grantees or their fiscal sponsor are required to keep detailed financial records, including receipts for expenses, which may be requested by Planning Grant: Establishing Nutrition Equity Zones in Greater Cleveland Grant Program (v. 9/24/2024)

Neighborhood Connections or Case Western Reserve University for grant auditing purposes. Grantees will meet project officers at the beginning of the project to review their proposed budget. Our goal is to support necessary changes of grantees, which may require re-budgeting. Re-budgeting more than 25% in any one category (i.e., personnel, other project costs) must be approved in writing by the project officers.

Community Action Research Evaluation:

Each organizational lead of the collective awarded this grant will be invited to take part in up to three evaluation interviews about their experiences leading this work. This evaluation is a part of the overall evaluation of Nourishing Power Network, which is a community action research project. These interviews will occur at the beginning (November 2024) and end (June 2025) of the grant with the option of doing a third interview six months after the end of the grant in December 2025. Additional compensation (\$35 for interviews 1 and 2; \$40 for interview 3) will be provided for your time and effort completing these interviews.

Grantee-Grantor Relationship:

We assume the best of grantees and seek to deepen relationships through the grantmaking process. Our goal is to establish a partnership that supports shared power relations between grantees and grantors. The following structures are built into our grantmaking process to support these goals.

- **Project Officer.** All grantees will be assigned a project officer as their main point of contact for all things related to the grant. The goal of this relationship is to ensure the grantee feels supported and that the granting group is responsive to the needs of the grantee. We anticipate at least 3 meetings with the project officer over the 8-month time frame (beginning, middle, and end), though the project officer will be available as needed.
- **Evaluation Advisor.** All grantees will be assigned an Evaluation Advisor from the Swetland Center. Leadership of each funded project will meet with the Evaluation Advisor at the beginning of the award to define evaluation metrics for their project. These metrics will be based on the grantee's aspirations for change. Grantees will meet with their Evaluation Advisor at the middle and end of the project to document learnings and impact. At the end of the project, the Evaluation Advisor in partnership with the grantee may create and share a data brief summarizing the findings of the project and evaluation.
- **Learning Together.** We embrace learning as you go, and lessons gained from so called "failures." We also want to grow a coalition of food justice leaders committed to long-term policy engagement for nutrition equity.
- **Shifting the Narrative by Sharing Lessons.** We encourage grantees to include funds in their proposed budgets to share lessons at local, statewide, and national meetings to elevate their policy engagement for nutrition equity work. We are committed to helping grantees identify venues to disseminating their insights. We will help grantees develop materials for these presentations, if desired by the grantee.
- **Amplifying Awardees.** The CWRU Swetland Center for Environmental Health and Neighborhood Connections will amplify the policy action for food justice work of awardees via their websites, newsletters, and social media, including those specifically related to the Nourishing Power Network.
- **Community Building.** We encourage grantees to participate in networking events organized by the Nourishing Power Network. This includes a required *Nutrition Equity Zone Think Tank* event in May 2025 and the optional final networking event of Nourishing Power Network in July 2025. All grantees will be added to the Nourishing Power Network Basecamp (i.e., an online communication and organization tool) to promote internal communications, networking, and community building.

Guidance for Decision Making

We seek to fund collectives who are jointly doing the work and have "skin in the game" to achieve nutrition equity in Greater Cleveland. We recognize that many collectives in Greater Cleveland would be a great fit for this planning grant and opted for the random selection process to reduce bias in the review and promote efficiency given our existing capacity. In the random selection process, all applications will be screened for fit to ensure the application is complete, meets all the requirements outlined above, and demonstrates a commitment to the following aspects of nutrition equity:

- **Connectedness.** Embrace connections across sectors and include processes to build and nurture trusting relationships.

- **Inclusivity.** Openness among the team with evidence of welcoming and promoting belongingness among BIPOC communities.
- **Adaptability.** Evolving and responsive approach that is situated and tailored to local communities. A commitment to share lessons learned as you iterate.
- **Power Relations.** Shared power and shared decision making with BIPOC community leaders and meaningful engagement of community stakeholders.
- **Racial Equity.** Seeks to dismantle structures of racism with an emphasis on systems change. Work that leads to wealth building for BIPOC communities.
- **Food Choice.** Creates vibrant and abundant opportunities to choose culturally relevant foods that are nutritious and enriching.

As funders, we are committed to grantmaking that is transparent and upholds these aspects of nutrition equity.

- **Connectedness.** We are incentivizing collaboration by encouraging use of funds to nurture trusting relationships across community and organizational partners.
- **Inclusivity.** Our review team includes meaningful representation from BIPOC communities and our process for review seeks to be transparent with technical assistance available.
- **Adaptability.** We assume initiatives will adapt and encourage super iterative designs that are responsive to feedback. We build in time and processes to understand pivots and allow for funds to be re-budgeted easily.
- **Power Relations.** We assume the best of grantees. We include processes to enrich grantor-grantee relationships by having fund decision makers spend time with grantees. We encourage creativity and sharing of lessons learned from so called “failure.” Our goal is to fund fairly and in a manner that is circular and generative and supports wealth building within BIPOC communities.
- **Racial Equity.** We are working to explicitly name how structures of racism influence every part of the funding process while actively dismantling racist practices in our grantmaking. We are holding ourselves accountable to monitor progress through reflexivity on the intersections of race and power.
- **Food Choice.** We encourage projects that align food choices with the hopes and desires of the community with a focus on vibrant, nutritious, and enriching foods grown and/or made by BIPOC people and communities.

Background on the Nutrition Equity Fund

The Nutrition Equity Fund is collaboratively designed by a group of diverse stakeholders representing Cuyahoga County. The working group includes the Nourishing Power Advisory Council, food system workers, researchers, funders, and other community leaders. We are committed to learning from the Fund through reflection and feedback, adapting as we go in alignment with our Nourishing Power values.

- **All People and Experiences Have Equal Value.** We believe that everyone has gifts to give and receive in co-creating the Nourishing Power Network. A diverse community with a variety of experiences, skills, and backgrounds are necessary to have a broader impact.
- **Create Inclusive and Holistic Spaces.** We believe in creating welcoming spaces where all people feel heard and seen. We are committed to creating a nourishing environment to root and grow a local food system that leads to holistic health for all - in body, mind, and spirit.
- **Build Bridges for Community Ownership.** We believe that linking community power with organizational power will strengthen and expand community-led actions in the local food system. These actions must promote freedom, hope, and dignity in food traditions among Black, Latino/a/x, Asian, and Indigenous communities.
- **Community-led = Sustained Impact.** We believe in investing in food system ideas and actions that lead to community ownership and build on and strengthen the collective vision of the community.
- **Promote Racial Equity in the Food System.** We believe systems were not created with the goal of racial equity and some were designed to maintain and expand structural racism within our systems and policies. We are committed to nourishing bold and fresh ideas that will address inequities and transform long-standing injustices of the food system.

ATTACHMENT 1: APPLICATION PROCESS

Screening Criteria

Applicants must meet these minimum criteria to be qualified for review and consideration for funding. We will not review or provide feedback for any applications that do not meet **ALL** these minimum criteria.

1	Collective of at least three organizations located in Cuyahoga County. Organizations include at least one non-profit and other organization types, such as businesses, government, schools, coalitions, neighborhood associations, etc.	Yes	No
2	Lead applicant must be a nonprofit or, if not a nonprofit, the lead applicant must engage a fiscal sponsor to receive the award. A letter of support from the fiscal sponsor is required. This should be on the fiscal sponsor's letterhead declaring they agree to serve as the fiscal sponsor for the proposal being submitted.	Yes	No
3	Collective agrees to conduct their joint work as a Nutrition Equity Zone in Cleveland or East Cleveland, Ohio.	Yes	No
4	Members of the collective are only involved with one grant application for this RFP.	Yes	No
5	Partners on the team have demonstrated experience (i.e., at least 1 year per organization in the collective) doing work related to the definition of a nutrition equity zone, including at least two of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting many pathways to get fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant foods through community-run markets, farmers markets, local food ventures, restaurants, value-added product development, etc. Serving as hubs of education and empowerment for holistic health through nutrition education, culinary arts, agricultural education, etc. Investing in local growing initiatives, such as community gardening and urban farming. Supporting policy and advocacy efforts around issues related to food justice and equity. 	Yes	No
6	Committed to complete their Nutrition Equity Zone planning grant by June 13, 2025.		
7	Willingness to participate in required evaluation of the grant-making process (finalized in partnership with grantees after the award is provided).	Yes	No
8	Willingness to share lessons as you go through two check-ins during grant cycle: one in January 2025 and the second in April 2025.	Yes	No
9	Commitment to use Nutrition Equity Zone marketing developed through this process for at least 6 months after receipt of the marketing materials.	Yes	No
10	Commitment to serve as a speaker at the "Nutrition Equity Zones Think Tank Event" planned by the Nourishing Power Network for May 2025	Yes	No
11	Collective is willing to participate in the community action research evaluation process (as described below).	Yes	No

Application Questions

1. Demographic information to collect for each Organization Lead (repeat for each organization)
 - a. First and Last Name
 - b. Phone Number
 - c. Email
 - d. What is the best way to reach you?
 - e. How do you currently describe yourself?
 - f. What are your pronouns?
 - g. What race(s) do you identify with?
 - h. Are you Hispanic, Latin or Spanish origin?
 - i. What is your age group?
 - j. Do you live in Cleveland or East Cleveland?
 - k. Organization Name
 - l. Organization Mission
 - m. Organization Type
 - n. Is the organization located in Cleveland or East Cleveland?
2. What is the geographic focus of your work as a collective? We assume the geographic scope of a Nutrition Equity Zone is smaller than a city but could be larger than one neighborhood.
3. Select which of the following are occurring among the work of your collective for at least one year or more in Greater Cleveland. For each one selected, please provide a brief description (200 words or less) about these activities including populations engaged, impacts, and length of time implementing.
 - a. Supporting many pathways to get fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant foods through community-run markets, farmers markets, local food ventures, restaurants, value-added product development, etc.
 - b. Serving as hubs of education and empowerment for holistic health through nutrition education, culinary arts, agricultural education, etc.
 - c. Investing in local growing initiatives, such as community gardening and urban farming.
 - d. Supporting policy and advocacy efforts around issues related to food justice and equity.
4. Please describe how your three organizations are already doing joint work related to nutrition equity. (500 words)
5. Why is your collective interested in coming together as a Nutrition Equity Zone? What value does this offer to your collective? (200 words)
6. What do you hope to accomplish through this funding opportunity designed to plan your collective work as a Nutrition Equity Zone? What are the steps you will take to accomplish these goals by June 15, 2025. (500 words)
7. How, if at all, is your proposed Nutrition Equity Zone focused on promoting nutrition equity for children and families? (200 words)
8. Do you have any concerns or reservations about this funding opportunity? (200 words)

ATTACHMENT 2: SAMPLE BUDGET

Expense Item(s):	Amount Requested	Budget Justification:
1. Supplies (items that will be consumed)		
2. Food		
3. Printing		
4. Equipment (lasts longer than project)		
5. Fees/Permits		
6. Space		
7. Personnel (paid or volunteers)		
8. Transportation		
9. Other		
10. Other		
11. Other		
12. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (sum of 1-11)		
13. Administrative Costs (5% of total direct costs)		
14. TOTAL (DIRECT + ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS)		

ATTACHMENT 3: SAMPLE TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

Project Name:

Team Members:

<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Deliverable</u>

Sample: Timeline from December 1, 2024 – June 15, 2025

Project Name: Planning for the XYZ Nutrition Equity Zone

Team Members: Sam T., Mason X., and Carla R.

<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Deliverable</u>
1/15/2025	Host info session with partners to get feedback on planning grant.	Attendee list, Suggestions for “must have” features of NEZ plan
3/15/2025	Engage consultant to conduct 3 co-design sessions to prototype shared initiative for NEZ	Prototype of shared initiative for NEZ
5/31/2025	Pilot test shared initiative for NEZ and identify 2 successes and 2 areas for growth	Photos of pilot test, summary of lessons learned
6/15/2025	Pitch shared initiative for NEZ to at least 2 potential funders	Secure at least \$50K to continue shared initiative for NEZ